

Regional Flash Update #19

Syria situation crisis

21 March 2025



Syrian refugee returnee family sit in a UNHCR-supported bus that has transported them through the Nasib border crossing from Jordan into Syria. © UNHCR Syria/Vivian Toumeh

Key Highlights

- As of 20 March 2025, UNHCR estimates that **some 356,200 Syrians** have crossed back to Syria via neighboring countries since 8 December 2024.
- The **Brussels IX Conference on “Standing with Syria: meeting the needs for a successful transition”**, hosted by the EU on 17 March 2025, **reaffirmed** international commitment to Syria’s post-Assad transition, emphasizing unity, sovereignty, and inclusive governance. The EU and Syria’s transitional government **highlighted** the urgent need for humanitarian aid for displaced Syrians. Financial pledges were made to support Syria’s recovery, alongside plans for a new coordination framework for reconstruction. **A total of €5.8 billion were initially announced** to aid Syria’s transition process and the country’s socio-economic recovery, while also addressing the urgent humanitarian needs, both within Syria and in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Türkiye.
- **UNHCR has largely resumed its work in Tartous and Lattakia**, with nine out of eleven UNHCR-Community Centres now fully operational in addition to the continued distribution of essential non-food items to thousands of families in the coastal areas.

Country updates

Syria

As of 20 March 2025, UNHCR estimates that **356,200 Syrians** have crossed back into Syria from neighboring countries since 8 December 2024. This brings up the total of **717,017 Syrian individuals** that have crossed back into Syria since the beginning of 2024. Most refugee returnees continue to cross from Lebanon, followed by Türkiye, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

In terms of internal displacement, as of 15 March, there were **some 926,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** who returned since to their places of origin in Syria since the 27 November 2024, according to latest data from the IDP Task Force.

At border crossings points, **UNHCR maintained a presence at Joussieh, Jdaidet Yabous, Nassib, Bab Al-Hawa, and Bab Al-Salama**, monitoring return trends and providing information, water, and Internet access. However, movement at Joussieh was significantly affected by military operations on 16 and 17 March. Daboussieh, Jesr Kamar, and Matraba border crossings are still closed due to extensive damage, with efforts underway for rehabilitation.

As per the political developments in the country, on 17 March, the Caretaker Authorities [announced](#) the formation of a **special committee to implement the agreement between the Syrian state and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**, marking a significant step in the ongoing negotiations between Damascus and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). The agreement, which integrates AANES-affiliated military and civilian structures into Syria's state institutions, has garnered broad Arab and international support.

In the **coastal areas**, displacement tracking remained challenging, especially in rural areas, but thousands are estimated to have become IDPs. Some families fled to Lebanon through unofficial border points, while others relocated to safer areas within Syria. For those recently displaced, their **most pressing needs** include food, non-food items (NFIs), dignity kits, medical support, and shelter. Access to medical facilities remained a challenge due to destroyed or looted pharmacies, particularly in Banyas and Jableh. UNHCR, in collaboration with SARC and local organizations, distributed essential non-food items to thousands of families in Banyas, Jableh, and rural Lattakia. Furthermore, as of 20 March, **9 out of 11 community centres** are fully operational, offering psychological first aid, counseling, and vital services. In coordination with UNFPA and UNICEF, UNHCR addressed protection gaps, facilitated community initiatives, and supported the distribution of dignity kits alongside psychological first aid for affected individuals.

As per the **response to return movements**, UNHCR continued to conduct multiple field missions and coordination meetings to assess returnee needs and enhance response mechanisms especially where the shelter needs are most pressing such as in Harasta and Shabaa (Damascus), Al-Ma'ra (Idlib) and Al Zebdeiah and Marran (Aleppo). Meanwhile, a joint UNHCR, AHC, and OCHA mission in Qamishli engaged with local self-administration representatives regarding the **resumption of civil services and the return of displaced Syrians, including those from Al Hol camp**.

Over 2,000 families in Homs, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqa received core relief items, including mattresses, blankets, plastic sheets, kitchen sets, solar lamps, and winter kits. In Aleppo, some 100 beneficiaries received cash grants to support income-generating activities, fostering economic resilience. Legal and awareness sessions on Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights were also conducted in Deir ez-Zor and Hassakeh, ensuring returnees are informed about their rights and entitlements. Overall, **during the reporting period, humanitarian assistance reached thousands of vulnerable individuals across Syria**.

