

UNHCR Syria Emergency Response Brief

17 November 2024



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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

The youngest girl in a family of six who returned to Maskana, eastern Aleppo Governorate, from Lebanon due to hostilities. The family is hosted at the grandfather's house, along with another displaced family. The mother used to work in Lebanon as a tailor but had to leave behind her sewing machine when fleeing. UNHCR distributed core relief items to the family and linked them with service providers to receive additional assistance.



Population Movement*



540,000
Estimated Individuals
Who arrived in Syria from
Lebanon since 24 Sep 2024



63% of arrivals are **Syrians**
and
37% are **Lebanese** nationals

The security situation across Syria has remained tense in recent days, posing risks to individuals as well as to UNHCR and partner staff and facilities. This has also impacted the movement of people entering Syria from Lebanon.

Rural Damascus Governorate

A notable decrease has been observed in the number of people crossing the border, and this was reflected in the number of those utilizing UNHCR and SARC transportation services from the damaged road near the Masnaa border crossing point (Lebanon) to the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point (Syria) where, on 16 November, only three buses were used. This reduction may partly be attributed to the loud sounds of

* The numbers of new arrivals in this document are based on "SARC Emergency Response For Lebanese Refugees and Syrian Returnees" (issued 16 November) and daily updates from UNHCR Border Posts. Figures are undergoing verification and are subject to change.

aircraft breaking the sound barrier around the border area on 15 November, with the loud noises reportedly continuing throughout the night.

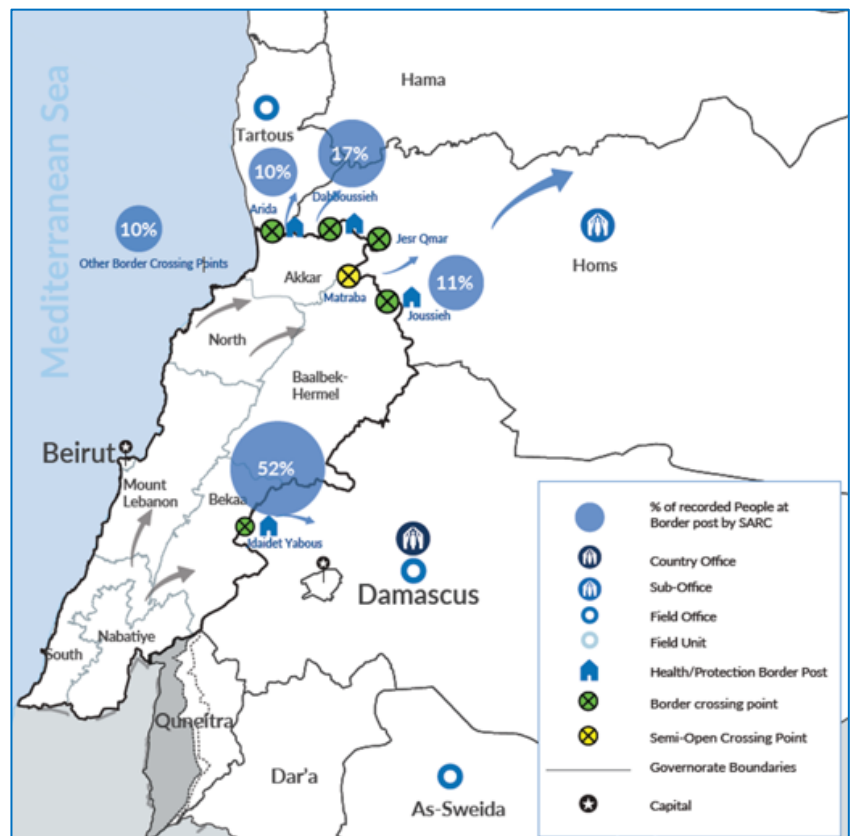
Despite this, 989 new arrivals were reported to have crossed the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing on 17 November. UNHCR and SARC continue to be present there daily, facilitating transportation for vulnerable new arrivals and enabling them to travel from the border point to their intended destinations in Syria. Since the onset of the emergency in Lebanon, 46,155 individuals have been supported through transportation arrangements.

