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Mental Health of Refugees in Egypt (2012-2023)



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Abstract:

The mental health of refugees in Egypt is examined in this report, with a focus on Syrian and Sudanese refugees in particular. The paper begins by defining refugees in detail and identifying the main categories of refugees. The topic of mental health is then explored, along with its numerous ailments and the effects they might have on people. The report next turns to refugees in Egypt and gives a general summary of their existence there. It looks at the particular difficulties Sudanese and Syrian refugees encounter and highlights any potential mental health issues that may arise. The potential psychological effects of factors including trauma, displacement, and the loss of loved ones are investigated. The research also looks at the living circumstances of refugees in Egypt, emphasizing the challenges they encounter in getting access to basic services like mental health assistance. It also looks at the social and economic aspects that might make this population's mental health problems worse. This paper emphasizes the significance of attending to the mental health needs of refugees in Egypt, particularly those who are Syrian and Sudanese. It highlights the need for more support services and interventions to lessen the psychological effects of trauma and displacement, thereby increasing these communities' general well-being.

Key Words:

Mental Health, Syria, Sudan, Refugees.

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Introduction:

Everyone knows the struggle of the refugees from the problems of travelling to the struggle of finding accommodations in different countries, but have you ever questioned yourself about the mental health of the refugees, and what problems they suffer from mentally and psychologically due to the traumatic events they go through? This is what this report focuses on.

Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their countries of origin because of persecution, conflict or violence. The global refugee crisis has become an urgent issue, with millions of people seeking safety and protection in their host countries. As an important host country, Egypt has seen an influx of refugees from various regions, including Africa and the Middle East.

Understanding the mental health challenges refugees face is crucial to providing effective support and interventions. Forced displacement, traumatic experiences, and loss of home and loved ones can have profound psychological impacts on individuals. This scientific introduction aims to explore the specific mental health issues refugees face in Egypt.

Refugees in Egypt face a unique set of circumstances that can contribute to mental health difficulties. They often face challenges related to legal status, limited access to health care, education, and employment. Uncertainty about their future and integration difficulties can further aggravate their psychological distress.

Research has shown that refugees in Egypt have a higher prevalence of mental health disorders than the general population. Common mental health conditions include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and

physical symptoms. These conditions can significantly impact their overall well-being and impede their ability to rebuild their lives in a new environment.

The factors contributing to the mental health challenges among refugees in Egypt are multifaceted. These include exposure to violence and trauma in their home countries, the difficult journey of displacement, and the challenges faced by the host country. In addition, social isolation, discrimination, and limited access to mental health services compound the difficulties they face.

Addressing the mental health needs of refugees in Egypt requires a holistic approach. This includes providing culturally sensitive and traumatic mental health services, promoting social inclusion, and addressing the underlying social determinants of mental health. Cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as international agencies, is crucial in developing and implementing effective interventions.

By understanding the unique mental health challenges faced by refugees in Egypt, policymakers, healthcare providers and humanitarian organizations can work to create a supportive environment that promotes resilience, recovery and well-being for this vulnerable population.

Definition of Refugees:

Since the beginning of time, millions of people have been forced to escape their homes due to conflict, persecution, and natural disasters, among other factors.

Refugees are people who have escaped war, violence, conflict, or persecution by travelling across an international border in pursuit of safety in another nation.

They frequently had to flee, taking nothing but the clothing on their backs and abandoning their homes, belongings, jobs, and loved ones behind. Refugees are defined and protected by international law. A refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention as "a person who, because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is unable or unwilling to return to his country of origin." (UNHCR.org, n.d).

By the end of 2017, there were 25.4 million registered refugees worldwide, including men, women and children (UNHCR.org, n.d). Imagine being forced to flee your country in order to flee to safety. If you're lucky you have time to pack a bag. If not, you simply dropped everything and ran away. Life as a refugee can be hard to imagine. But for millions of people around the world, it is a horrific fact - and in 2021, the number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate increased to 29.4 million (UNHCR.org, n.d).

