FACTSHEET

Legal Aid in Syria

January-December 2025

354,639
returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host community members benefited from legal aid

248,512 (70%) individuals reached through civil documentation and services	**106,127 (30%)** individuals reached through housing, and property (HLP) Documentation and services	
186,816 (53%) individuals reached through awareness raising on legal matters	**138,505 (39%)** individuals received legal counselling	**29,318 (8%)** individuals benefited from interventions before courts and administrative bodies

3,972
refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from legal aid

IMPACT OF LEGAL INTERVENTIONS **BEFORE COURTS AND ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES*

10,961 (37%) individuals assisted to obtain HLP documents

5,212 (18%) individuals assisted to document their marriage events

8,837 (30%) children assisted to be officially registered and obtain birth certificate

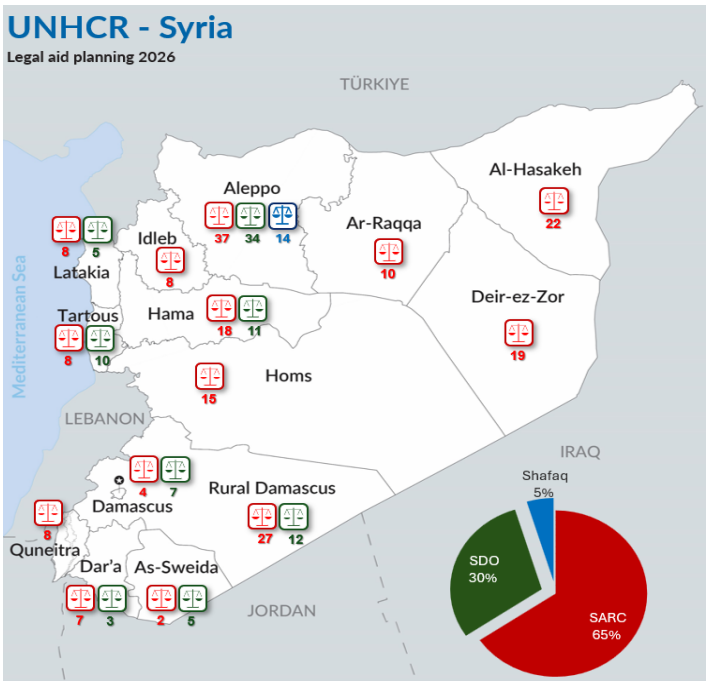
4,308 (15%) individuals benefited from other interventions, including divorce authentication, gender-based violence prevention and response, and other civil documentation issues.

Coverage:
Legal services are provided nationwide across all **14 governorates** through a network of legal clinics, community centres and mobile legal teams

Partners:
- Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)
- Syrian Development Organization (SDO)
- Shafak

Legal clinics:
Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Hama, Homs, Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa.

Legal Aid is provided through:
- 294 lawyers
- 159 legal outreach volunteers



Legal assistance for refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities

UNHCR's legal assistance programme supports vulnerable refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities to access their rights and essential services by addressing legal and documentation-related barriers. The programme focuses on:

- **Supporting the documentation of vital events**, including births, marriages, divorces, and deaths;
- **Facilitating access to personal and civil documentation** including identity cards, family booklets, and civil status records;
- **Supporting the recognition of housing, land, and property (HLP) rights** by facilitating the issuance of HLP documents and documenting HLP ownerships;
- **Responding to protection risks affecting women and children** including risks related to gender-based violence and custody, alimony, and inheritance disputes;
- Intervening in **cases at risk of refoulement of refugees and asylum-seekers**;
- Supporting refugees and asylum-seekers issues related to **immigration procedures**, including the issuance and renewal of residency permits and the acquisition of exit visas;

Operational context:

