

UNHCR Continues Supporting Refugees Amid Unprecedented Funding Crisis

UNHCR is committed to assisting refugees and host community members in Türkiye.



In March, UNHCR Türkiye provided over 100,000 hygiene materials and bedding items for use in government-run service centres for women, children and people with disabilities, benefiting both refugees and host community members in need.

Highlights

- According to the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), [2,789,266 Syrians are living in Türkiye under Temporary Protection \(TP\) as of 10 April 2025](#). In addition, over 193,340 refugees and asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Ukraine and other countries of origin are living under international protection in Türkiye (as of December 2024).
- On 16 April, the Ministry of Interior [announced](#) that as of 13 April, 175,512 Syrians (33,730 families) have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to their country since 9 December 2024.
- PMM declared the Yayladağı (Hatay) border crossing as the third crossing from which Syrians undertaking go-and-see visits can depart, in addition to those in Zeytindalı (Hatay) and Çobanbey (Kilis).
- Besides the Turkish Airlines flights, the private airline Ajet has announced the [launch of direct flights from both Ankara and Istanbul \(Sabiha Gökçen Airport on the Asian side\) to Damascus, commencing on 21 April](#). UNHCR is already present at the Istanbul airport and will coordinate with the Provincial Directors of Migration Management to monitor the returns of Syrian refugees from all airports.
- The “[Syrians Barometer 2023: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Türkiye](#)” report has been published. The study was supported by UNHCR and led by Prof. Dr. Murat Erdoğan from Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences Migration Research Center- MÜGAM. The Syrians Barometer is an annual, evidence-based research initiative that provides comprehensive insights into the evolving dynamics of social cohesion, public perception, and the experiences of Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye, while also reflecting the perspectives of the host community. The series of studies has been supported by UNHCR since 2019.

Recent Developments

National

- Türkiye welcomed the formation of a transitional government in Syria. In a [written statement](#) on 30 March, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that this step “demonstrates the Syrian administration’s commitment to advancing the political transition, led and owned by the Syrians, in an inclusive manner”.
- UNHCR’s Representative in Türkiye attended the [Antalya Diplomacy Forum](#) that took place from 11 to 13 April. The 4th edition of the Forum mobilised over 6,000 participants from 155 countries, including 21 heads of state and government. Opened by President Erdoğan, the three-day summit presented key proposals to resolve pressing regional and global challenges and addressed a wide range of issues, including the situation in Syria.
- The Representative held bilateral meetings with the ambassadors of Germany, Spain, Ireland, and the Netherlands on separate occasions. During these discussions, the Representative highlighted the impact of the funding crisis on the refugee situation in Türkiye and UNHCR’s response. The conversations also addressed the trends of voluntary return to Syria, the humanitarian response of the UNHCR operation, including support for the Turkish authorities and the asylum system, as well as the critical protection needs that remain unmet.



Her Excellency Mrs. Emine Erdoğan, the first lady of the Republic of Türkiye and Ms. Angela Li Rosi, UNHCR’s Representative at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

Regional

- On 17 March, the EU Ministerial meeting on '[Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region](#)' took place in Brussels. Chaired by Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Brussels Conferences had a two-fold objective of mobilising humanitarian and financial aid for the Syrian people – both those living in Syria and those in neighbouring countries – as well as for the host communities in the wider region. During the conference, [Mr. Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) urged the EU Member States to consider the consequences of their decisions to cut aid, reminding them that the stability in Europe is bound with the security of the Syrian people. With messages of solidarity and support, the [EU committed nearly €2.5 billion for 2025 and 2026](#), while together with partners, the conference raised an overall €5.8 billion to support Syria's transition process and its socio-economic recovery. The pledged resources will also address the urgent humanitarian needs, both within Syria and in the host communities across Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Türkiye ([Learn more](#)).
- On April 3, in two separate tragic incidents, the coast guards of Türkiye and Greece recovered the bodies of 16 deceased individuals who sadly lost their lives when their rubber boats sank while attempting to cross the Aegean Sea. The survivors rescued by the Turkish coast guard have been identified as Afghan nationals. UNHCR and partners are in contact with the relevant counterparts to support the referral process for the survivors and the procedures concerning the deceased.

Protection Assistance & Advocacy

Protection and Access to Services

On 25 March, UNHCR's Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi met with the President of the Justice Academy of Türkiye, Mr. Bekir Altun. During this meeting, the cooperation protocol with the Academy was extended for three years, with an additional protocol signed. The protocol reiterates both parties' commitment to cooperate in planning, designing and carrying out training activities aimed at enhancing awareness among, and strengthening the capacity of, judges and public prosecutors working in the civil and administrative jurisdiction in finding solutions for legal challenges faced by refugees in the fields of private law, criminal law and administrative law in Türkiye. UNHCR has been working in cooperation with the Justice Academy for nearly a decade.



Signing of the Cooperation Protocol between UNHCR and the Justice Academy of Türkiye.

UNHCR continued its support for the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) by providing 165 staff members to work in social service centres across 29 provinces. In March, these staff assisted 2,757 refugees with various services. Additionally, UNHCR deployed 39 staff members to women's guesthouses and violence prevention and monitoring centres (ŞÖNİM) across 21 provinces. In March, 1,317 refugees received support, including over 1,300 women and children who benefited from services at ŞÖNİMs and women's guesthouses.

