

**REPORT**

**2025**



# TÜRKİYE PROTECTION ANALYSIS REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Türkiye is facing a worsening protection crisis, driven by the compounded impacts of the February 2023 earthquakes, socio-economic instability, and systemic discrimination. The earthquakes displaced 15.7 million people, including 1.7 million refugees, while Türkiye continues to host over 4.2 million foreigners, including 3.1 million refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Among them, 2.9 million Syrians under temporary protection face escalating risks due to displacement, disrupted services, and inadequate legal protections. Vulnerable groups, particularly women, children, and refugees, are disproportionately affected by overlapping protection concerns, including gender-based violence (GBV), systemic discrimination, deportation risks, and child protection issues. The protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Women and girls face high risks of GBV, including domestic violence, exploitation, and child early and forced marriage, worsened by insecure shelters, economic dependency, and limited access to support services. Psychological violence affects 90% of cases, while economic violence traps survivors in abusive situations.

**Discrimination and Denial of Resources:** Refugees face systemic barriers to aid, healthcare, education, and public services, fuelling xenophobia and exclusion. Women and children are particularly affected, with refugee children often denied education and essential services, perpetuating poverty and vulnerability.

**Refoulement and Deportation:** Deportation threats, including coerced "voluntary returns" undermine refugee safety and rights. Many Syrians have reportedly "voluntarily" returned under duress, while those living in Türkiye face the risk of unlawful deportation due to documentation issues and limited legal support.

**Child Protection:** Children face neglect, child labour (18.5%), and exclusion from education, worsened by economic hardship and overcrowded shelters. Girls are burdened with caregiving duties, while boys are pushed into hazardous labour, with limited access to safe spaces or psychosocial support.

Addressing these intersecting risks requires immediate action. Expanding GBV services, legal aid, and child protection programs is critical, alongside strengthening anti-discrimination measures and ensuring equitable access to resources. Inter-agency coordination must prioritize holistic, survivor-centred approaches, while donors should invest in integrated programs that address vulnerabilities, foster social cohesion, and uphold international protection standards.

## CONTEXT

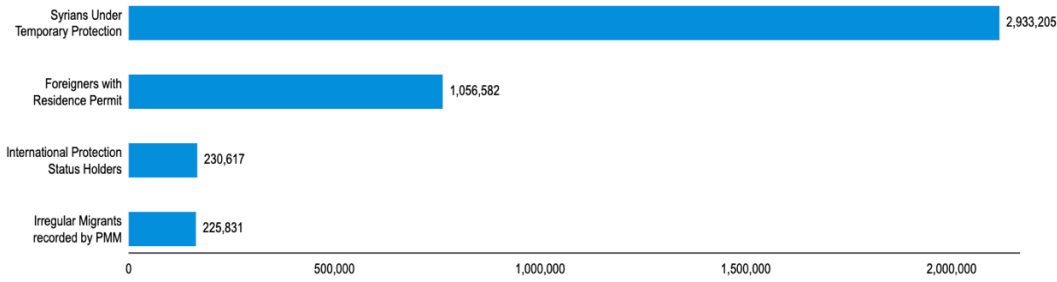
Refugees and Migrants	Irregular Migrants	People Affected by Earthquakes	People Relocated Due to the Earthquake
3,163,822	255,831	15.7 million	3,549,443

Data from the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) show that Türkiye hosts over 4.2 million foreigners, including 3.1 million refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and Ukraine. Among them are 2,933,205<sup>1</sup> Syrians granted temporary protection status. In 2024, Türkiye hosted 230,617 refugees and asylum seekers, 1,056,582<sup>2</sup> foreigners nationals with residence permits, a decrease of 50,450 from 2023.

<sup>1</sup> PMM. (2024). Temporary Protection Statistics. <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638>

<sup>2</sup> PMM. (2024). Irregular Migration Statistics. <https://www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-istatistikler>

**Figure 1: Legal Status of the Foreign Nationals Present in Türkiye, December 2024**



The earthquakes that struck southeast Türkiye on 6 February 2023 killed more than 53,000 people and injured more than 107,000 people, directly affected an estimated total of 15.7 million people including 14 million Türkiye citizens and 1.7 million foreigners living in the 11 hardest-hit provinces<sup>3</sup>. Over 300,000 buildings were affected, including 262,000 severely damaged or destroyed, leaving millions homeless during winter and disrupting essential services like schools, women's shelters, hospitals, maternity and educational facilities, and municipal infrastructure, especially for women and children, according to the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD)<sup>4</sup>. The earthquakes exacerbated already-existing protection risks and brought in new ones for refugees, particularly the Syrians living in the affected areas<sup>5</sup>. The destruction of homes displaced many refugees once again, forcing them into temporary shelters or overcrowded conditions, heightening their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The loss of personal documentation in the rubble has complicated legal status, making it harder for refugees to access aid, healthcare, and education, thus heightening risks of statelessness or detention<sup>6</sup>. Inequities in aid distribution have exacerbated tensions between refugees and host communities, occasionally resulting in discriminatory behavior and xenophobic attitudes. Inequities in aid distribution have exacerbated tensions between refugees and host communities, occasionally resulting in discriminatory behaviour and xenophobic attitudes.

The February 2023 earthquakes caused \$103.6 billion in damage, equivalent to 9% of Türkiye's 2021 GDP, exacerbating pre-existing economic challenges, including 72% inflation in 2022<sup>7</sup> and continued currency depreciation through 2023 and 2024 (OECD 2022). This economic strain has heightened competition for jobs, housing, and services, fuelling anti-refugee sentiment and xenophobia. Refugees, particularly Syrians, face significant barriers to formal employment, often relegated to insecure, low-paying jobs in the informal sector. Women refugees are disproportionately affected, as restrictive social norms and insufficient childcare infrastructure limit their economic participation perpetuating cycles of dependency, vulnerability and increased risk to Gender based violence. Those who enter the workforce frequently encounter exploitative conditions.<sup>8</sup>

The earthquakes displaced 15.7 million people, including 1.7 million foreigners, disrupting critical infrastructure such as schools, shelters, and healthcare facilities. Refugees were forced into overcrowded temporary shelters, increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The loss of personal documentation has further complicated access to aid, healthcare, and education, heightening risks of statelessness and unlawful detention<sup>9</sup>. Inequities in aid distribution have exacerbated tensions between refugees and host communities, occasionally resulting in discriminatory behaviour and xenophobic attitudes.

Refugees have become a focal point in political discourse, particularly during the 2019 municipal and 2023 general elections. Political rhetoric has increasingly adopted anti-refugee narratives, fuelled by misinformation surrounding refugees and alleged criminal activity. Anti-refugee sentiment in Türkiye is among the highest globally, with 77% of respondents in a 2024 Ipsos study supporting the closure of borders to refugees<sup>10</sup> with over 70% believing that refugees are seeking comfort, economic gains and not protection. Public perceptions have been shaped by misinformation, including unfounded rumours of looting after the earthquakes, which have fuelled hostility and violence. For instance, an alleged incident in Kayseri in June 2024 triggered violent protests, leading to the displacement of 3,000 Syrian refugees and the closure of 24 refugee-owned/employing businesses<sup>11</sup>. These events not only exacerbate social exclusion and stigmatization but also

<sup>3</sup> Presidency of Türkiye. (2024). Presidency of Strategy and Budget. Kahramanmaraş and Hatay Earthquakes Reconstruction and Development Report. <https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Kahramanmaraş-ve-Hatay-Depremleri-Yeniden-Imar-ve-Gelisme-Raporu-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Presidency of Türkiye. (2024). Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Presidency of Türkiye. Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Asylum Information Database (AIDA). (2023). 2023 Update Türkiye Country Report. <https://ecre.org/aida-country-report-on-turkiye-2023-update/>

<sup>7</sup> OECD. (2023). Türkiye Inflation (CPI). <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/inflation-cpi.html?oeecdcontrol-d6d4a1fcc5-var6=T&oeecdcontrol-9d7cd6b604-vari=OECD%7CTUR>

<sup>8</sup> Southeast Türkiye Protection Sector. (2024). Protection Analysis Initiative - Focus Group Discussions Report (FGDs - First Final Report).