Worldwide, 89.3 million individuals have been compelled to leave their homes. About 27.1 million of them are refugees, and about half of them are minors (A.Basaleh, 2023).Millions of individuals also lack access to

fundamental liberties including the right to travel, work, and receive medical treatment.

There are various categories of refugees, and each one left their home country for a unique cause.

Types of Refugees:

- asylum seeker
- Internally displaced persons
- stateless person
- Religion or political affiliation
- Hunger
- war refugee

Mental Health:

A person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being are all referred to as their mental health. It influences people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as well as how they cope with stress, interact with others, and make decisions. Every period of life, from childhood and adolescence to maturity, is vital for mental health. No matter one's age, gender, color, or social background, mental diseases are widespread and can afflict anyone. But being mentally healthy goes beyond simply being free of mental diseases; it also refers to having the capacity to handle daily stressors, perform efficiently at work, and give back to one's community.

What affects Mental Health: A wide variety of mental health conditions—disorders that impact your emotions, thinking, and behavior—are referred to as mental illnesses, sometimes known as mental health disorders. Depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders, and compulsive behaviors are a few examples of mental illnesses. Many people occasionally experience problems with their mental health. However, a mental health issue turns into a mental disease when persistent symptoms put you under a lot of stress and impair your capacity to perform daily tasks. A mental illness can make your life miserable and interfere with regular activities including work, school, and relationships. Most of the time, a combination of medicine and talk therapy helps control symptoms (mayoclinic.org, 2022).

There are numerous potential causes for mental health issues. Although various people may be more severely impacted by specific things than others, it is likely that many people are affected by a complex combination of circumstances.

For instance, the following elements may contribute to a time of poor mental health:

- child abuse, trauma, or neglect
- social isolation or loneliness
- being subjected to racism
- facing social deprivation, poverty, or debt
- mourning (losing a loved one).
- severe or persistent stress
- job loss or unemployment
- homelessness or substandard housing

Although lifestyle issues like employment, nutrition, drugs, and lack of sleep can all have an impact on your mental health, there are frequently additional elements involved if you have a mental health issue (mind.org, n.d).

Refugees' Mental Health: Many refugees are regarded as a high-risk demographic for acquiring mental problems because they have undergone a wide range of negative traumatic events prior to, during, and/or after their escape. Refugees frequently experience a variety of traumatic events, such as exposure to armed conflict, witnessing atrocities, genocide, imprisonment, death of loved ones, partners, children, or other family members, physical or sexual violence, torture, and losing one's home, stressful escape and rather unpleasant transit experiences, perilous journeys, a lack of food, water, or shelter, ethnic or racial discrimination, cultural and linguistic barriers, and restricted access (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

In addition to being the outcome of violent conflict and forced relocation, trauma in refugees and asylum seekers is frequently linked to (childhood) abuse. Considerable evidence suggests that refugees and asylum seekers, particularly children and women, are susceptible to gender-based violence and forced early marriage in addition to becoming victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

The severity and frequency of the traumatic events affect the chances of acquiring post-traumatic stress disorder and comorbid disorders like depression and anxiety disorders. In general, the more traumatic events a person has, the more severe their mental health issues will be (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to extreme life conditions that affect their mental health and well-being, and many of them have experienced life-threatening situations and a number of traumatic experiences prior to and during the process of flight from their home country to the host country (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

When they arrive in the host nation, many of them are still dealing with the psychological effects of their exposure to the ongoing war. It has also been acknowledged that pressures and the standard of living in the host country can have an impact on their mental health. Studies conducted in Denmark found that rather than traumatizing events in the past, refugees and asylum seekers related their mental health issues with pressures during the post-migration period in the host nations. In research on the needs of refugees in the Netherlands, mental health issues were also more frequently linked to stressors in the host nation (such as uncertainty, helplessness, and identity) than to traumatic prior events (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Numerous researches have demonstrated that the onset and persistence of psychological problems are influenced by post-migration stressors in the host countries. Financial issues, anxiety about relatives still living in the country of origin, cultural integration issues, resettling in unfamiliar environments, "homesickness," loss of social identity, loneliness, restrictions on employment, disruptions to children's education, language difficulties, or protracted uncertainty about residency status are some post-migration stressors that can affect mental health issues. Another is the possibility of having to return to the country of origin (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