- Following the political transition in Syria in December 2025, services at Civil Registry and Cadastral Offices were temporary suspended, which limited access to civil documentation and HLP-related procedures.
- From May onwards, gradual resumption of Civil Registry services took place by approximately 100 civil registry offices. However, the issuance of identity cards and family booklets remained suspended throughout the year.
- To register civil events that occurred abroad, including the registration of children born abroad, Syrian families are required to pay USD 50 fees at Syrian embassies. Additional fees apply if late registration or when several civil status events—such as marriage, and previous births—must be recorded simultaneously., posing a significant financial burden for many families and a barrier to timely birth registration.
- In August, the General Directorate of Cadastral Affairs resumed services that had been suspended since December 2024. These services include the registration of property transfers, such as inheritance, sale and donation. The suspension of public services and loss of records affected immigration services and procedures, particularly the issuance and renewal of residency permits for refugees and asylum-seekers. Although this service resumed in March, the issuance of short-term residence permits (one or two months) continue to impose additional financial constraints on refugees and asylum-seekers.

Positive developments and achievements:

- Partner lawyers are present at Civil Affairs and Cadastral Offices, providing legal support, facilitating access to procedures and referring cases for legal interventions before courts where required. This has helped ensure continued access to legal remedies despite administrative constraints.
- Following UNHCR's advocacy efforts, fines for the late registration of civil events are not being applied, reducing financial barriers for returnees, IDPs and other vulnerable individuals.
- Procedural reforms on HLP procedures were introduced by the government, including allowing the use of alternative ID, such as passports, temporary IDs or a notification of ID loss issued by a Civil Registry Office, when a national ID is unavailable, as well as the establishment of specialised civil courts across Syria to address cases of unlawful property seizure or ownership manipulation during the Syrian conflict. These reforms benefited returnees and forcibly displaced persons and supported access to HLP rights.
- **2,255 refugees and asylum-seekers** obtained annual and temporary residency permits without paying fines or fees related to the late registration or delayed renewal, as a result of UNHCR's advocacy efforts.

- To coordinate legal aid provided in Syria, the Legal Aid Technical Working Group was activated in December 2025, bringing together NGOs, UN and legal aid providers to reduce duplication, improve the quality and consistency of legal services, strengthen referrals and support joint advocacy.
- The **General Directorate of Civil Affairs** reported that the total number of identity documents issued in 2025 was **3,180,591**. This includes **2,591,562**, **civil and family extracts issued as an alternative to ID cards and family booklets**, and **589,028 birth certificates**. Through institutional support and the legal aid programme, UNHCR contributed to ensuring that returnees and IDPs have access to civil documentation.

Working with Partners

Working with partners is an integral part of UNHCR's legal strategy in Syria. The main governmental counterparts include Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Local Administration and Environment.

UNHCR operates in close cooperation with operational partners, who are providing legal aid in Syria, to ensure consistency and quality of legal assistance, complementarity and non-duplication. UNHCR is a co-lead of the Legal Aid Technical Working Group and the Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Technical Group, both under the Protection Sector in Syria.

In 2025, UNHCR supported capacity-building and coordination efforts with government counterparts and partners. This included support to 10 governmental officials from Syria to attend a Training on International Protection and Solutions in Sanremo, Italy. , In addition, UNHCR supported the organization of targeted workshops benefitting 154 partner lawyers, strengthening legal assistance delivery, promoting common standards and supporting coordinated advocacy on civil documentation, HLP, and protection risks affecting vulnerable populations. Additionally, UNHCR organized a two-day workshop on "Return and Reintegration", bringing together key line ministries and institutions. The workshop provided an important platform to discuss the role of ministries in supporting safe, voluntary, and dignified returns, and in creating conducive conditions for such.

Institutional Support

To enhance access to civil documentation and housing, land and property services for affected populations, UNHCR provided rehabilitation and/or technical support to **31 Civil Registry offices** and **six Cadastral Offices**, contributing to improved service delivery and increased access to legal documentation in 10 governorates. Additionally, UNHCR has provided ICT equipment as technical support to the Ministry of Justice and the Bar Association to enhance access to civil documentation and HLP rights for communities across Syria.

Photos from the rehabilitation of the Civil Registry in Ein Al-Bayda Town in Latakia Governorate:

Before

After