<sup>9</sup> Asylum Information Database (AIDA). (2023). 2023 Update Türkiye Country Report. <https://ecre.org/aida-country-report-on-turkiye-2023-update/>

<sup>10</sup> Ipsos. (2024). Global Attitudes to Refugees: A 52-Country Survey from Ipsos and UNHCR. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/unhcr-ipsos-survey-shows-enduring-public-support-refugees-alongside-stark-variations-attitudes>

<sup>11</sup> Türkiye Human Rights Foundation. (2024). Discriminatory, Racist, Phobic, and Hate-Filled Physical and Verbal Attacks, Experienced Human Rights Violations. Ankara: Türkiye Human Rights Foundation Documentation Center. <https://tihv.org.tr/ozel-raporlar-ve-degerlendirmeler/ayrimci-irkci-fobik-ve-nefret-icerikli-fiziki-ve-sozlu-saldirilar-yasanan-hak-ihlalleri-1-ocak-1-eylul-2024/>



undermine social cohesion. According to STL protection reports, the Kayseri incident also led to increased barriers for refugees in accessing essential services.

Türkiye, as a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, has incorporated the principle of non-refoulement into its domestic legal framework through the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP, 2013), the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014), and its Constitution. However, recent shifts in migration policies, influenced by public pressure, reflect a transition from humanitarian-focused approaches to security-oriented migration management concerns on voluntary return. Measures such as the Kalkan (Shield) operations which emphasize deportations and border security, often resulting in indefinite detentions of refugees in temporary centres in inhuman conditions raising legal questions and ethical concerns on treatment of migrants<sup>12</sup>. Recent administrative changes have further constrained refugees' access to rights and services. Syrian nationals are now required to obtain documentation directly from the Syrian Consulate, while the abolition of V87 protocols reclassifies deactivated individuals as irregular migrants, limiting their legal protections. The non-renewable 90-day emergency visa compels refugees to exit and re-enter Türkiye for renewal, while restrictions on neighbourhood registrations and reliance on local mukhtars create additional bureaucratic barriers to essential services and integration opportunities. These developments raise concerns about Türkiye's adherence to its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, particularly regarding the non-refoulement principle.

The earthquakes exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, particularly for women and girls, and significantly heightened the risks of gender-based violence (GBV). The destruction of homes displaced millions into overcrowded temporary shelters, where women and girls faced heightened risks of GBV, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and exploitation. Overcrowding, lack of privacy, and inadequate security in these shelters created environments where women were particularly vulnerable to harm and are without the legal protections necessary to report abuse or seek justice for lack of documentation. Refugee women, already marginalized by restrictive social norms and limited access to resources, were disproportionately affected. The earthquakes further restricted their economic and social participation, confining many to caregiving roles. Divorced women face additional risks, including threats and exclusion from resources, which hinder their independence and integration.

The earthquakes severely disrupted critical support systems for GBV survivors. Many women's shelters, counselling centres, and protection services were destroyed or rendered inaccessible. The disaster further strained already limited resources, leaving survivors with few safe spaces or specialized services. Municipal and governmental authorities' capacity to restore these services was overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis significantly restricting women's access to social spaces, particularly within temporary settlements where communal areas are notably absent. Moreover, STL Protection Reports identify multiple barriers to integration, including exclusion from education, child early and forced marriages, limited economic independence, and heightened vulnerability to domestic violence. Social isolation further intensifies these risks, particularly for divorced women, who face threats that limit their access to economic resources and opportunities. These gendered vulnerabilities impede independence, hinder social integration, and perpetuate withdrawal from community and economic participation.

The destruction of schools left many refugee children out of education, exposing them to risks such as child labour, child early and forced marriage, and exploitation. Families facing severe economic hardship often resorted to marrying off daughters as a coping mechanism, perpetuating cycles of GBV and limiting opportunities for girls to rebuild their lives. To protect children, Türkiye has ratified several instruments including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994), Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) in 2012, and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor in 2001. Moreover, Türkiye has enacted domestic laws such as Child Protection Law 5395, Social Services Law 2828, and the 1926 Turkish Civil Code which place the responsibility to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation on the state. However, implementation is hindered by resource constraints, discrimination, and the high concentration of refugee populations in certain provinces. Child Monitoring Centres, established under the Lanzarote Convention to support child survivors of sexual abuse, remain inaccessible in many areas due to insufficient resources and the scale of the disaster.

Türkiye has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 1951 Refugee Convention, and has enacted progressive legislation, including Law No. 6284 on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women (2012), which provides for protective orders, shelters, and support services. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, leaving refugee women and girls particularly vulnerable due to barriers such as language limitations, discrimination, residency permits tied to abusive family members and limited awareness of their rights. For Syrian women, these challenges are compounded by the requirement to obtain documentation from the Syrian Consulate, posing risks due to mobility restrictions and safety concerns. While the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) provides healthcare and legal assistance, these measures often fall short of addressing survivors' specific vulnerabilities. Moreover, Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021 has further undermined institutional accountability, exacerbating the existing challenges in effectively addressing gender-based violence.

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<sup>12</sup> Türkiye Human Rights Foundation. Ibid. & Politico. (2024). The EU is Helping Türkiye Forcibly Deport Migrants to Syria and Afghanistan. <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-eu-is-helping-türkiye-forcibly-deport-migrants-to-syria-and-afghanistan/>

Informal support networks, often led by women within refugee communities, play a critical role in providing emotional and material assistance to GBV survivors. Civil society organisations have also stepped in to fill gaps left by the collapse of formal support systems, offering legal aid, counselling, and vocational training. However, these efforts remain limited by resource constraints and the scale of the crisis.

## PROTECTION RISKS

### RISK 1

### Gender Based Violence

The compounded effects of natural disasters, armed conflict, and mixed migration flows have significantly exacerbated vulnerabilities among women, girls, and other affected groups, intensifying gender-based violence (GBV) within these populations. Recent case management data indicates that 56.2% of adult cases involve GBV. Notably, 64.7% of adult women report experiencing GBV compared to 2.6% of adult men — a disparity that underscores deep-rooted structural inequalities further exposed by recent crises.

Psychological violence against women is the most pervasive affecting 90.4% of reported cases, often serving as both a precursor to and concurrent element of physical violence (53.8% prevalence). Its further compounded by structural gender dynamics where male household members control financial decisions, an imbalance that erodes female autonomy and creates dual psychological-economic pressures. Within this context, economic violence (7.1% reported cases) operates as particularly insidious mechanism, trapping survivors in abusive situations through financial dependence. Though sexual violence is reported by 14.7% of the cases there is underreporting<sup>13</sup> due to cultural stigmas, risks, and institutional barriers especially for refugee women. Poorly designed temporary shelters with inadequate lighting, shared sanitation, and isolated locations with limited access to support services and emergency assistance increased vulnerability to risks of harassment and assault for women and girls who represent 72% of displaced populations. Economic instability further increases GBV risks. Monthly household deficits averaging 3,615 TL force over half of families into high-interest loans, fuelling domestic tensions. Financial strain often leads to coercive control, with 58% of women reporting restricted access to cash — a common precursor to intimate partner violence. Increased caregiving responsibilities (up 47% since 2023) and discriminatory hiring practices limit female employment to 22.8%, trapping survivors in abusive situations.