In actuality, traumatic experiences that occurred prior to and during the migration process may not have been as significant in asylum seekers' and refugees' mental health issues as post-migratory resettlement settings. Due to discrimination and unrecognized job experience, refugees also face significant difficulties finding employment that is compatible with their education and prior experience in their home country. They frequently have to take jobs they are overqualified for in order to provide for their families. Higher symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety are closely correlated with low socioeconomic status. Furthermore, refugees and asylum seekers may be excluded due to their cultural, social, or religious background as a result of being judged based on the social and religious groups they represent (e.g., Arabic Muslims). Common mental health issues are correlated with daily pressures such as inadequate access to basic resources, lack of security, racial conflicts, and family violence (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Notably, the protracted asylum-seeking procedure and convoluted immigration laws exacerbate persistent mental health issues in refugees following resettlement. Despite international law clearly stating that it should

only be used as a last resort and that children should never be detained, many countries are rather restrictive when it comes to asylum seekers and require not only adults but also children and adolescents to live in mandatory immigration detention. One of the biggest pressures that forcefully displaced people must deal with is an uncertain asylum status (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Actually, stressors that arise after a move may have a bigger influence on long-term (mental) health and wellbeing than those that arise before a move. In comparison to those with secure visa status, refugees and asylum seekers with insecure visa status had greater rates of psychopathology (such as depression, suicidality, and post-traumatic stress disorder), as well as post-migration living issues. Anxiety, sadness, and somatoform disorders were more prevalent in Iraqi asylum seekers who stayed at the center for more than two years compared to those who stayed for less than six months in a study conducted in the Netherlands. According to these findings, long stretches of uncertainty, fear, and boredom during the post-migration phase may have a very severe impact on the wellbeing of asylum seekers (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Numerous researches have looked into how immigration detention affects refugees' and asylum seekers' mental health. Compared to uninvolved refugees and migrants, detained refugees and migrants typically exhibit more severe post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety symptoms. According to a recent meta-analysis, imprisoned refugees had twice as many cases of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety than incarcerated refugees. About half of the jailed migrants had anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder, and three out of every four had depressions. According to other research, detained migrants are also more likely to suffer

from personality disorders and psychosis than unrestricted refugees (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Long-Term Effects: Refugees exhibit a poor quality of life. Due to exposure to traumatic events, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression rates in asylum seekers and refugees are unmistakably greater in the first year of resettlement in the host nation than in the populations of the hosting countries. However, rates of anxiety disorders and depression even rose five years after resettlement, which may be related to a loss of social support, uncertainty about their asylum status, and a lack of mental health services in the host nation. The impacts of the transition period among refugees in the United Kingdom were examined in a study by Walker et al. (2021) with regard to improvements in mental health as a result of the stability of receiving leave to remain in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the goal of this study was to find out how the transitional phase affected the mental health of those who had just been given official refugee status. The scores for anxiety, depression, distress, and post-migration living difficulties all showed linear improvement over the course of a year, corroborating earlier studies' findings that finding employment and stable housing are related to reductions in mood and anxiety symptoms. Few researches have examined the mental health issues of refugees over a ten-year period or longer. According to the findings, the majority of refugees have little or no mental health issues, although a small percentage still has ongoing issues (G. Emmelkamp, 2023).

Refugees in Egypt:

“Egypt hosts around 300,000 registered asylum seekers and refugees from 55 countries. The majority are from Syria, followed by Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Yemen and Somalia” (UNHCR.org, 2023).

