



Online discussions pave the way for World Humanitarian Summit MENA Consultations

Participants debate human trafficking in crises ahead of Amman consultations

26 February—Following a productive two week run, the [online discussions for the World Humanitarian Summit for the MENA region](#) were extended for an additional week. For the second session, the migration section of the forum discussions focused on the question “How can we protect people affected by crises from human trafficking?”

While the initial round of questions looked at the broader reasons that migrants are made vulnerable, the extended session focused specifically on trafficking, and how the humanitarian community can better protect vulnerable individuals. Responses covered both the reasons for a heightened risk of trafficking during crises, and possible ways to reduce the attraction of traffickers to desperate people.

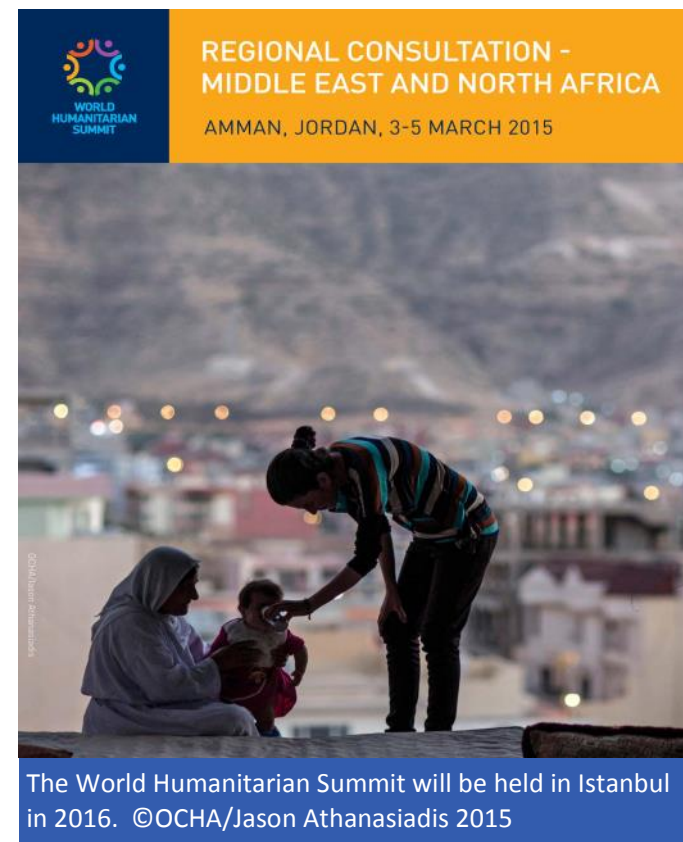
Several respondents underlined the need for more comprehensive outreach to vulnerable migrants which warn of the risks associated with irregular migration, falling for traffickers or hiring people smugglers. In response, the moderator said, “[A]s we know that in our hyper-connected world, people often are aware of the risks of migration, but decide to go for it regardless – because the desperation is stronger than the fear.” A second recurring point focused on the prevention of trafficking through alternative livelihood options in countries of origin or countries in which forced migrants reside. Participants advocated for meaningful action to stimulate job creation instead of continued theoretical discussion.

The other side of the discussion focused on how best to protect victims of trafficking. According to one participant, a balance must be struck between using police and military resources to deter and catch traffickers, while at the same time not over-militarizing the borders and punishing the victims. Another point raised is the important distinction that needs to be drawn between “smugglers” and “traffickers”—terms that are not interchangeable because they do not equally reflect the degrees of agency, overlapping reasons and inconstant circumstances in which people migrate.

The protection of all individuals affected by crisis is the ultimate purpose of all humanitarian action. In the context of the World Humanitarian Summit, IOM has emphasized that migrants – including victims of trafficking, internally displaced persons, migrants caught in crisis, unaccompanied minors – must be afforded the same protection as other affected groups in times of crisis. Humanitarians, States, and civil society need to be more aware of emerging risks in times of crisis, such as human trafficking, as well as the challenges facing groups who fall outside the purview of the humanitarian community’s established assistance categories. Assessments conducted by IOM in the MENA region will highlight impacts of ongoing crises on mobile populations who fall prey to trafficking in persons.

The [online consultations](#) have tapped into the experience and insights of academics, humanitarian practitioners, and migrants themselves and will help shape discussions at the World Humanitarian Summit regional

consultations in Amman, Jordan from 3-5 March. The consultation will bring together participants from across the humanitarian spectrum on questions of emergency preparedness and financing, protection of civilians, protracted crises and displacement, localizing humanitarian response and humanitarian access. An overview of the online comments will be presented early on the first day.



The World Humanitarian Summit will be held in Istanbul in 2016. ©OCHA/Jason Athanasiadis 2015

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