Their vulnerability is compounded by documentation and legal status as resident permits or residency permits tied to male family members, discouraging abuse reporting out of fear of deportation. Moreover, the policy excluding boys over 12 years old from shelters impacts mothers' decisions to seek shelter support.

Camp settlements present major healthcare and sanitation challenges, especially for adolescent girls, pregnant women, and new mothers. According to STL's CBI assessment data, 13% of assessed adult women were either pregnant (3.7%) or lactating (9.3%), and are faced with tripled maternal mortality risks due to nonfunctional pre- and post-natal care facilities<sup>14</sup>. Healthcare system collapse compounds these issues. Lack of access to menstrual hygiene products due to stigma, high costs further compromise their dignity and increases risk.<sup>15</sup>

Legal and bureaucratic barriers enable impunity. Conditional residency permits force 89% of refugee women to choose between reporting abuse or risking deportation, while documentation issues block shelter access for 74%. A 92% decline in reported GBV cases highlights systemic failures, especially among the 63% lacking legal literacy in local languages. In response to these threats and vulnerabilities, communities have developed various coping mechanisms. Some positive strategies include informal support networks, women support groups and accessing the few NGO-operated safe spaces<sup>16</sup>. Others are adopting negative coping strategies including social isolation, staying in abusive situations due lack of livelihood opportunities/alternatives.

### RISK 2

### Discrimination and Denial of Resources

Post-earthquake resource competition amplified xenophobic narratives, evidenced by municipal policies that institutionalized exclusion through targeted removal of Arabic-language signage and differential fee structures for non-citizens accessing basic utilities. These structural barriers manifested acutely in aid distribution systems, where STL data documented shows discriminated affected 54.4% of adult refugee cases with gendered dimensions being observed. Due to their gender roles and being primary contact between for documentation and

<sup>13</sup> Özdemir, N. (2023). Depremin Ardından Kadınlar ve Kız Çocukları. UN Women Türkiye. [https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/her\\_aftermath\\_turkce-1.pdf](https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/her_aftermath_turkce-1.pdf) & UNHCR and UNDP. (2024). Türkiye Country Chapter 2023-2025: & 3RP Türkiye Chapter 2024 Update. <https://www.3rpsyriacrisis.org/portfolio/turkiye2024/>

<sup>14</sup> UNFPA. (2023). Türkiye Earthquake Situation Report No. 7. <https://turkiye.unfpa.org/en/turkiye-earthquake-situation-report-no-7>

<sup>15</sup> Southeast Türkiye Protection Sector. Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Family and Social Services, Directorate General of Women's Status. (2025). <https://www.aile.gov.tr/sss/kadinin-statusu-genel-mudurlugu/>

registration processes, male refugees represented 86.8% while women represented 49.3%. Analysed reports indicate refugees were systematically denied basic services such as water, shelter, sanitation and humanitarian assistance<sup>17</sup> especially amongst Syrian refugees living in Dom and Abdal communities<sup>18</sup>. A semi-structured survey by STL social workers confirms refugees faced significant barriers accessing public services and aid due to ethnicity or lack of documentation, increasing marginalization. Stark disparities in temporary shelter amenities further highlight institutional discrimination and compounded vulnerabilities. Surveys conducted by STL social workers showed that discriminatory practices included refugees being denied access to public services and humanitarian aid. Moreover, LGBTQ+ individuals face total denial in access to housing while women face psychological abuse and evictions.

Deep-seated refugee-as-threat narratives, reflected in 77% public support for border closures (UNHCR-Ipsos 2024), on June 30, 2024, Kayseri incident of sexual assault escalated into days of violent protest against refugees leading to displacement of 3,000 refugees and close down of 24 refugee-owned businesses. STL protection reports observed there was increased restrictions in accessing services after the Kayseri incident with municipalities removing Arabic information messages, making it more difficult to access services for lack of information. Evidence shows that discrimination severely disrupts service provision across multiple sectors, disproportionately impacting marginalized populations. Survivors of gender-based violence and child labourers risk losing access to critical protective services, perpetuating cycles of abuse. In healthcare settings, language barriers and insufficient Arabic-speaking professionals significantly restrict refugees' access to medical and psychological support, particularly affecting women and children.

Economic discrimination constitutes a significant barrier preventing refugees from obtaining fair employment, thereby perpetuating poverty, exploitation, and financial instability. Refugee women experience compounded economic marginalization due to intersecting barriers including language limitations and limited social networks. From a social perspective, discrimination undermines community cohesion, fosters isolation, and limits educational opportunities, deepening inequality and vulnerabilities. Bullying, and discrimination contributes to absenteeism, poor academic performance, and negatively impacts the emotional well-being.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) data reveals a strong correlation between discrimination, social exclusion, and psychological distress, with elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and behavioural issues among affected adults and children. Persistent discrimination fosters resentment, mistrust, and inter-group conflict, weakening social cohesion, particularly in temporary settlements.

Türkiye has established comprehensive anti-discrimination legal frameworks, including ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), constitutional equality guarantees, and Law No. 6701 establishing the Human Rights and Equality Institution (TİHEK). This legislation explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, belief, philosophical and political opinion, ethnic origin, and other protected characteristics, providing a comprehensive foundation for addressing discrimination against refugees. However, significant gaps persist in implementation and enforcement mechanisms, with few prosecutions despite increasing reports of discrimination. The Turkish government faces methodological challenges in collecting statistical data regarding different groups experiencing discrimination, limiting the ability to track and address systemic issues effectively. Local authorities' responses demonstrate considerable variation, ranging from proactive interventions to practices that potentially limit refugee access to essential resources.

### RISK 3

### Refoulment and Deportation

Refugees face increasing barriers to international protection, including restricted access to territory and asylum application, as well as access to basic rights such as healthcare and formal employment.<sup>19</sup> The worsening protective environment for refugees, particularly Syrians, created by the various push and pull factors such as deteriorating socio-economic conditions; increase in the anti-refugee sentiment; policy shift regarding the access to territory and registration (including the closure new registrations since June 2022<sup>20</sup>); infrastructural investments in border security<sup>21</sup>; address verification exercises; closure of neighbourhoods; and introduction of mobile migration points; etc. As a result of these policies, the Minister of Interior, Ali Yerlikaya, reported that 442,505 individuals were deported between 2020 and 2024.<sup>22</sup> These figures, however, pertain to non-Syrians, often categorized as irregular migrants, since Syrians under temporary protection cannot be deported due to the principle of non-refoulement. However, there has been claims on practice of deporting Syrians under the label of "voluntary returns". Human Rights Watch (HRW)<sup>23</sup> highlighted that between February and July 2022, Turkish authorities arbitrarily arrested, detained, and

<sup>17</sup> Southeast Türkiye Protection Sector. Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Southeast Türkiye Protection Sector. Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR and UNDP. Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> PMM. (2024). Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya: "We Stopped Migration at Its Source". <https://www.goc.gov.tr/icisleri-bakani-ali-yerlikaya-gocu-kaynaginda-durdurduk>