From 12,800 at the end of 2012 to more than 145,000 today, Syrian refugees in Egypt who have registered with UNHCR come from a variety of social, economic, and religious backgrounds. Thousands of people from Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Yemen have sought sanctuary in Egypt as a result of the resurgence of political upheaval and conflict in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, as well as in Iraq and Yemen. As of June 30, 2023, 147,999 Syrians, 77,140 Sudanese, 27,142 South Sudanese, 24,444 Eritreans, 16,286 Ethiopians, 7,319 Yemenis, 6,562 Somalis, 5,464 Iraqis, and more than 45 other nationalities were registered as refugees with UNHCR (UNHCR.org, 2023).

In Egypt, refugees and people looking for asylum primarily reside in the cities of Greater Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, and a few others on the northern shore. The vulnerability of refugees and members of the host community, however, has significantly risen in recent years as a result of Egypt's challenging economic situation. Basic necessities are barely being satisfied since many refugees lack a reliable source of income and because inflation is increasing. Lack of employment prospects and linguistic problems for non-Arabic speaking refugees are other difficulties. Some people don't have access to formal education that will promote their growth over the long term. Furthermore, a significant percentage of refugees and asylum seekers rely on humanitarian aid to meet their basic requirements as well as for medical or psychiatric support (UNHCR.org, 2023).

The legal framework:

Egypt was one of two Arab nations that participated in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees' drafting committee and later became a signatory to it (UNHCR 2010). Although the Government of Egypt (GoE) did not ratify the Convention until May 1981 and its 1967 addendum, the state's obligations to refugees have been mentioned in Egyptian constitutions since 1953 (Sadek, 2016). The right to seek asylum in Egypt was established in Article 5 of the Constitutional Declaration of February 1953. The 1971 constitution reiterated this privilege. In Article 57 of the 2012 Constitution, which forbade the repatriation of political refugees, the protection of refugees and asylum seekers was reaffirmed. According to article 91 of the 2014 constitution, anyone fleeing persecution are entitled to protection (Elshokeiry, 2016) (Rashed, 2023).

Egypt has agreed to abide by the non-refoulement principle in accordance with these conventions and constitutional frameworks. However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Cairo office administers asylum-related tasks including as Reception, Registration, Documentation, and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) at the government's request and on its behalf. The UNHCR works with countries to find solutions for refugees, such as settling them in the host nation, helping them go to a third country, or repatriating them (UNHCR.org, 2013). Through its RSD process, the UNHCR conducts interviews with individuals who are of concern, and those who qualify for refugee status are given a yellow refugee card. The card is stamped by the Department of Migration and Citizenship of the Ministry of Interior's Department of Migration and Citizenship and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Refugee Affairs division. To guarantee that all individuals of concern

are protected, the UNHCR closely collaborates with the Egyptian authorities (UNHCR.org, 2013).

Regarding that most of the refugees in Egypt are Syrians and Sudanese people based on the UNHCR reports, this report will focus on them specifically.

Syrian Refugees:

Syria still has the biggest refugee issue in the world even after more than ten years of strife. Over 14 million Syrians have been compelled to leave their homes in pursuit of safety since 2011. More than 6.8 million Syrians are still internally displaced within their own nation, where 70% of people are in need of humanitarian aid and 90% of people are living in poverty. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt are the five nations that border Syria and are home to almost 5.5 million Syrian refugees. With more than 850,000 Syrian refugees, Germany is the largest non-neighboring host country (UNHCR.org, 2023).

Syrian Refugees, why did they become refugees?

The southern town of Daraa in March 2011 marked the start of the Syrian refugee crisis. A civil war broke out as the situation swiftly grew worse, forcing millions of Syrian families to escape their homes. Syrians are still suffering as a result of the conflict twelve years later; more than 15.3 million people in Syria, or 70% of the population, require humanitarian aid (UNHCR.org, 2023).

What made the situation miserable in Syria; is that the protests turned into civil war, and that what made the Syrian people escape away their country.

Protests against the regime quickly expanded from Deraa to important cities including Damascus, Hama, and Homs. Deraa's events served as a foreshadowing of further events to come.