On 13 March, the UNHCR Field Office in Istanbul delivered a presentation on international refugee law and refugee rights under international protection for 30 students at Istanbul University. On 17 March, UNHCR facilitated a session on International Humanitarian Law and Refugee Protection for 27 officers and civilian personnel from 12 countries, as part of the Law of Conflict course organized by the NATO Partnership for Peace Program in Ankara.

Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

In March 2025, a total of 1,074 individuals from Afghanistan and various African nations were intercepted or rescued by the Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) units at the western sea borders of Türkiye, representing a 43 per cent increase compared to February 2025. UNHCR and partners delivered 6,617 core relief items, including baby food, water, hygiene products, and clothing for nearly 1,000 individuals through the border authorities and Gendarmerie (law enforcement force under the Ministry of Interior) in İzmir, Çanakkale, Aydın, Balıkesir, Muğla, Edirne and Kırklareli to address the basic needs of individuals who were rescued (or apprehended and intercepted).

As part of its ongoing collaboration with the MoFSS, UNHCR has provided over 100,000 hygiene and bedding materials for use in ministry-run service centres, benefiting both refugees and host community members in need. These items will now support MoFSS service outlets across 81 provinces in Türkiye, including children's organizations, facilities for persons with disabilities and the elderly, and women's organizations.

UNHCR, in collaboration with PMM, facilitated the Beginner Level Active Trainings for PMM staff. The training sessions concentrated on interviewing techniques, credibility assessment, and legal analysis. More than 130 participants attended the workshop, including 118 interpreters from Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs). Over 330 PMM/PDMM staff have participated in the interpreter trainings since the project's inception in 2022.

Legal Aid and Legal Assistance

In March, these six legal clinics (LCs), in partnership with the Union of the Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), provided legal assistance to 584 refugees and asylum-seekers (including 116 individuals in removal centres and 47 individuals in TACs) for 878 cases involving civil law, exit and re-entry procedures, detention, and family reunification, among others. In addition, the LCs reached 250 refugees through awareness sessions.

Support for Solutions

Voluntary Returns

UNHCR continues to monitor 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, capturing diverse demographic trends and motivations ([Learn more](#)).

Over the last month, UNHCR consulted with thirteen refugee-led organizations (RLOs) in the southeast of Türkiye regarding return trends and temporary visits. Key priorities mentioned by the RLOs for fostering a positive and safe return environment in Syria include transitional justice, education, peacebuilding, social cohesion and integration, shelter, and land and property rights. According to the RLOs, return patterns vary across Syrian Governorates due to different dynamics related to security, access to land, and shelter availability. Higher return rates are anticipated in Governorates such as Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib, while lower rates are expected in Deir Az Zor, Dara'a, and Sweida.

Most refugees who went to Syria on go-and-see visits still consider a permanent return, pending the restoration of basic services, public infrastructure, and addressing security risks. Financial constraints also prevent refugee families from reconstructing their homes.

Education

As of 9 April, a total of 608 Syrian refugee students in Türkiye have received scholarships through the German Albert Einstein Refugee Academic Initiative (DAFI) programme in 2025. Within the scope of the Higher Education Cash Grant (HECG) Programme for non-Syrians, UNHCR has completed the review of 1,790 applications. As of 11 April 2025, 665 applications have been identified as eligible. Most refugee students are studying engineering, architecture, medical science, public health, education, as well as commercial and business administration, for which the labour market in Türkiye continues to have a high demand. The education and skills of the refugee students will also help rebuild their respective countries should they return voluntarily.

Livelihoods

As part of the [IFC-UNHCR Joint Initiative](#) aimed at understanding labour market challenges to engage refugees in the private sector and inform targeted interventions, UNHCR conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) with 57 employed and unemployed refugees in three provinces of south-east Türkiye, i.e. Şanlıurfa, Adana and Gaziantep. Some of the challenges highlighted during the FGDs include barriers toward obtaining work permits, travel restrictions, post-earthquake accommodations, workplace discrimination, job exploitation, language barriers for unemployed Syrian male refugees, etc. Participants emphasized the need for vocational training, financial resources for business startups, and better integration efforts. Participants mentioned concerns about their children's future and financial challenges as significant obstacles towards returning to Syria.

Inter-Agency Coordination

UNHCR, in consultation with the partners implementing the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), is now finalising the 3RP Return Addendum that contains a response plan within the strategic framework for voluntary return to Syria established by the Government of Türkiye. The appeal for 2025 is also being revised.

On 15 April, UNHCR, along with 3RP partners, facilitated a regional donor briefing on the [3RP Regional Strategic Overview for 2025](#) in Amman. During the briefing, UNHCR and its partners urged the international community to consider how the recent developments in Syria are reshaping the lives of millions both within Syria and across the region. While Syria has entered a new phase, challenges remain significant in host countries and humanitarian needs are at record levels, with particular difficulties faced by women, girls, and persons with disabilities.

UNHCR is grateful to the donors for unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the refugee response. UNHCR in Türkiye is also thankful to donors who are contributing to 2025 programmes. For more details: [UNHCR Türkiye Funding Update – 31 March 2025](#).