<sup>21</sup> Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Interior. (2024). 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. [https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kurumlar/icisleri.gov.tr/IcSite/strateji/raporlar/stratejik-planlar/ICISLERI\\_BAKANLIGI\\_2024\\_2028\\_STRATEJIK\\_PLANI.pdf](https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/kurumlar/icisleri.gov.tr/IcSite/strateji/raporlar/stratejik-planlar/ICISLERI_BAKANLIGI_2024_2028_STRATEJIK_PLANI.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> AHaber. (2024). Statements of Minister of Interior. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvCTLIDWJxQ>

<sup>23</sup> HRW. (2022). Türkiye: Hundreds of Refugees Deported to Syria. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/24/Turkiye-hundreds-refugees-deported-syria>

deported hundreds of Syrian men and boys, claiming these returns were voluntary. Despite official narratives, many Syrians have reported being coerced into signing voluntary return documents through intimidation, threats, or physical force. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced on January 10, 2025, that 792,625 Syrians have "voluntarily" returned to Syria since 2017. Notably, there has been a surge in returns with 52,622 Syrians recorded as having returned since the fall of the Assad regime, suggesting a significant shift in migration patterns potentially influenced by the political changes in Syria.<sup>24</sup>

According to the STL case management database, deportation is the third highest protection concern among the refugee adults. The STL database indicates that 10.2% of total cases involve deportation risk, with 13.1% of male cases and 9.6% of female cases reporting such concerns. However, as it is highlighted in the semi structured survey for social workers these figures likely underrepresent the actual scale of the issue, as fear of repercussions often prevents individuals from reporting deportation threats or attempts.

Refugees – particularly Syrians – confronted a dual catastrophe in the aftermath of the earthquakes: natural destruction and the threat of forcible return to the very dangers they had originally fled. Policies and actions around refugee movement and deportation became a serious protection threat following the disaster. Immediately after the earthquakes, Turkish authorities announced a temporary relaxation of rules that normally restrict refugees from leaving the province where they are registered. For 60 days, Syrian refugees in the six most affected provinces were allowed to travel to other parts of Türkiye without obtaining prior permission.<sup>25</sup> The initial policy provided temporary relief by allowing refugees in disaster-affected areas to seek alternative accommodation elsewhere, including Northwest Syria, within a specified timeframe. However, the policy's implementation proved limited and inconsistent. Upon the 60-day grace period's expiration in April 2023, displaced refugees encountered significant administrative uncertainty. The government's communication regarding residency procedures proved inadequate, with numerous refugees insufficiently informed about return or re-registration requirements. Following the grace period, Turkish authorities reinstated strict enforcement of established regulations, subjecting refugees outside designated provinces to detention during address verification. The situation deteriorated as detention and deportation instances increased among relocated refugees from earthquake-affected provinces. Syrian nationals who evacuated from regions such as Hatay or Kahramanmaraş to metropolitan areas faced arrest and removal proceedings, resulting in secondary displacement of families who had established temporary security. These actions generated widespread apprehension, restricting mobility and access to essential services within refugee communities.

Temporary accommodation centres, which were initially meant to provide shelter, have become de facto detention facilities, coercing refugees to sign "voluntary return" forms under threats or intimidation.<sup>26</sup> STL social workers report a troubling increase in seemingly unjustified deportations, particularly following recent social tension incidents in Kayseri. Field observations document a pattern where identification documents are cancelled without clear justification or due process, forcing many individuals to re-enter Türkiye through irregular channels. This creates a cycle of vulnerability and perpetual hiding that significantly impacts individuals' ability to access services and maintain stable lives.

Field observations highlight significant concerns regarding access to legal assistance in deportation cases. Social workers report instances where clients paid legal fees but received inadequate representation, creating a pattern of dual victimization through both unjust deportation and financial exploitation. This situation is particularly concerning given the complexity of deportation proceedings and the severe consequences of inadequate legal support.

The vulnerability context surrounding deportation threats is multifaceted. Documentation challenges play a central role, with 80% of STL social workers identifying people without address registration as vulnerable, and 60% noting unregistered individuals as particularly at risk. These documentation issues intersect with other vulnerabilities: extreme poverty (affecting 60% of cases), single parenthood, and health conditions create situations where individuals may be unable to maintain proper registration or may be forced into irregular living arrangements that increase deportation risk.

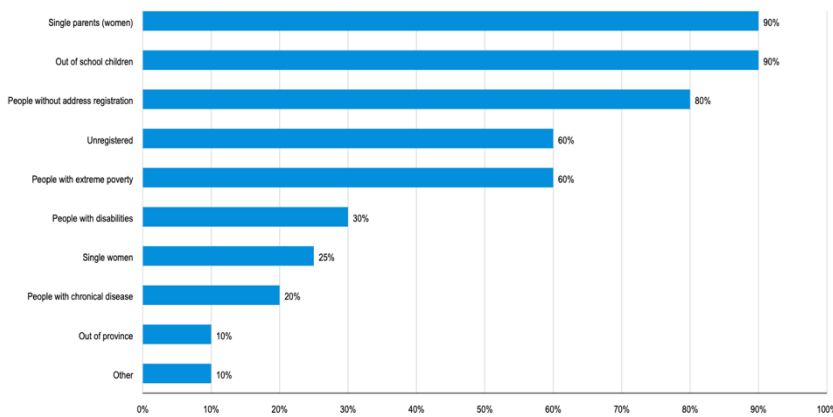
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<sup>24</sup> PMM. (2025). Statements of Minister of Interior, Ali Yerlikaya. <https://x.com/Gocidaresi/status/1877677083066818701>

<sup>25</sup> Mixed Migration Center (2023). Türkiye-Syria earthquake's impact on Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi and Somali migrants and refugees in Türkiye. [https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/292\\_Turkiye-Syria-earthquakes-impact.pdf](https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/292_Turkiye-Syria-earthquakes-impact.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Politico. Ibid.

**Figure 2: Percentages of Vulnerabilities Identified through Semi-structured Survey**



Facing the threat of refoulement, refugees adopted several coping strategies: A primary strategy was avoidance and caution. Many Syrians decided to keep a low profile: for example, not venturing out of their immediate area unless necessary, to avoid encountering police checks. Some who had moved to another city might rarely leave their apartment, effectively living in semi-hiding. This obviously had negative side effects, such as not accessing aid or opportunities, but was seen as necessary for safety. This reluctance to engage with authorities has particularly concerning

implications for protection cases. Gender-based violence survivors often refrain from seeking essential assistance due to fear of potential deportation, either of themselves or their abusers. In child protection cases, mandatory reporting requirements become fraught with complexity, as families fear being perceived as potential criminal elements and facing deportation risks. Another coping mechanism was ensuring documentation. Refugees who lost documents in the earthquake made efforts to replace them quickly or always carried any proof of status they had. Those who travelled to a new province tried to register with authorities if possible or at least informally with local community leaders, hoping it might protect them. In camps, some refugees stuck closer to official camps run by AFAD, thinking that being in a recognized camp might shield them compared to being self-settled.

The legal framework governing deportation and refoulement in Türkiye presents significant contradictions between international commitments and domestic practice. As a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Türkiye is bound by the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to territories where they would face persecution. This commitment is reinforced through domestic legislation, including the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) of 2013 (Articles 4 and 55) and the Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014 (Article 6), complemented by Constitutional protections (Article 17). However, implementation of these protections has been increasingly compromised by policy shifts focusing on security and border control. Recent changes include requirements for Syrian nationals to obtain documents directly from the Syrian Consulate rather than through notary approval, the abolition of V87 voluntary return interview protocols, and restrictions on emergency travel document extensions. Temporary accommodation centres, initially meant to provide shelter, have in some cases become de facto detention facilities where refugees face pressure to agree to return. These administrative changes have created additional barriers and vulnerabilities for refugee populations.