Syrian refugees' mental health:

Both Syrian citizens and Syrian refugees have suffered severe psychological effects as a result of the Syrian civil war, a lot of mental health hunted the Syrians for years as a result of the very stressful events that they have witnessed. There are many ways that may have affected them such as:

1. Trauma and PTSD: The Syrian people has experienced extensive trauma as a result of the continual conflict, persistent danger to one's life, and exposure to extremely high levels of violence. Many people have gone through or seen terrible experiences, which can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms like flashbacks, nightmares, and extremely high levels of anxiety.
2. Depression and anxiety are widespread among Syrians as a result of the war's intense stress and unpredictability. A sense of powerlessness and hopelessness has been exacerbated by the loss of family members, homes, and livelihoods as well as by the ongoing dread of violence.
3. Loss and displacement: Syrian refugees who have been compelled to evacuate their homes frequently feel a profound feeling of loss and grief. Due to the loss of their sense of security, familiarity, and belonging, they may experience melancholy, loneliness, and a sense of dislocation.
4. Family and social disruption: As a result of the war, many Syrians have lost loved ones, been split up from family members, or have witnessed the deaths or disappearances of relatives and friends. This has led to the

dissolution of families and communities. Significant psychological anguish and feelings of loneliness can result from such disturbances.

5. Mental health of children: Syrian children have been especially susceptible to the psychological effects of the war. Many have been victims of or witnesses to violent crime, have lost loved ones, or have been split from their parents. Bedwetting, nightmares, behavioral issues, and difficulties focusing and learning have all increased as a result of this.
6. prejudice and stigma: Syrian refugees frequently experience stigmatization and prejudice in their new countries, which can worsen their psychological anguish. This may result in emotions of guilt, low self-esteem, and an unpleasant or undesired feeling.

Syrian Refugees in Egypt:

Following Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq as host nations for internally displaced Syrians in the MENA area in 2022, Egypt came in fifth. Syria and Egypt did not share a border, but they did have a special political history thanks to their brief union from 1958 to 1961. In this chapter, I contend that concerns for domestic stability and economic capacity have influenced Egypt's approach towards the Syrian refugee crisis. 2011 saw widespread uprisings in Egypt and Syria, but the political trajectories of the two nations have substantially different. Syria has not undergone a regime transition and has descended into civil war with the assistance of foreign intervention from regional and international powers to its warring groups, unlike Egypt's political unrest, which led to regime change in 2011 and again in 2013. The Egyptian government's policies surrounding entry regulation of displaced people,

particularly Syrian refugees, have been impacted by the fact that spillover effects from nearby wars continue to be a clear and present risk. In terms of the economy, the Egyptian government has worked to restore macroeconomic stability and offer suitable services to its citizens; however, the unintended consequences of adhering to neoliberal international prescriptions have had an impact on both the living conditions of Egyptian citizens and Syrian refugees as well as the state's policies towards them (Rashed, 2023).

The Syrian Refugees in Egypt post 2011 Uprisings: The Socio-Economic Context:

Egypt, in contrast to other MENA neighbors, does not force Syrian refugees to live in camps. Syrian refugees and asylum seekers are allowed to live, interact, and travel across the nation as they like, as do individuals with visiting or student visas. Geographically, they tend to congregate in Cairo, Alexandria, and Damietta, three large cities. On an equal basis with Egyptians, they enjoy access to numerous public services, particularly in the areas of health and education. The refugees experience social and economic challenges as a result of their displacement and the effects of the economic structural adjustment policies that the Egyptian government continues to execute, even though they have freedom of movement and residency. The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in Egypt claims, according to prior estimates, 67% of Syrian refugees in Egypt are very poor and in need of financial aid (UNHCR Egypt, 2020), and approximately one-third of Egyptians live below the national poverty line (Moneim, 2020). Both Egyptian citizens and Syrian refugees have suffered as a result of the depreciation of the Egyptian pound in 2016 and again in 2022, which has caused inflation and skyrocketing consumer prices.

Opinion Poll of the Syrian refugees in Egypt:

P.S: This questionnaire is made on a very small number of refugees in Egypt, so these numbers aren't expressing the status of the refugees in Egypt.

