

Regional Flash Update #17

Syria situation crisis

7 March 2025



Returnee women gather to bake fresh bread, reviving old traditions and singing cherished songs at UNHCR-supported Community Centre in Sheikh Miskeen (Dar'a), kneading dough and memories together. © UNHCR Syria/Nivian Toumeh

Key Highlights

- As of 6 March 2025, UNHCR estimates that **some 301,900** have returned to Syria via neighboring 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.
- On 4 March, the spokesperson of the Jordanian government **announced** that Syrian refugees willing to leave Jordan voluntarily will be exempted from some customs service fees, including those for luggage and furniture.
- According to a new large-scale intention survey carried out by UNHCR, REACH and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, **one million internally displaced people living in camps and sites across north-west Syria intend to return to their areas of origin within one year, 600,000 of them before the end of the summer.**

Country updates

Syria

As of 6 March 2025, UNHCR estimates that **301,900 Syrians** have crossed back into Syria from neighboring countries since 8 December 2024.

Furthermore, **885,294 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** have returned to their homes since 27 November 2024, based on the most recent data from UNHCR and OCHA, as of 26 February 2025.

With regards to internal displacement, according to a new large-scale intention survey carried out by UNHCR, REACH and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster, **one million internally displaced people living in camps and sites across north-west Syria intend to return to their areas of origin within one year, 600,000 of them before the end of the summer.** The survey, conducted across 514 IDP sites, highlights that return intentions are particularly strong in Idlib, with former frontline areas in Idlib and Aleppo being the primary destinations. However, massive challenges remain: IDPs cite a lack of humanitarian aid, jobs, basic services, and the threat of land mines as major obstacles. Nearly all returnees plan to move back to their former homes, but 80% report severe damage or destruction, a figure rising to 95% in frontline districts. UNHCR and partners are working to provide transportation, legal assistance, and essential aid, yet the scale of needs is immense. With Syria's economy and infrastructure shattered after nearly 14 years of crisis, UNHCR calls on the international community to support early recovery efforts, ensuring returnees have the resources to rebuild their lives. This moment presents a historic opportunity to help end the world's largest displacement crisis – but urgent international commitment is needed.

As per the **political developments** in the country, the Legal Committee for Drafting the Constitutional Declaration [stated](#) the necessity of drafting a constitutional declaration to manage the transitional period in Syria. This declaration aims to regulate the transitional phase, define the powers of the three authorities, and ensure stability and reconstruction. On the other hand, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres [met](#) with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa to discuss the political transition in Syria and ongoing challenges. Guterres emphasized the need for an inclusive transition and pledged UN support for Syria's recovery and humanitarian needs.

In terms of **UNHCR's response**, the UN Refugee Agency continues to play a pivotal role in supporting displaced populations and returnees across Syria, ensuring access to essential services and protection. At key border crossing points, including Joussieh, Jdaidet Yabous, Nassib, Bab Al-Hawa, and Bab Al-Salama, UNHCR maintains a consistent presence to monitor return trends and provide crucial assistance. This includes offering information on available services at the destination, as well as facilitating communication by providing water and Internet access to those approaching the border posts.

In Northeast Syria, UNHCR has been instrumental in facilitating voluntary returns for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Only on March 4, over 403 individuals departed Areesha Camp in Qamishli, making their way back to their areas of origin in Deir ez-Zor, including Tabia, Mayadin, and Qoria. To support these movements, UNHCR is procuring **ad-hoc transportation services, ensuring that IDPs can return in a safe and dignified manner.**

Through an **extensive network of community-based services**, UNHCR is reaching IDPs, returnees from Idlib, and Syrian refugee returnees from neighboring countries. Key areas of support include civil documentation (such as identity cards and marriage authentication), distribution of core relief items, hygiene kits, cash assistance, and livelihood opportunities.

UNHCR-supported Community Centers remain at the heart of protection services, with 106 out of 122 operational centers providing critical assistance to returnees, IDPs, and host communities.