The humanitarian response to deportation threats faces significant challenges. While certain NGOs operate protection hotlines and legal assistance programs, field observations indicate gaps in legal representation quality, with some clients experiencing financial exploitation without receiving adequate support. Legal support through NGOs and UNHCR's legal clinic project with bar associations provides some protection through court challenges to unlawful detention or deportation. However, these mechanisms are limited in reach and effectiveness, particularly as public sentiment hardens against refugee populations. The complexity of deportation proceedings, combined with limited access to quality legal aid, creates situations of dual victimization through both unjust deportation threats and inadequate legal protection.

The intersection of deportation threats with other protection concerns creates a complex landscape where vulnerability to forced return both stems from and exacerbates other protection risks. Success in addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment to legal protection principles, supported by robust monitoring systems and accessible legal aid services. Most critically, it demands recognition that protection against refoulement is fundamental to all other humanitarian interventions, as the threat of deportation can undermine access to essential services and support systems across all sectors.

### Return of Syrians after the Fall of Assad Regime

On December 8, 2024, Syria witnessed a transformative moment when armed rebels, predominantly led by 'Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), gained control of Damascus, leading to President Bashar al-Assad's departure from the country. This development, marking the end of a 14-year civil war, has created a complex mixture of hope and uncertainty among Syrian migrants, including the 2.8 million living under temporary protection<sup>27</sup> in Türkiye. While the political transition suggests possibilities for a return, the reality on the ground reveals a more nuanced

<sup>27</sup> PMM. Ibid.



situation where security concerns, infrastructure and housing challenges, and practical considerations heavily influence refugee decision-making.

The scale of Syria's displacement crisis remains staggering. More than half of the pre-war population has been displaced, with over 13 million Syrians forced from their homes since 2011. Of these, 7 million remain internally displaced within Syria, while more than 6 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, Europe and beyond. Recent regional developments have further complicated this landscape, with over half a million people fleeing Syria from Lebanon in late 2024 due to Israeli airstrikes, while simultaneously, over 1.1 million Syrians faced new internal displacement<sup>28</sup> between November and December 2024.

Since 2017, 821,579 returns<sup>29</sup> have been recorded from Türkiye, including 81,576 since the fall of Assad regime. Türkiye has introduced a policy allowing Syrians to make temporary "go-and-see" visits to assess the situation in Syria. Under this "go-and-see visit program" implemented in since January 1, 2025, Syrian families can apply through their head of household (or the eldest adult family member if the head is unable) for permission to make up to three visits to Syria within a six-month period. Processing of voluntary returns continue in provinces and at five border crossings, while three border crossings are open for processing go-and-see visits. In the first week of implementation (January 1-8), 1,766<sup>30</sup> Syrians have already utilized this program to make exploratory visits. On 16 January, Turkish Airlines announced the resumption of flights to Damascus as of 23 January, with three flights per week.<sup>31</sup>

According to UNHCR's 11th Regional Flash Update on Syria Situation Crisis, voluntary returns from Türkiye mostly involve individuals returning alone, often due to the absence of dependent family members in Türkiye or because they intend to assess conditions in Syria before reuniting with their families.<sup>32</sup> The primary reasons for returning include improved security, political changes and family reunification, with some citing homesickness or economic considerations. Most returnees aim to return to their province of origin, with Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Hama being the most common destinations. Challenges such as property destruction, family relocation, inadequate infrastructure and security concerns influence their choices of destination. Property ownership remains a critical factor, with many returnees owning homes, though some lack the documents needed to claim them. While most returnees hold Syrian civil documentation, gaps in birth, marriage and divorce records are common.

Average number of daily returns was around 200-300 people in the pre-fall of Assad period, while it has drastically increased to an average of 1,100-1,150 since the fall of Assad. Despite this drastic increase, it can be also observed that the political change alone does not automatically trigger large scale organised returns. Instead, refugees are carefully weighing multiple pull and push factors and conditions in their decision-making process. In fact, factors influencing the decision to return to Syria include assistance status in the host country, ethnicity, gender, marital status, and the security as well as housing conditions in the place of origin.

According to MdM Türkiye's needs assessment on the intentions of Syrian communities in İzmir and Hatay<sup>33</sup> is evident on the critical role of security conditions in shaping their intention or pulse to return. In İzmir, 55% of key informants, who are primarily originating from northeast Syria, reported no intention to return at the moment, while in Hatay only 20% of the community indicated no intention to return. Another intention survey on the future plans and humanitarian needs of the Syrian migrants in Türkiye, carried out by Support to Life<sup>34</sup>, indicate 53% of the respondents' intention to stay in Türkiye, while 18.9% would like to return to Syria and 8.9% hoped to settle in a third country.

The survey also reveals geographical and contextual insights. Participants originating from conflict-prone regions like Haseke and Deir ez-Zor are less likely to return due to ongoing instability. Meanwhile, participants from Aleppo and Damascus, where security has improved, are more inclined to consider returning. Housing conditions in Syria remain a critical issue, with many participants reporting that their homes are either destroyed or heavily damaged, further discouraging return. Demographic factors such as gender and marital status also influence decisions. Women-led households and single individuals are less inclined to return, reflecting economic vulnerabilities and safety concerns. In contrast, male-headed and married households show a slightly higher intention to return.

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024, December 12). Syria Flash Update No. 5: Recent Developments in Syria.

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-flash-update-no-5-recent-developments-syria-12-december-2024>

<sup>29</sup> Presidency of Migration Management. (2025, March 18). The 15th Migration Board Meeting was Held Under the Chairmanship of Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya.

<https://www.goc.gov.tr/icerileri-bakani-ali-yerlikayanin-baskanliginda-15-goc-kurulu-toplantisi-gerceklestirildi>

<sup>30</sup> Presidency of Migration Management (PMM). (2025, January 10). Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya: 52,622 Syrians Made Voluntary, Safe, Dignified, and Orderly Returns in One Month.

<https://www.goc.gov.tr/icerileri-bakani-ali-yerlikaya-bir-ayda-52-bin-622-suriyeli-gonullu-guvenli-onurlu-ve-duzenli-geri-donus-yapti>

<sup>31</sup> Associated Press. (2025, January 16). Turkish Airlines to start passenger flights to Damascus next week in a sign of normalizing relations.

<https://apnews.com/article/turkish-airlines-damascus-flights-3fc385df53d33653db0acc7a174ea0e2>

<sup>32</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2025, January 18). Syria Situation Crisis: Regional Flash Update #11.

<https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-11>

<sup>33</sup> Médecins du Monde (MdM). (2025, January). Rapid Needs Assessment on the Intentions of Syrian Communities in Türkiye to Return to Their Hometowns in Syria," ReliefWeb.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/turkiye/rapid-needs-assessment-intentions-syrian-communities-turkiye-return-their-hometowns-syria-january-2025>

<sup>34</sup> Support to Life. (2025, January 15). Intention Survey Report on the Future Plans and Humanitarian Needs of Syrian Refugees in Türkiye.