Homs Governorate

On 14 and 15 November, multiple missile attacks near Al-Qusair town in southern Homs, close to the Joussieh border crossing between Syria and Lebanon, damaged several bridges and resulted in casualties. In response, all UN missions to the border points in Homs were suspended until 17 November while the security situation was being assessed. Missions were resumed on 18 November.

At the Dabbousieh and Jesr Kumar border points, approximately 400 people were observed to have crossed daily, primarily traveling from Baalbek and Chtoura in Lebanon to different areas of Syria, including Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus.

Movement through the Joussieh border crossing point remains limited, with fewer than 100 families crossing daily since the multiple recent attacks on the border crossing.



Tartous Governorate

At the Al-Arida border crossing point, UNHCR observed an influx of individuals in recent days, arriving mainly from Nabatieh and South Lebanon. Many reported that they were leaving Lebanon due to challenges they faced in collective shelters, including being denied access to available collective shelters as they were Syrian, or being expelled when the collective shelter was reverted to its original function (e.g. a school).

A small number of Lebanese nationals continue to cross back into Lebanon. Recently, some have cited reasons such as having secured rental accommodations in peaceful areas of northern Lebanon, the need to resume work, difficulties faced whilst in Syria in making daily ends meet and the insufficiency of available support, or temporarily returning to accompany family members traveling to Syria.



Operational Highlights

On 17 November, Ms. Dominique Hyde, UNHCR Director of the Division of External Relations, and Ms. Rema Jamous, Director of the Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa, commenced a three-day mission to Syria to monitor the emergency response, advocate for further support, and help mobilize resources. Accompanied by the Representative and colleagues from UNHCR Syria, the mission includes visits to key locations in Damascus and Homs Governorates, including the Border Protection and Health Support Points at Jdaidet Yabous and Joussieh respectively; a hosting centre in Homs; and meeting new arrivals at the homes that are accommodating them. Additionally, the delegation will engage with immigration officials on-site and hold discussions with Government representatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In areas of return, UNHCR and partners continued to provide support through community centres, mobile teams, and the creation of safe spaces, while UNICEF has provided support to over 2,300 newly arrived students through their education programmes and school materials. WFP delivered food assistance to approximately 16,000 individuals, and UNFPA provided reproductive health services, psychosocial support, and hygiene kits to those in need.



Protection



114
Community Centres



85,580
Individuals Reached

On 14 November, in another positive step to help Syrian returnees, the Syrian Government extended the temporary suspension of the US\$ 100 currency exchange requirement for Syrians entering from Lebanon until 30 November (Decision No. 46 of 2020 and its amendments).

Notable procedural improvements were also observed. Individuals returning after irregular departure can now regularize their status directly at the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing (Rural Damascus), reducing the need for additional travel. Furthermore, the decision to allow Syrian private cars, alongside previously authorized Lebanese private cars, physical access to transport individuals from Masnaa (Lebanon) directly to Damascus has enhanced the accessibility. These measures reflect meaningful progress in easing the challenges often faced during the journey.

Inside of Syria, UNHCR continued to monitor the well-being and respond to the needs of new arrivals in their areas of return/destination. Common matters observed include issues with the sufficiency of accommodation, with living in overcrowded conditions with their relatives that are hosting them. While the new arrivals have been generally well received by their host communities, the sudden influx of residents has put considerable strain on resources available, particularly as many communities themselves have been reliant on humanitarian aid to survive. Livelihood opportunities remain scarce. While returnee generally have access to public schooling, they often face adjustment challenges with a new academic curriculum and unaffordable school materials, with many classrooms also suffering from overcrowding despite instituting a “double-shift” arrangements. Similarly, health services are generally accessible but lacking in affordable medication.



Inter-Agency Coordination

Significant progress has been made in the rapid inter-sectoral needs assessment, with around 50% of the targeted 1,347 communities across Syrian governorates now covered. Over 100 outreach volunteers from UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, and local partners are actively participating in the data collection process, which is expected to conclude soon. While approvals are still pending for assessments in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Latakia, and Deir-ez-Zor, the overall results are expected by the end of November.