This poll was made by IOI (Independent Organization International) to check on the Syrian refugee's mental health by asking them four main questions:

- 1) Do you feel discriminated against or treated unfairly based on your refugee status in Egypt? **48.571% of Syrians their answer was YES, 34.286% their answer was TO SOME EXTENT.**
- 2) Have you had a bullying incident? **54.286% of Syrians their answer was YES, and some of them said that they have been bullied by the UNHCR employees.**
- 3) Have you had sexual harassment of any kind? **71.429% of Syrians their answer was NO.**

It is Important to state the we as a non-governmental organization that is affiliated to the ministry of social solidarity, that is specialized in Human Rights, we tried to cooperate with the UNHCR to get more information about if they have received complaints from Syrian refugees related to their mental health such as bullying incident, etc....., but they didn't respond to us.

Conclusion:

Even though the conditions for refugees in Egypt are far from ideal, Syrians have generally been treated better than other migrants in the nation. Arab refugees have historically received warmer treatment from the Egyptian authorities than have other nationals. According to a legal expert, everyone is eligible for refuge; after that, the government grants asylum to nations on the

grounds that they are Arabs and are viewed as siblings (Elshokeiry 2016). In addition to official policy, international organizations operating in Egypt have provided Syrian refugees with more aid than other types of refugees. The difficult circumstances that forced Syrians to flee their nation help to explain this. One such instance is the winter aid, a one-time award given to the most at-risk refugees registered with UNHCR to help them buy essentials during Egypt's hardest winter months. 85,000 Syrian refugees who were particularly vulnerable were estimated by UNHCR to require help throughout the winter of 2016. Around 61,000 Syrian refugees, 8,500 African and Iraqi refugees, and 24,000 Syrians with children under the age of 18 received cash assistance from UNHCR in collaboration with UNICEF. Syrian refugees received EGP 300 per person, compared to EGP 200 for African and Iraqi beneficiaries (UNHCR Egypt, 2016). Their living conditions have improved, according to reports from foreign organizations. According to some estimates, 67% of Syrian refugees in Egypt are desperately destitute and in need of financial aid (UNHCR Egypt, 2020). Recent data, however, indicate that the prevalence of poverty is lower among Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2022). The political climate of the civil war and the capacity of the fleeing population to return home will continue to have an impact on the number of Syrian refugees in Egypt. However, their residency situation will also be significantly influenced by the state of the economy.

Sudanese Refugees:

Over 3.3 million people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers, and refugees, were forced to flee their homes as a result of deadly fighting that broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan on April 15, 2023. Many of Sudan's preexisting problems including continuing battles, disease outbreaks, economic and political instability, and weather emergencies—were made worse by this conflict (unrefugees.org, 2023).

When did the crisis in Sudan begin?

Sudan had already been dealing with violence and displaced people from the start of the Darfur crisis in 2003 before the present conflict. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) topped 3.7 million by the end of 2022, with Darfur housing the majority of them in camps. Around 800,000 Sudanese people were residing as refugees in nearby nations like Ethiopia, South Sudan, Egypt, and Chad. More over 1 million refugees lived in Sudan prior to the current crisis, making it the second-highest refugee population in Africa. The majority of these refugees came from South Sudan and Northern Ethiopia, with many also fleeing conflict in Tigray. Sudan was already experiencing its worst levels of humanitarian need in a decade when the latest combat between the SAF and RFS took place. Initially, there was a lot of hope that Sudan would return to civilian governance after longtime authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir was overthrown in 2019. However, a military takeover two years later led to the dissolution of the interim civilian government, which in turn caused political and economic unrest and rekindled intercommunal clashes. Climate change-related severe weather events, such as floods and droughts, have also had a significant impact on Sudan. In addition to destroying crops and cattle and

aggravating family food shortages, these catastrophes have had a negative impact on hundreds of thousands of people across the nation. The humanitarian situation has gotten worse since the most recent confrontations broke out on April 15. The nation experienced severe shortages of food, water, medication, and fuel during the first two weeks of fighting. Price increases for everyday items ranged from 40 to 100 percent, with bottled water being sold for twice as much as usual and petrol prices soaring from \$4.20 to \$67 per gallon. A further 700,000 people were internally displaced within Sudan during the first four weeks of the fighting, while close to 200,000 refugees and returnees left the nation (unrefugees.org, 2023).