<https://www.supporttolife.org/announcements/intention-survey-report-on-the-future-plans-and-humanitarian-needs-of-syrian-refugees-in-turkiye-2/>

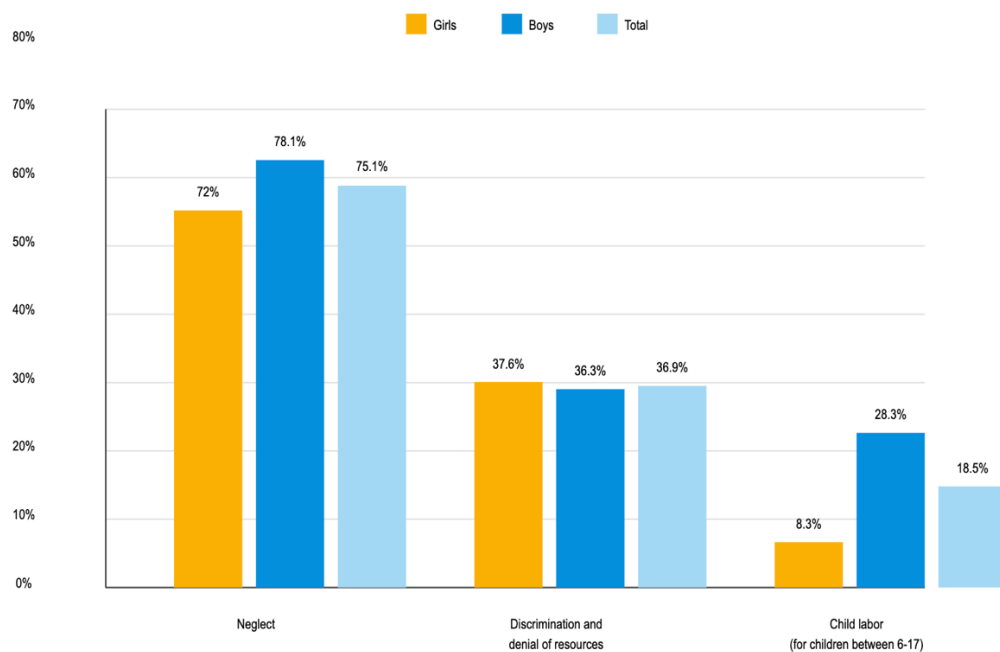
Regardless of complex pull and push factors and the characteristics as well as the priorities of the Syrian community in Türkiye, ensuring territorial integrity of the country with a priority given to inclusive governance system and improvement of safety and security conditions are most important elements in determining the return decisions of Syrian migrants. Until the fall of Assad regime on December 8, 2024, EU had a position for 'no normalization, lifting of sanctions or reconstruction until a political transition'<sup>35</sup>. With Bashar al-Assad gone and his autocracy in ruins, Foreign Affairs Council of EU reached the political agreement<sup>36</sup> to begin easing sanctions on Syria to give a boost to Syrian economy and help the country get back on its feet on January 27, 2025. Diplomats in Brussels<sup>37</sup> believe there is enough consensus to make the decision but caution the sanctions will not be lifted, in the sense of permanently erased. Instead, they will be "suspended" and coupled with a "fallback mechanism" that can reinstate the penalties if HTS fails to deliver on its promises of inclusive governance.

Even prior to this decision, there has been already humanitarian exemptions to the EU's Syria sanction regime. On January 17, 2025, EC announced the provision of new humanitarian support to Syrians, both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, for an amount of €235 million for 2025.<sup>38</sup> However, despite these exemptions and derogations for humanitarian aid, NGOs face a complex, costly landscape in their operations. A 2023 study by the European Parliament<sup>39</sup> highlighted the "widespread refusal" of banks to process any transfers to Syria and the "chilling effect" created by the fear of violating sanctions. Therefore, restoring financial ties between Europe and Syria will be essential to ramp up assistance for reconstruction, infrastructure and public services. Lastly, considering the persistent volatility on the ground, any returns should be based on achieving protection thresholds and parameters, as set by UNHCR in 2018.<sup>40</sup>

## RISK 4 Child Protection Concerns

In the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes, the protection landscape for children has become increasingly complex and precarious. The disaster has fundamentally altered family structures through the loss of parents, emergence of new caregiving arrangements with elderly relatives, and increase in single-parent households. These changes, combined with crowded living conditions and diminished awareness of child protection issues, have created an environment where children face multiple, overlapping protection threats.

**Figure 3: Child Protection Threats by Gender in STL Case Management Database**



<sup>35</sup> European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). (2023, October). EU Sanctions on Syria. Briefing Paper PE 749.765, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/749765/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)749765\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/749765/EPRS_BRI(2023)749765_EN.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Council of the European Union. (2025, January 27). Foreign Affairs Council. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2025/01/27/>

<sup>37</sup> Jorge Liboreiro. (2025, January 27). EU is about to start suspending sanctions on Syria: How many are in place?. Euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/01/27/eu-is-about-to-start-suspending-sanctions-on-syria-how-many-are-in-place>

<sup>38</sup> European Commission. (2025, January 17). EU provides €235 million in humanitarian aid to Syrians. ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/eu-provides-eu235-million-humanitarian-aid-syrians>

<sup>39</sup> EPRS. Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2018, February). Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy: Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63223>

Analysis of STL case management data reveals three primary child protection threats that disproportionately affect different demographic groups. **Neglect** emerges as the most pervasive threat, affecting 75.1% of children, with boys showing slightly higher rates (78.1%) compared to girls (72%). This high prevalence suggests a systemic challenge in ensuring adequate childcare and supervision in the post-disaster environment. Children aged 6-9 years show the highest overall neglect rate at 78.7%, while those aged 10-13 years maintain a significant rate at 77.2%, with boys in this age group showing particular vulnerability at 83.7%.

The physical manifestation of neglect is particularly evident in container settlements, where inadequate infrastructure creates immediate risks to child safety. The absence of designated, secure play areas not only limits children's opportunities for socialization but also exposes them to potential physical harm. An incident in August 2024 at the Akpınar Temporary Accommodation Centre in Adıyaman tragically underscored these risks, where a child was fatally struck by a vehicle. Container shelters pose increased risks of fire hazards, electric shocks, and domestic accidents, particularly affecting unsupervised children. The economic hardship and the trauma faced by parents lead to inadequate care and supervision. These circumstances are exacerbated by the disruption of extended family support systems and community networks that traditionally helped safeguard children's well-being. The contribution of extended family members, and crowded households to neglect situations becomes apparent in multi-generational households living in temporary settlements, where overcrowding and resource scarcity can lead to overlooked child needs. Neglect manifests differently across gender lines, shaped by socio-economic pressures and traditional role expectations. For boys, neglect often stems from their increasing engagement in child labour as they grow older, particularly in communities facing severe financial hardship. This economic pressure forces many boys to spend extended periods away from home or school, working in conditions with no adult supervision. Conversely, girls face neglect through the premature imposition of domestic responsibilities and caregiving duties within their households, often managing household chores while caring for younger siblings or elderly relatives.