These centers offer legal aid, agricultural support, medical assistance, mental health and psychosocial services, gender-based violence prevention, and child protection case management, among other services. Recent initiatives include the rehabilitation of damaged homes in Aleppo, distribution of agricultural grants in Dar'a, provision of dignity kits in Aleppo and Idlib, support for children's education in As-Sweida, and essential relief distributions in Homs, Ar-Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor. Additionally, UNHCR is promoting sustainable solutions through livelihood grants for small businesses, distribution of solar devices to newly returned families in Qamishli, and the Cash for Shelter program in Aleppo. These initiatives underscore UNHCR's ongoing commitment to fostering resilience and recovery for displaced populations across Syria.

Türkiye

Deputy Foreign Minister Nuh Yılmaz hosted the UK Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamish Falconer and his delegation. As reported by the media, the discussions covered Syria and other regional issues, including the unconditional removal of sanctions on Syria, particularly to restore financial flows.

Processing of voluntary returns continues in provinces and at five border crossings points, namely, Cilvegözü / Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar / Bab al-Salama, Karkamış / Jarablus and Akçakale / Tel Abyad. As of 5 March, Çobanbey / Al Rai and Zeytindalı / Jinderes are open for processing **go-and-see visits** for Syrians under temporary protection as well as all Syrian nationals legally residing in Türkiye and those who acquired Turkish citizenship.

On 6 March, **President Erdoğan announced that 133,000 Syrians returned** since the fall of Assad regime voluntarily and in dignity.

UNHCR continues to monitor returns in various locations, including in 13 provinces **with the recent addition of Kahramanmaraş** as well as at border crossing points – Cilvegözü / Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar / Bab al-Salama, Karkamış / Jarablus –, and at the Istanbul International Airport. A notable number of female-headed households and unregistered individuals were among the returnees during the reporting period.

As with last week, the decision to return was primarily driven by political changes, security improvements, and family reunification. Many returned alone due to a lack of dependents in Türkiye or to assess conditions before bringing family members back. Aleppo remains the most common destination, followed by Idlib, Damascus, and Hama. Most returnees aimed to return to their province of origin, but challenges such as property destruction, family relocation, and economic difficulties hindered some from returning to their pre-conflict homes. Whilst many returnees own property, some lack documentation to prove ownership. Civil documentation remains an issue, with a significant portion missing key identification papers. Many returnees anticipate job-seeking, while others expect to rely on informal work or family support. **Access to basic services remains uncertain, highlighting the need for continued support to ensure sustainable reintegration.**

Lebanon

As of 5 March, the government's Disaster Risk Management reported **approximately 90,500 arrivals from Syria in Baalbek Governorate**, North Bekaa, including 32,950 in 193 informal collective shelters, with 57,600 in community including 20,000 Lebanese returnees. A household profiling exercise is currently underway with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and UNHCR's partner Intersos in Hermel and Baalbeck governorates. So far, **7,000 households have been profiled**, with the aim, to identify needs and refer the most vulnerable individuals to the available assistance programmes.

UNHCR is currently advocating with the Government of Lebanon (GoL) for a structured mechanism that enables refugees to have access to objective and up-to-date information on the potential impact of return and facilitates support and targeted assistance with other actors who are part of the Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG). Moreover, UNHCR Lebanon has also reinforced information to refugees on voluntary return through the [UNHCR Lebanon Help Page](#) and community structures, as well as the provision of return counselling through its National Call Centre.

Jordan

On 26 February, during the meeting with Syria's President Ahmed Al Sharaa in Amman, His Majesty King Abdullah II [affirmed](#) Jordan's support for Syrians as they rebuild their country and highlighted the need to create conditions conducive to the **voluntary and safe return of Syrian refugees**.

On 4 March, the spokesperson of the Jordanian government [announced](#) that Syrian refugees willing to leave Jordan voluntarily will be **exempted from some customs service fees**, including those for luggage and furniture. He added that the decision is aimed at encouraging the voluntary return of Syrian refugees to their country.