Where are people impacted by the conflict fleeing to?

Many people have been compelled to leave their homes due to a shortage of basic supplies, violence, and uncertainty. As of July 21, 2023, more than 3.3 million people were displaced, according to UNHCR. Included in this are the 2.6 million internally displaced persons in Sudan and the 738,000 refugees who fled to neighboring nations. Chad (260,399), Egypt (255,565), South Sudan (178,560), Ethiopia (26,801), and the Central African Republic (17,227) are the countries that have taken in the most people. Most people that arrive in South Sudan are natives who had previously lived in Sudan as refugees. Thousands more people will be forced to flee in search of safety and essential aid if the crisis is not resolved. By October 2023, 860,000 refugees and returnees could exist, according to UNHCR and its allies (unrefugees.org, 2023).

Sudanese refugees' mental health:

Refugees from Sudan, like those from other conflict-affected areas, frequently struggle with serious mental health issues as a result of the tragic events they have experienced and the uncertainty they now confront as displaced people. Typical psychological and mental health issues that Sudanese refugees may experience include:

- 1) Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): Many refugees have gone through or seen terrible situations like violence, persecution, or uprooting. PTSD, which is characterized by symptoms like intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, and emotional discomfort, may develop as a result of these experiences.
- 2) Depression and anxiety: Among Sudanese refugees, depression and anxiety disorders can develop as a result of the stressors related to being a refugee, including as uncertainty about the future, the loss of social support networks, and limited access to basic requirements.
- 3) Difficulty with adaptation and acculturation: Sudanese refugees frequently experience difficulty with acclimating to a new culture, language, and society. Feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and difficulty making new social connections can all be caused by challenges adjusting to a new environment, including prejudice and social exclusion.
- 4) Substance abuse: As a coping strategy for the trauma and hardship they have endured, some migrants may abuse substances. This could aggravate their mental health issues even more and make their lives more difficult.

5) Family and social networks can be damaged as a result of forced relocation, which can result in the loss of social support networks. Among Sudanese refugees, this loss of support can lead to greater feelings of isolation, loneliness, and psychological anguish.

Sudanese refugees in Egypt:

More than 250,000 Sudanese have now entered Egypt, according to a statement by H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry, Egypt's foreign minister. The national stability and security of Egypt and the entire region depend on the security of the Sudan, the foreign minister emphasized. He asked the international community to support host communities financially so they can strengthen their resilience and ensure peaceful cohabitation, noting that 60% of individuals fleeing the turmoil in Sudan are presently being housed in Egypt. Although significant pledges were made at the pledging conference, the Regional Refugee Response Plan's Egypt chapter is still just 11% financed. Nearly 14,500 of the more than 30,000 new arrivals from Sudan—the vast majority of whom are Sudanese—have contacted UNHCR in Egypt to request international protection. IOM has received help requests from 12,305 Sudanese (Relief web, 2023).

Obstacles facing Sudanese refugees in Egypt:

People who are escaping the turmoil in Sudan, which began on April 15th, now mostly travel to Egypt. The refugees from Sudan cross the border into Egypt after a risky journey through the desert on roadways. After that, they must endure a protracted wait at the border, which usually lasts several days. Food, water, shelter, necessities, medical treatment, and psychosocial assistance are all urgently needed (Relief web, 2023).

At the border, there are more refugees than ever before. They don't have access to food, drink, or restrooms. Only the Egyptian Red Crescent steps in at the moment. In this location, the needs are most pressing (Relief web, 2023).

"Most of the Sudanese refugees are in Aswan, the main city in Egypt once you cross the border, and surrounding areas," says Caroline Dauber, Country Manager in Egypt. "They are primarily composed of older people, women, and children. We are beginning to see people settling in the streets and occupying school buildings, as affordable and available accommodation is becoming scarce. The pressure on the host community is increasing, resulting in rising prices and strain on services. The situation is worrisome, and humanitarian aid needs to be organized quickly."