**Discrimination and denial of resources** emerges as the second most prevalent threat, affecting 36.9% of children with remarkably similar rates between girls (37.6%) and boys (36.3%). This consistency across genders indicates a broader structural issue in resource access and distribution rather than gender-specific vulnerabilities. Children, like adults, also suffers from the lack of access to the basic utilities and facilities as well as the discriminatory practices in front of accessing public services and aid distribution. According to the semi structured survey by social workers and the STL Protection Situation Reports, children are mostly face denial of registration, education and health services, however the access to education is the most prominent issue. Among Syrian families, difficulties in registering children for school contribute to low attendance rates.<sup>41</sup> Peer bullying in the education sector is a growing concern in Türkiye, affecting both refugee and Turkish host communities. This issue poses significant barriers to education, leading to absenteeism, poor academic performance, and long-term emotional and psychological harm, including deliberate deprivation of child rights, violence, abuse, self-imposed isolation as the country continues to host large populations of refugees, it is critical to address peer bullying to foster inclusivity and ensure equitable education for all children.<sup>42</sup>

**Child labour** presents perhaps the starkest gender disparity among protection threats. Affecting 18.5% of children aged 6-17 overall, it shows significantly higher rates among boys (28.3%) compared to girls (8.3%). The prevalence of child labour increases with age, particularly affecting boys in the 10-13 and 14-17 age groups, where rates reach approximately 35%. Similarly, according to the STL Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) assessment data, 27,7% of total out of school children identified as child labour which is the top reason for being out of school. The rate is significantly higher in boys with 41,8% compared to girls with 7,7%. Insights from a semi-structured survey conducted by social workers reveal that these children are engaged in a range of sectors, including scrap collection, seasonal agricultural work, industrial labour, and waste collection. The mortality rate among migrant child workers is particularly alarming at 12%, double the overall migrant worker death rate, with Syrian children comprising nearly all deceased migrant child workers.<sup>43</sup> While economic hardship remains the primary driver of child labour, several other factors contribute. Documentation issues, particularly address registration problems, prevent school enrolment. Post-earthquake school closures have diminished students' motivation to return. Discrimination and bullying in schools increase dropout rates, leading families to choose work over idleness. Cultural norms, especially regarding boys' employment, along with widespread scepticism about education's value for future employment, further influence families' decisions to prioritize work over schooling.

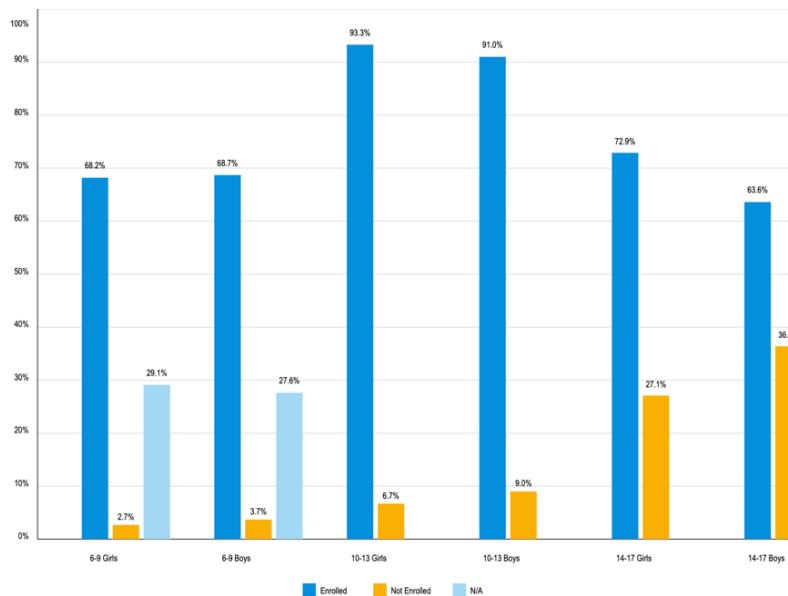
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<sup>41</sup> Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation. (2024). Adolescents After the February 6 Earthquakes: Supporting Adolescents in Disaster and Crisis Situations. <https://www.tapv.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/6-Subat-Depremlerinin-Ardindan-Ergenler.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> UNICEF. (2024). Advocacy Note on Addressing Peer Bullying in Türkiye's Education Sector. <https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/reports/addressing-peer-bullying-t%C3%BCrkiyes-education-sector>

<sup>43</sup> Health and Safety Labor Watch Türkiye. (2024). In MESEM, in the fields, on the streets, in industry, in construction... At least 695 child workers have lost their lives in the last eleven years. <https://www.isigmeclisi.org/21015-mesem-de-tarlada-sokakta-sanayide-insaatta-son-on-bir-yilda-en-az-695>  
<https://www.isigmeclisi.org/21015-mesem-de-tarlada-sokakta-sanayide-insaatta-son-on-bir-yilda-en-az-695>

**Figure 4: School Enrolment Status by Age Group and Gender in STL CBI Assessment Data**



Local mechanisms and coping strategies have evolved in response to these protection challenges, though their effectiveness varies significantly. Community-based childcare networks sometimes emerge in temporary settlements, providing informal supervision and support. However, these mechanisms often struggle with limited resources and capacity. The Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) program serves as a formal coping mechanism, providing financial incentives for families to keep children in school rather than sending them to work. Children and adolescents also show resilience. Some working children attend second-shift schools or informal education centres (run by NGOs) so they don't entirely forgo education. In refugee communities, youths often support each other; older siblings might work so younger ones can study, hoping to break the cycle.

The consequences of child protection failures manifest across multiple dimensions and timeframes. In the immediate term, children face physical risks from unsafe environments and lack of supervision. The psychological impact is particularly concerning, as neglect compounds existing emotional vulnerabilities stemming from discrimination and earthquake-related trauma. The educational dimension presents perhaps the most far-reaching consequences, as separation from schools' protective environments exposes children to additional risks while undermining future opportunities and perpetuating a cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

**Table 1: Reasons for not attending school data from STL CBI assessment data**

Reason for not attending school	Female	Male	Total
Child labour	7,7	41,8	27,7
Neglect	21,6	5,8	12,4
Children are not interested	5,7	10,5	8,5
Family cannot afford school equipment	7,2	8,0	7,7
School is too far	9,8	5,5	7,2
Disability	5,2	7,3	6,4
Helping at home with household chores or taking care of family members	13,4	0,4	5,8
Bullying at school	4,6	4,7	4,7
Address registration problems	5,2	4,0	4,5
Health problems	5,2	3,6	4,3
Other	4,6	1,5	2,8
School is not safe	1,5	2,2	1,9
Psychological problems	1,5	1,8	1,7
Language barriers	1,5	1,5	1,5



Don't know	1,5	1,1	1,3
Too young under school age	1,0	0,4	0,6
Mixed gender class	0,5	0,0	0,2

The legal framework for child protection in Türkiye draws from both international and domestic sources. Türkiye is party to key international agreements including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1994), the Lanzarote Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2012), and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2001). Domestically, Article 10 of the Turkish Constitution guarantees fundamental rights regardless of status, while specific protections are outlined in the Child Protection Law 5395, Turkish Civil Code, and Social Services Law 2828. However, this robust legal framework faces significant implementation challenges in the post-disaster context. The workload created by concentrated refugee populations in certain provinces, language barriers, and discrimination creates gaps between legal protections and practical realities. The expansion of innovative practices, such as Child Monitoring Centres established under the Lanzarote Convention, has been disrupted by the crisis and disasters. Moreover, despite the presence of numerous NGOs in the field, significant gaps persist in specialized services, particularly in areas requiring specific expertise such as Best Interest Determination for children – a critical component in child protection cases within migration contexts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### RISK 1

### Gender Based Violence

#### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Expand GBV Services:** Deploy mobile GBV response units in hard-to-reach areas, providing psychosocial support, legal aid, and cash for protection.
- **Safe Spaces:** Increase safe spaces for women and girls in temporary shelters, ensuring privacy and security.
- **Community Engagement:** Establish peer support groups for refugee women; develop male engagement programs for GBV prevention.
- **Capacity Building:** Train humanitarian workers, local authorities, and communities on GBV prevention and survivor-centred approaches.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Partner with local organisations to raise awareness on GBV prevention, services, and referral mechanisms.
- **Gender Integration:** Mainstream gender-transformative approaches and protection into community programs.

#### INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- Strengthen inter-agency protocols for GBV case management, referral pathways, and service mapping.
- Enhance coordination between health, legal, and protection sectors to ensure holistic support for GBV survivors.
- Facilitate joint capacity-building initiatives for local and international actors on GBV response.

#### DONORS

- Fund expansion of women's shelters, addressing service gaps in Adiyaman and Hatay.
- Provide dedicated funding for mobile GBV response units and infrastructure improvements (e.g., lighting, washing facilities, secure spaces).
- Establish funding streams for psychological support services, addressing cases of psychological violence.
- Prioritize funding for GBV prevention, response, and rehabilitation programs.
- Support research on the long-term impacts of GBV in disaster contexts.

### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Awareness and Training:** Develop outreach programs to address systemic discrimination and train service providers on anti-discriminatory practices and cultural sensitivity.
- **Monitoring and Social Cohesion:** Strengthen community-led monitoring for equitable aid distribution and implement structured social cohesion programs through MHPSS and livelihoods to combat prejudice and foster solidarity.

### INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- Establish centralised complaints mechanisms and enhance accountability strategies to address discrimination.
- Form sub-working groups on Anti-Discrimination and Misinformation.
- Develop SOPs for equitable aid distribution and create an inter-agency group to recommend needs-based resource allocation.
- Advocate with authorities to reduce legal and bureaucratic barriers for marginalized and vulnerable groups.

### DONORS

- Provide flexible funding to address systemic discrimination and respond to emerging needs.
- Invest in capacity-building for local organisations to promote equitable service delivery.

### HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Awareness and Outreach:** Conduct community campaigns on refugee rights, protection against forced returns, and access to legal aid; partner with local organisations to share accurate information on “voluntary return” agreements.
- **Legal Support:** Expand legal clinics for refugees at risk of refoulement, offering free counselling, representation, and documentation assistance; create rapid response teams with legal counsellors for immediate deportation risks.
- **Protection Monitoring:** Strengthen mechanisms to document refoulement incidents and advocate against unlawful practices; embed protection focal points in local networks to build trust and address concerns confidentially.
- **Community Training:** Train volunteers to safely identify and report refoulement risks.

### INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- Develop a coordinated protection and border monitoring strategy, including intention surveys and advocacy at national and provincial levels.
- Engage with the governmental authorities to reinforce adherence to non-refoulement under international law.
- Establish inter-agency referral mechanisms for timely legal aid and protection services; standardize protocols for addressing deportation risks.
- Work with authorities to ensure voluntary return processes comply with international standards.
- Train law enforcement and migration authorities on refugee rights and non-refoulement principles; organise joint workshops to improve cooperation.

### DONORS

- Fund legal aid services, community outreach programs, and capacity-building for local NGOs to provide timely assistance.
- Invest in monitoring systems to track and report refoulement incidents and support the publication of periodic transparency reports.
- Prioritize programs offering durable solutions, such as resettlement or local integration, to reduce reliance on forced returns.

## HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- **Childcare and Protection:** Establish community-based childcare networks and child-friendly spaces in temporary settlements.
- **Parenting and Family Support:** Develop parenting programs tailored to age and gender needs; implement family support programs combining cash assistance for child protection outcomes.
- **Mobile Teams and Early Intervention:** Create mobile child protection teams for monitoring and early action.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Implement social-emotional learning programs and psychosocial support for children.
- **Child Labor Prevention:** Collaborate with local authorities to enforce child labour laws and provide vocational training for adolescents and youth.
- **Feedback and Reporting:** Establish child-friendly feedback mechanisms and strengthen mandatory child protection reporting procedures.

## INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

- **Screening and Referrals:** Enhance standardized screening tools for identifying at-risk children and implement clear referral pathways between education, protection, and psychosocial services.
- **Service Mapping and Gap Analysis:** Regularly update statutory service mapping and conduct joint gap analyses.
- **Training and Advocacy:** Develop joint training programs on child protection in emergencies and safeguarding; create advocacy strategies to address systemic issues like peer bullying, school enrolment, neglect, and substance use prevention.

## DONORS

- **Childcare Funding:** Establish dedicated funding for child supervision programs in temporary settlements to address neglect.
- **Support Vulnerable Families:** Fund programs for single-parent households and families with elderly or disabled members influencing childcare.
- **Safe Spaces:** Support the development of safe areas and childcare facilities.
- **Cash Transfers:** Create conditional cash transfer programs to address socio-economic vulnerabilities and child protection concerns.
- **Integrated Programs:** Fund integrated education, psychosocial, and child protection programs.

## About This Report

This Protection Analysis Report was developed as a collaborative initiative between DKH and STL to provide a comprehensive assessment of protection threats and intersectional vulnerabilities affecting populations in the earthquake-impacted provinces of Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, and Adiyaman. The report development process was led by DKH, while the analysis draws primarily on STL's extensive datasets from protection case management, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities, and cash-based intervention (CBI) assessments.

The report aims to inform evidence-based programming for both organisations and their partners, while also providing valuable insights for the broader humanitarian community, donors, and policymakers working to address protection needs in post-earthquake Türkiye. By identifying critical protection risks and their underlying factors, this analysis supports the development of more effective, targeted interventions that respond to the specific needs of vulnerable populations, particularly refugees and earthquake-affected communities.

## Methodology

The protection analysis employed a mixed-methods approach guided by the Protection Analytical Framework (PAF), which structures analysis through four dimensions: context, current threats, effects on population, and response capacities. The PAF follows the protection risk equation:  $\text{Risk} = \text{Threat} \times \text{Vulnerability} \div \text{Capacity}$ . The analysis was based on analysing multiple sets of data and information as following:

### Quantitative Data

- STL's Protection case management records of 673 individuals collected between January and September 2024.
- Cash-Based Intervention assessments of 2,087 households covering 11,099 individuals conducted between June and September 2024.
- MHPSS assessment data from 394 individuals performed between January and September 2024.
- Cash Based Intervention Post Distribution Survey data from 384 individuals in April 2024.

**Qualitative Analysis** included: 18 situational reports, semi-structured surveys with 17 field professionals, and review of 30 national and international documents.

### Limitations

The study's data collection focuses on people with defined protection cases, relying heavily on individual referrals and risking underrepresentation of those lacking access to services. Supplementary approaches — including MHPSS and Protection situation reports, semi-structured surveys, and secondary resources — offer broader insights while mitigating this bias. However, the post-earthquake context remains highly dynamic. Political shifts, such as changes in Syria, can rapidly reshape migration patterns and alter findings. Despite these challenges, the research emphasized ethical considerations, data protection, and triangulation to enhance validity. Nevertheless, the limitations underscore the need for ongoing updates and further investigation.





## Organisational Background

**Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (Diakonie Emergency Aid – DKH)**, a Germany-based international NGO, has been providing humanitarian aid since 1954. We support people who have fallen victims to natural disasters, war and forced displacement. We assist those unable to recover from shocks without any form of external assistance. We are committed to supporting people in need in forgotten crises that receive little to no public attention.

**Support to Life (STL)** is an independent humanitarian organisation established in Türkiye in 2005, with the primary mission of helping disaster and crisis-affected communities meet their basic needs and rights. STL implements programs across four main sectors: Emergency Assistance, Refugee Support, Child Protection in Seasonal Agriculture, and Capacity Building.

## Imprint

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