

Regional Flash Update #15

Syria situation crisis

20 February 2025



Two siblings tightly embrace each other after reuniting for the first time in ten years at a bus stop near Syria's Bab al-Hawa border crossing with Türkiye. © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

Key Highlights

- As of 20 February 2025, UNHCR estimates that some **292,150 Syrians** have returned to Syria via neighbouring countries since early December 2024. The figures are based on a triangulation of sources from outside and inside Syria and include refugees registered with UNHCR and other Syrians returning from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well as those transiting from beyond the Region. Moreover, as of 9 February 2025, **829,490 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** have returned to their areas of origin since end of November 2024, according to the latest data gathered by UNHCR and OCHA. Thus, more than **one million Syrians have returned home** since the fall of the Assad regime.
- In Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, UNHCR continued to **monitor voluntary returns** and provide the needed support to those wishing to return, such as information and legal counselling, and transportation assistance (Jordan).
- Inside Syria, UNHCR continued to provide **protection and humanitarian assistance** to refugee and IDP returns and other vulnerable Syrians, as well as **early recovery interventions**. In view of the cold winter months and continued electricity shortages, distributions of core relief items (CRI) and warm winter clothing, as well as urgent shelter repairs, such as new windows and doors, continued to be priority interventions. UNHCR also continued to facilitate **free transportation assistance** to returnees in need within Syria.

Country updates

Syria

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Moreover, as of 9 February 2025, **829,490 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** have returned since end November 2024, according to the latest data gathered by UNHCR and OCHA.

As part of the ongoing organized return movements, UNHCR continued to **facilitate free transportation within Syria** for returnees crossing the Nassib Border Crossing Point (BCP) with Jordan and the Bab Al-Hawa BCP with Türkiye.

The dynamic security situation in parts of the country, combined with frequent electricity shortages and a severe liquidity crisis across the country continued to affect returnees and other vulnerable Syrians, and also hampered humanitarian response efforts.

UNHCR in Syria continued to provide essential protection assistance and services to returnees and other vulnerable Syrians through its network of community centres across the country. During the reporting week, UNHCR reopened four community centres, bringing the **total number of operational centres in Syria to 106 out of a total of 122 existing centres**. In the week in review, UNHCR recorded new registrations by returnees at its community centres in various governorates, indicating the pressing needs for continued assistance.

In its engagements, information sessions and focus group discussions with refugee and IDP returnees, UNHCR identified legal assistance and counselling, child protection interventions, education assistance, healthcare services, including psychosocial support, as well as gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response services as **key protection needs**, among others. Information sessions with returnees also highlighted the need to target persons with specific needs, such as returnees with disabilities and elderly individuals, given their heightened vulnerabilities related to specific medical needs, including psychosocial concerns, and challenges in sustaining their livelihoods.

Exchanges with returnees found that **property ownership** in Syria is a mixed reality for returnees, with some finding their homes intact while others face damage or complete loss. **Documentation challenges persist**, affecting civil status recognition and property claims. **Economic reintegration** poses a major challenge, as many returnees anticipate struggling to find work in Syria.

In view of the cold winter months, **access to basic services**, in particular functioning electricity, warm water, heating supplies and winter clothing, as well as **repairs of damaged shelters** were noted as priority needs among returnee families. A large number of refugee and IDP returnees reported facing urgent shelter needs due to the widespread damage of their homes from conflict and, in some areas, the 2023 earthquake. Given the rising rent prices and limited options, many returnees are forced to share accommodation with other returnee families or live with family members, which frequently leads to overcrowding, lack of private spaces, and tensions. UNHCR

continued to conduct shelter rehabilitation missions and home visits to assess needs and provide support, including through small shelter repairs and installations of new windows and doors.

Türkiye

As of 29 January 2025, according to Türkiye's Minister of Interior, **81,576 individuals** have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria since early December.

The processing of voluntary returns continued in Türkiye's provinces and at five border crossings, including Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Keseb, Öncüpınar /Bab al-Salam, Karkamış /Jarablus and Akçakale/Tel Abyad. Çobanbey/Al Rai and Zeytindalı /Jinderes remain open to process go-and-see visits for Syrians under temporary protection, Syrian nationals legally residing in Türkiye, and those who have acquired Turkish citizenship.

UNHCR continues to monitor returns in various locations, including in 12 provinces and at border crossing points: Cilvegözü / Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar /Bab al-Salam, Karkamış /Jarablus as well as at Istanbul International Airport.

Through its **monitoring efforts**, UNHCR found that many returnees are traveling alone - often because family members never left Syria or have already returned, or due to a desire to assess conditions in Syria before bringing loved ones back. While the majority of returnees are adults, a significant portion also includes children, with men outnumbering women.

UNHCR found that **Syrians' motivations to return** remained consistent, driven by political and security improvements, the desire for family reunification, and strong emotional ties to their homeland. Most returnees aim to settle in their province of origin, particularly in Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, and Hama, citing family presence as the primary factor. However, obstacles such as family relocation, property destruction, and economic hardships prevent many from returning to their pre-conflict residences.

UNHCR has learned that some Syrian refugees are hesitant to take advantage of the authorized **go-and-see' visits** due to new rumours suggesting they would not be permitted to come back to Türkiye, following their visit. In response, UNHCR has undertaken several communication measures to disseminate accurate information. These include introducing a pop-up alert on the UNHCR Türkiye [HELP page](#), broadcasting an alert on the dedicated Facebook page, and sharing updates through WhatsApp channels. Additionally, UNHCR's Counselling Line operators have been briefed and trained to address these new concerns effectively.