As of 1 March, **around 46,600 refugees registered with UNHCR have returned** from Jordan to Syria since 8 December 2024. The number of returnees in February was close to 18,600, representing a 20% decrease compared to over 23,000 refugees who returned in January, possibly in view of the Ramadan. The most common reasons for return included a desire to reunite with family, rebuild homes, and register children in schools.

Since last week, the proportion of returnees from the camps has increased from 15% to around 17%. Since 8 December, majority of returnees are men and boys (55%), children represent around 42% of overall returning refugees. Most returnees originate from Dara'a (34%), Homs (25%), and rural Damascus (13%). More details about the numbers and profile of returnees are available on UNHCR Jordan's newly launched [returns dashboard](#).

From 28 February to 6 March, **UNHCR coordinated and supported transportation** from Azraq, Amman and Irbid for some 200 refugees who wanted to voluntarily return to Syria and requested UNHCR's support. During this period, there was a decrease in number of refugees' requests to return in the immediate term, likely due to a desire to delay return until after Ramadan.

Since the start of the transportation pilot project on 20 January 2025, UNHCR has supported **nearly 1,300 refugees to return to Syria**. Before departure, in-person interviews are conducted to ensure that returns are voluntary and well-informed, with counselling and information provided on available services inside Syria. The return process is closely coordinated with UNHCR Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination.

During recent information sessions and focus group discussions, refugees continued to express concerns about continuity of their access to education in Jordan and rising education costs. **Concerns about security inside Syria also remain high**. Some refugees noted they are not ready to return in the short term as they would like to save some money and eventually to return to Syria in a more stable and dignified manner. Those who consider returning mentioned economic hardships and reduced humanitarian assistance in Jordan among reasons influencing their intention to return. Refugees also mentioned the issue of having debts in Jordan, which hinder their return to Syria, and requested assistance to clear debts to facilitate their departure.

Iraq

Between 8 December 2024 and 27 February 2025, **over 8,900 Syrians** have returned from Iraq to Syria, including some 600 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR. This includes Syrians who have returned through Peshkhabour and Al-Qaim border crossing points. The number of registered Syrian refugees who returned this week (65 individuals) is higher than the number of returns in the previous week (54 individuals). The improved security situation in Syria, reuniting with family, and avoiding overstay fines in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are the most common reasons Syrians report for their return.

During the reporting period, UNHCR continued to observe arrivals from Syria to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, mainly from the Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh areas. Over the past week, about 300 Syrians arrived through the Peshkhabour border crossing point. Visiting family, returning from visit to Syria, family reunification, or transiting through the Kurdistan Region to other destinations were indicated as the main reasons for arrivals, with most expressing their intentions to return to Syria following their visit. Only a few Syrian families arriving to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq expressed their intention to register with UNHCR in Iraq.

Egypt

As of 3 March 2025, **over 142,000 Syrian refugees** are registered in Egypt, 300 less than a week ago. Syrians represent almost 15.2% of the total refugee population in the country.

Since 8 December 2024, there has been a significant increase in Syrians approaching UNHCR in Cairo and Alexandria to request the closure of their asylum cases. As of 3 March, **some 6,350 closure requests** involving almost 13,000 individuals were submitted, averaging 105 requests per day, compared to just seven per day in November 2024.

UNHCR observed a slowdown in the number of Syrian households requesting closing their refugee files in February 2025 (daily average of 80), compared to the peak seen in January, when the daily average was 147. This decline may indicate a stabilization of the situation. However, UNHCR expects an increase in Syrians returning from Egypt after Ramadan and the end of the academic school year, according to the findings of the [Flash Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria](#).

Regarding their return plans, 60% intend to return to Damascus, 11% to Homs, 8% to Rural Damascus, 4% to Al Bab, and the remaining 17% to other locations within the country. 97% identified these locations as their original home areas. The percentage of applicants originating from Damascus dropped from 43% at the start of February to 39% towards the beginning of March, with male applicants remaining consistently around 66-67%.

Between 8 December 2024 and 3 March 2025, **897 new registration requests** have been made, averaging 15 per day as compared to 45 per day before the new regime came into power in Syria.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #16, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [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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CONTACTS

UNHCR Syria

SYRIAreporting@unhcr.org

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