Many Sudanese expressed their intense unhappiness with the lengthy process of determining their status. According to some, organizing the next phase of the process with UNHCR can take months, even after one has received the Yellow Card. The Blue Card might take up to two years to get. Others talked about how the UNHCR didn't communicate well about the speed of registration, RSDs, and the whole asylum process. For instance, there are no clear justifications given when the status of refugees is rejected, even the weakest families have the choice to stay in the nation as guests and renew their residency visa every six months. Overall, the situation for Sudanese refugees in Egypt is quite challenging due to the paperwork and effort needed to register and receive refugee status, as well as a history of abuse by Egyptian security forces (Halakhe ,2023).

In addition to registration and RSD, Sudanese refugees in Egypt also struggle with a lack of accommodation and chances for employment. Since there are no refugee camps in Egypt, refugees are allowed to live and travel

freely. Numerous people rely on the humanitarian relief given by the few foreign aid agencies, mostly the UN agencies. The atmosphere created by the Egyptian government for international humanitarian organizations is one that is restrictive and, in some circumstances, hostile. The main national relief organization in Egypt is the Red Crescent, through which the majority of aid is distributed (Halakhe ,2023).

The lack of chances for refugees to find work in Egypt continues to be a major problem. Despite the fact that Egyptian law permits refugees to access the labor market, they encounter various challenges. Additionally, according to the Four Agreements, Sudanese refugees have the freedom to work "in any profession, craft, and other works," yet there is no domestic law that makes the Four Freedom Agreement operative. As a result, a large number of refugees enter the unregulated labor market, where they are more vulnerable to exploitation by employers. Additionally, they lack occupational security. This further deters people from seeking legal recourse, perpetuating a vicious circle of vulnerability and abuse (Halakhe ,2023).

Here is a heart breaking testify from a Sudanese family: “Faris is four months old and is from Khartoum. Both his kidneys have issues. He was operated on once in Cairo and was due for an operation on his second kidney. When the conflict started, his mother and aunt fled to Egypt, but Faris’s father was left in Khartoum. The family spent all their resources on escaping and could not afford the second operation, which would cost 50,000 Egyptian pounds (just over U.S. \$1,600).”

Opinion Poll of the Sudanese refugees in Egypt:

P.S: This questionnaire is made on a very small number of refugees in Egypt, so these numbers aren't expressing the status of the refugees in Egypt.

This poll was made by IOI (Independent Organization International) to check on the Sudanese refugee's mental health by asking them four main questions:

- 1) Do you feel discriminated against or treated unfairly based on your refugee status in Egypt? **41.379% of Sudanese their answer was YES, 37.931% their answer was TO SOME EXTENT.**
- 2) Have you had a bullying incident? **55.172% of Sudanese their answer was YES.**
- 3) Have you had sexual harassment of any kind? **75.862% of Sudanese their answer was NO.**

It is Important to state the we as a non-governmental organization that is affiliated to the ministry of social solidarity, that is specialized in Human Rights, we tried to cooperate with the UNHCR to get more information about if they have received complaints from Sudanese refugees related to their mental health such as bullying incident, etc....., but they didn't respond to us.

Conclusion:

It seems obviously that the status of the Sudanese refugees in Egypt is harder than any other refugee, for example Syrian refugees in Egypt are having a better life.

The current trajectory of the Sudan conflict is such that more Sudanese will flee to neighboring countries, including Egypt, for their safety. thousands

of Sudanese are stuck at or near the border in unsanitary conditions where they cannot meet their basic needs for weeks. Those who cross the border must contend with a painfully slow registration and RSD backlog by UNHCR and a less-than-welcoming environment. The net result means refugees are stuck between conflict and a hostile environment inside Egypt. Relaxation of entry and expediting the refugee determination process, combined with livelihood and labor access by the Egyptian authorities and UNHCR, will reduce the humanitarian suffering at the border and inside Egypt.

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