Lebanon

In the Bekaa, daily crossings at the Masnaa official BCP continued at a low but steady rate, averaging **1,300 entry and exits per day**, according to the General Security Office. In North Lebanon, the Arida BPC remains closed as public work is ongoing. Movements also continue to take place across borders through unofficial crossing points.

As of 18 February 2025, the Government's Disaster Risk Management reported over **89,000 arrivals from Syria**, including 20,000 Lebanese returnees, in Lebanon's Baalbek Governorate (North Bekaa) since 8 December 2024. This includes around 31,800 persons who moved to 186 informal collective shelters, while some 57,600 persons moved to communities.

The Technical Working Group of the Durable Solutions Working Group convened on 14 February 2025 to discuss return preparedness and operationalization to ensure a coordinated response of humanitarian actors, partners and donors across Lebanon on voluntary refugee returns to Syria. Moving forward, the Working Group will provide technical guidance on returns, guided by the [UNHCR Operational Framework for the Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs \(2025\)](#).

Jordan

As of 15 February 2025, close to **40,000 refugees registered with UNHCR** have returned from Jordan to Syria since early December 2024.

The **profiles of returnees** remained largely similar to previous weeks: women and girls represent around 45% of the total returnee number, compared to 55% men and boys. Children constitute approximately 42% of all returnees. The share of refugees returning as complete families has continued to increase to nearly 50%, up from 48% in the previous reporting period. The proportion of refugees returning from camps grew from 12% to 15%.

The Jaber border centre announced that it will extend its operation time by four hours from 08h00 to 22h00, previously operating from 08h00 to 18h00, starting on 20 February 2025.

From 14 to 20 February 2025, UNHCR organized **free transportation for 275 refugees** who expressed interest to return to Syria. Prior to departure, UNHCR met all refugees planning to return during the week to ensure their decision to return is voluntary and well-informed and provided counselling and information on the availability of services in Syria. UNHCR also asked refugees whether they had any outstanding judicial or administrative issues or debts that might prevent their exit from Jordan, to avoid delays during exit procedures at the border. When such issues were raised, UNHCR provided counselling on how to clear them. The return process was closely coordinated with UNHCR in Syria to facilitate the provision of counselling and other support upon arrival at the final destination. From 20 January to 20 February 2025, UNHCR provided transportation for over 930 refugee returnees from Jordan's camps and host communities, including a convoy from Azraq camp organized jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

UNHCR continued to maintain **regular communication** with refugees through in-person activities, digital platforms and helplines to provide first-hand updates on the return process and address any rumours and misinformation. During the week, the number of calls concerning returns to Syria received by the UNHCR Jordan hotline decreased from an average of 43 calls a day to 29 calls a day. Many questions pertained to UNHCR's pilot transportation programme, inquiries about the needed travel documentation and spontaneous return.

In recent focus group discussions and information sessions, refugees expressed concerns about the continuity of UNHCR's assistance for Syrians in Jordan, particularly in areas such as education, healthcare, and livelihood support, and even the belief that UNHCR is reducing assistance on purpose and in order to encourage return to Syria. While views on returning to Syria varied - especially among different generations - hesitancy to return in the short term prevailed among many refugees due to the uncertain security situation, financial hardships, and the lack of basic services and livelihood opportunities in Syria.

Iraq

Since early December 2024, **over 7,000 Syrians** have returned from Iraq to Syria, including **over 480 registered refugees**. This includes Syrians who have returned through the Peshkhabour border crossing point and the Al-Qaim border crossing.

The main reason for refugees returning to Syria is to avoid overstay fines in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, as many entered on a 30-day visa. In addition, the improved security situation in Syria and the possibility to reunite with family members are frequently mentioned reasons for return.

During the reporting period, UNHCR continued to observe arrivals from Syria to Iraq's Kurdistan Region at an average of **200-300 persons a day**, mainly from the governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, and Ar-Raqqa. Most of these Syrians are crossing for family visits, medical purposes, marriage or to transit to other destinations. Most express their intention to return to Syria after their visit, while only a few Syrians arriving through the Peshkhabour border crossing intend to apply for asylum and register with UNHCR.

Egypt

As of 17 February 2025, over 142,800 Syrian refugees are registered in Egypt, around 15% of the country's total refugee population.

Following the latest events in Syria, UNHCR in Egypt continued to observe a notable increase in case closure requests from Syrian refugees. Since 8 December 2024, more than **5,740 closure requests** were submitted by over 11,650 refugees, averaging 117 requests a day. Of those requesting to close their case, 66% are male, with most refugees originating from Damascus (40%), followed by Rural Damascus (24%), Homs (10%), Aleppo (7%), and other areas in Syria (19%). Regarding their return plans, the majority of refugees wish to return to Damascus, followed by Homs, Rural Damascus, and Al-Bab, with the vast majority identifying these as their original home areas. Additionally, 76% of refugees plan to travel directly to Syria, whereas 24% intend to transit through other countries.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #14, Syria Situation](#)
- [UNHCR Operational Framework for Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs \(February 2025\)](#)
- [January 2025 Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey \(RPIS\)](#)
- [UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic \(16 December\)](#)
- [Syria Situation Data Portal](#)
- [UNHCR Help Site](#)

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