

UN Refugee Agency Says At Least 1.4 Million Refugees in Europe by End of 2016



United Nations, October 2 (RHC)-- The United Nations refugee agency says at least 1.4 million refugees will be in Europe by the end of next year.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a Thursday statement that it predicts the arrival of 700,000 asylum seekers to Europe by the end of this year alone.

In early September, the UNHCR had estimated that 850,000 refugees would reach Europe by the end of 2016, but the figure was revised after it was revealed later that month that 520,957 refugees had already crossed the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey and Northern Africa to Europe since January.

"The UNHCR is planning for up to 700,000 people seeking safety and international protection in Europe in 2015," the statement read, adding: "While it is difficult to estimate at this point, it is possible that there could be even greater numbers of arrivals in 2016. Planning is based for the moment on similar figures to 2015."

The UN refugee agency also said that the refugees are exposed "to smuggling rings, harsh and dangerous conditions and hardship at all stages" due to the "absence of a comprehensive emergency response commensurate with the scale of the present crisis."

The UNHCR has begun emergency operations in Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary, which currently form the main route for asylum seekers trying to reach Western Europe.

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