Türkiye

According to the [announcement](#) by the Vice President on 17 March, **145,639 Syrians** have voluntarily returned from Türkiye following the events of 8 December. Meanwhile, President Erdoğan [expressed](#) hope for more Syrian returns as stability in Syria increases, while emphasizing that Türkiye will not force anyone, but will provide the necessary facilitation to those who want to return.

The **processing of voluntary returns** continues in provinces and at five border crossings: Cilvegözü / Bab al Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar /Bab al Salama, Karkamış /Jarablus and Akçakale / Tel Abyad. As of 18 March, Çobanbey / Al Rai and Zeytindalı / Jinderes are open for processing go-and-see visits.

Currently, UNHCR monitors returns in 13 provinces and at the Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Keseb, Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salama, and Karkamış/Jarablus border crossings in the southeast, as well as at Istanbul Airport.

UNHCR's observations on returns remain largely consistent with previous weeks. Many returnees travel alone, often to assess conditions before reuniting with family. The primary motivations for returning include political changes, improved security, family reunification, and economic considerations. The demographic profile of returnees is diverse, with adults aged 18-59 forming the largest group, followed by children. Men continue to outnumber women among those returning. Documentation challenges persist, as a significant portion of returnees lack official Syrian civil documents. Although property ownership is common, many returnees face issues such as property damage or the lack of valid ownership documents.

Economic stability is a major concern, as many returnees relied on informal employment or social assistance in Türkiye. In Syria, a large proportion expect to be unemployed initially, while others anticipate finding informal work or relying on family support. **Access to basic services in the areas of return is inconsistent, leaving many returnees uncertain about the availability of such services.**

During focus group discussions and meetings with refugee-led organizations, **Syrian individuals who utilized the go-and-see visit opportunity shared the challenges they faced and their observations.** Concerns were raised regarding poor infrastructure, limited access to services, and security issues within Syria. To improve the process, participants recommended expanding eligibility for go-and-see visits and the duration, increasing financial support, enhancing information sharing, and allowing entry and exit through additional crossings.

Lebanon

The hostilities in the Tartous, Latakia, Homs, and Hama Governorates of Syria in early March continue to displace people on a daily basis into the North and Akkar Governorates of north Lebanon. Newly arrived refugees are now across 25 different locations, predominantly in Akkar in 22 villages near to the border with Syria. Local authority official figures from Disaster Risk Management (DRM) cite **12,798 individuals (2,792 families)** as of 17 March in Akkar (see also [Lebanon Flash Update](#)). Coordinated response from humanitarian partners for immediate needs continues, including core relief items distribution, ready to eat food, shelter repairs and mobile medical teams.

As of 13 March, the government's Disaster Risk Management reported **approximately 91,937 arrivals from Syria** in Baalbek Governorate, North Bekaa, including 34,345 in 200 informal collective shelters, and 57,592 in the community including 20,000 Lebanese returnees.

Jordan

On 18 March, at the Brussels IX Conference, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs [emphasized](#) the importance of supporting the Syrian people in rebuilding their country. He reiterated that the solution to the refugee issue is their voluntary return to their homeland, "but until the conditions are suitable for their return, their needs must be addressed, and hosting countries cannot bear the burden alone." He noted as alarming the decrease in the funding for the refugee response, including for the agencies that care for refugees, and recalled that without the support of donors, Jordan would not have been able to support the refugees in the way it has done, giving as an example the fact that 11 percent of the students in Jordan's schools are Syrian refugees.

In the same vein, and during a meeting with the UNHCR Representative on 16 March, the Minister of Government Communications [reaffirmed](#) Jordan's continued support for Syria and commitment to foster a safe environment for voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

Over the past week, passenger movement across the Jaber border remained light, while commercial traffic continued to be heavy. As [reported](#) by media, since the beginning of the year, 49,679 trucks have crossed or transited through the Jaber border compared to 12,689 during the same period in 2024. From 23 March, the **Jaber border centre will be open 24 hours**.

As of 15 March, **nearly 49,000 refugees registered with UNHCR have returned from Jordan to Syria** since 8 December 2024. Over the past week (from 9 to 15 March) the number of refugee returns was 135 individuals per day on average.

Demographics of returnees remained largely unchanged from previous weeks, with women and girls representing around 45 per cent of the total refugee returnees. Children accounted for around 42 per cent, and men of military age (18-40 years old) made up 23 per cent of overall returns. More details about the numbers and profile of returnees are available on [UNHCR Jordan's returns dashboard](#).

