

Kuwait donates US\$120 million to help UNHCR's vital Syria operations

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Kuwait has handed over US\$121 million to the UN refugee agency to assist its efforts in dealing with the humanitarian situation resulting from the crisis in Syria.

At a ceremony in Geneva on Thursday evening, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres warmly thanked and praised Kuwait's ruler, government and people for the extreme generosity when he received a cheque for the amount from Abdullah Al Matouq, adviser to the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Al Matouq is also the UN's humanitarian envoy for Kuwait.

"As we approach the beginning of the Holy Month of Ramadan I think nothing could be better than this ceremony to celebrate the generosity embedded in Islam. Shukran (Thank you) to Kuwait and its people," Guterres said.

The funds, part of US\$500 million pledged for the Syria humanitarian crisis by Kuwait at a conference in Kuwait City last March, will be used in neighbouring host countries to ease the suffering of the 3.9 Syrian refugees. The money will be used in many sectors.

Al Matouq told the ceremony the funds were aimed at "putting an end to the pains and tears shed thus far, giving hope to every child, drawing a smile on the face of every orphan and responding to the call for relief of the elderly, widows and women who lost their children and loved ones."

The Syrian conflict entered its fifth year in March with millions of refugees facing a bleak future. Most see little opportunity of returning home in the near future and have little opportunity to restart their lives in exile. Annual UNHCR figures due to be released next week are likely to show that the number of Syrian refugees and internally displaced continued to grow substantially in 2014.

At the Geneva ceremony, Al-Matouq also gave cheques to several of UNHCR's sister agencies, including the World Food Programme, UNICEF, World Health Organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.

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