Additionally, **UNHCR analysed the skills profile of approximately 20,000 refugees** aged 18-64 who returned to Syria over the past two months. Over 3,000 have secondary education and around 800 have tertiary education. Just under 3,000 returnees had completed their highest education in Jordan. Nearly 4,800 returnees reported having some English language skills. Furthermore, some 3,600 returnees had been engaged in work/income generating activities in Jordan acquiring experience which they can contribute upon return to many sectors, including construction, transport, hospitality, wholesale, agriculture, manufacturing and community services.

Since the start of the transportation pilot project on 20 January 2025, **UNHCR has supported over 1,370 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. On 18 and 20 March, UNHCR organized transportation from Azraq camp and Amman for nearly 50 refugees wishing to return to Syria.

During recent focus group discussions, UNHCR observed increased **concerns about security** compared to previous conversations with refugees. Participants highlighted fears of escalating sectarian violence, arbitrary arrests, and harassment. While many refugees were previously considering returning, especially after Ramadan, violent incidents in coastal areas have caused many to delay their plans, even if these areas were not their intended destination of return. Additionally, reported curfews in some areas (i.e., Homs) also add to their reluctance, as they have grown accustomed to freedom of movement in Jordan. Challenges in Jordan also continue to influence return decisions. Economic hardship, including restricted work permits, rising living costs, and delays in resettlement processing, create pressure to return. However, **the lack of livelihoods**

and basic services in Syria, along with security risks, make the decision extremely difficult. Refugees reiterated their request for assistance with go-and-see visits to make an informed decision about returning.

Iraq

Between 8 December 2024 and 16 March 2025, **more than 10,200 Syrians have returned from Iraq to Syria**, including about 700 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 and asylum-seekers who returned this past week (39 registered refugees) is lower compared to the previous week (99 registered refugees). 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 200 Syrians arrived through Peshkhabour border crossing. Family visits, returning from visits 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. None of Syrians families arriving to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq expressed their intention to register with UNHCR in Iraq.

Egypt

As of 18 March 2025, **140,150 Syrian refugees** are registered in Egypt, some 450 less than a week ago. Syrians represent almost 15% of the total refugee population in the country.

Since the regime change in Syria, there has been a **significant increase in Syrians approaching UNHCR in Cairo and Alexandria to request the closure of their asylum cases**. As of 18 March 2025, some 6,710 closure requests involving over 13,684 individuals were submitted since 8 December 2024, averaging 104 requests per day, compared to just seven per day in November 2024. UNHCR observed a continued decline in the number of Syrian households requesting case closures through mid-March 2025, noting a stabilization trend in the request numbers seen in February. The decrease of requests may be due to the beginning of Ramadan and the recent events in Syria. Nonetheless, if conditions do not worsen in Syria, based on the findings of the [Flash Regional Survey](#), conducted in January 2025, on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria, UNHCR does anticipate an increase in case closure requests after Ramadan and the conclusion of the academic school year, as more Syrians in Egypt may choose to return home.

In response to identified information gaps among the Syrian refugee community, a **comprehensive field assessment** was conducted in late January, to evaluate awareness of UNHCR services and monitor misinformation. Terre des Hommes (TdH), in collaboration with UNHCR, interviewed 100 beneficiaries at the UNHCR Zamalek office (Greater Cairo). Findings revealed that 81% of inquiries focused on file closure procedures, with additional concerns about file reopening (9%), new registrations (8%), and card renewals (2%). The assessment also uncovered widespread misinformation about deportations, repatriation flights, and policy changes, emphasizing the need for a targeted communication strategy. In response, UNHCR held a two-day information-sharing session at Zamalek, where the team assisted 176 beneficiaries through small-group discussions, ensuring clearer guidance on key issues such as file closures, registrations, and reopening requests. To further strengthen communication efforts, as of March 2025, the PSTIC-TdH Information Team is present inside the Zamalek registration center twice a week, conducting information sessions specifically focused on return procedures for Syrians.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #18, 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](#)

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its operations in the Middle East in 2025, including:

Australia | Austria | Belgium | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Iceland | Ireland | Luxembourg | Monaco | Netherlands (Kingdom of the) | Norway | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Central Emergency Response Fund | Islamic Development Bank

CONTACTS

UNHCR Syria

SYRIAreporting@unhcr.org

For more information, please visit:

[UNHCR Global Focus – Syria Situation](#)