

# Courage and Resilience of Refugees Commemorated on World Refugee Day

UNHCR's [Global Trends](#) report suggests that over 123 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide. This equates to 1 in every 67 individuals in the world who have been uprooted from their homes due to war, violence and persecution. Türkiye remained among the top refugee-hosting countries globally, with some 3 million refugees - [Global Report 2024](#).



*Shaimaa, who had to flee Syria in 2015, is currently continuing her education at Istanbul University. Türkiye's inclusive policies made it possible for refugee youth to pursue their dreams. On this World Refugee Day, solidarity means honouring refugees with actions, not just words.*

## Highlights

- Turkish Vice President Mr. Cevdet Yılmaz [announced](#) that more than 273,000 Syrians voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria from 9 December 2024 through mid-June, along with 27,000 people who returned to Syria on go-and-see visits to make a well-informed decision about voluntary return. UNHCR estimates that between 8 December 2024 and 19 June 2025, some 596,579 Syrian refugees have returned home from neighbouring countries.
- On 12 June, UNHCR Türkiye surpassed 200,000 voluntary repatriation movements monitored by the office in coordination with the Government. This milestone reflects a 73 per cent coverage of the officially reported figures.
- From 16 to 19 June, the [15by30 Refugee Higher Education Conference](#) took place in Istanbul to highlight the role of higher education in sustainable humanitarian responses, strengthen refugee youth leadership, and advance towards the [15by30 Roadmap](#). On 16 June, UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi delivered an opening speech and participated in a panel discussion alongside Professor Alexander Betts from the University of Oxford.
- Since 2023, UNHCR and the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports have engaged in a unique partnership with the [FC Barca Foundation](#) to support refugee and host community youth through sports initiatives in Türkiye. In June, the parties agreed to extend this initiative for another year.

# Recent Developments

## National

PMM's third "National Action Plan (NAP) on Combatting Human Trafficking (2025-2030)" was adopted on 16 May. UNHCR contributed to relevant discussions through participation in several workshops and consultations held with line ministries, public institutions, international organisations, and NGOs. While there is very limited reference to international organisations, UNHCR is the only international organisation addressed as a 'relevant institution' under an activity that aims to conduct analysis to identify human trafficking cases during international protection registration, data update, and status determination interview processes.

On 16 June, UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi joined the [15by30 Refugee Higher Education Conference](#) in Istanbul. Ms. Li Rosi, alongside Professor Alexander Betts from the University of Oxford, attended a panel discussion focused on the critical role of higher education institutions in refugee-hosting countries as well as the role of refugee students in driving localised, sustainable responses. Over 5,000 delegates representing academia, government institutions, civil society, international organisations, and private sector from more than 90 countries attended the conference. This high-level gathering of stakeholders was co-convened by the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN), the Council of Higher Education of Türkiye (YÖK), and UNHCR, and supported by [Times Higher Education](#). The discussions explored how stakeholders can come together to accelerate progress toward the [15by30 target](#), aiming to reach 15 per cent refugee enrolment in higher education by 2030. Türkiye's achievement of a 12 per cent enrolment rate for Syrian refugees in higher education was highlighted as a best practice.



UNHCR Representative speaking at the 15by30 Refugee Higher Education Conference in Istanbul.

On 18 June, Ms. Li Rosi met with the Governor of Istanbul, Mr. Davut Gül, and discussed the importance of structured coordination to promote inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in livelihood activities. The Governor proposed establishment of a joint commission with UNHCR to support and enhance coordination in the livelihood sector. UNHCR will engage with PMM to move forward towards implementation of the proposal.

## Regional

Following the recent escalation between Israel and Iran, Türkiye has enhanced security measures along its shared borders. As of 22 June, no significant increase in border movements from Iran to Türkiye has been reported. UNHCR, the only UN Agency with a permanent presence in Van, is closely monitoring developments and is prepared to provide technical and operational support to the Turkish authorities to ensure an effective and humane response, if required.

On 24 June, the second "Trilateral Ministers' Meeting between Bulgaria, Greece, and Türkiye" took place in Sofia. During the high-level dialogue, the respective Ministers exchanged views on the impact of migration movements in the region and across borders. ([Learn more](#)).

## Global

Ahead of World Refugee Day (20 June), UNHCR published the Global Trends Report. The report reveals that by the end of 2024, over 123 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict, persecution, violence, and human rights violations—a record high and nearly double the figure from a decade ago. Türkiye, with some 3 million refugees—primarily Syrians—remains a major host country. Through his [message on World Refugee Day 2025](#), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, called upon the global community, including governments, institutions, companies, and individuals, to stand in solidarity with refugees.

# Protection-Assistance & Advocacy

## Protection and Access to Services

During May, the UNHCR Türkiye Counselling Line answered 16,728 calls from 75 provinces. Most of the callers with specific needs who reached the counselling line are Syrian nationals. Last month, UNHCR counselled and intervened in 1,128 cases involving administrative detention and negative government decisions on asylum applications.

In May, UNHCR provided in-kind assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees, including medical support through the contracted clinic for 109 individuals and the contracted pharmacy for 105 individuals. Additionally, 990 individuals received transportation assistance. Furthermore, in April, through the support provided to the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), 2,233 refugees received direct assistance through Social Service Centres (SSCs) in 29 provinces. Due to ongoing funding constraints, this support to the MoFSS will phase out by July 2025, although thousands of vulnerable people will still be in need of assistance.

On 16 May, UNHCR conducted a remote Best Interest Determination (BID) panel, during which six cases involving 17 children—two Afghans and 15 Syrians—were presented and approved for resettlement consideration and family reunification. The cases necessitated a BID due to various identified protection risks, including family separation, resettlement with only one parent, challenges faced by earthquake survivors, sexual abuse, gender-based violence, and others.

## Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

Between 5 and 7 May, a workshop on international protection procedures for Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) was held in Ankara. A total of 77 participants attended the workshop, which aimed to inform PDMMs about standard practices and recent developments in the field. During the event, the PMM Department of Status Determination addressed questions and challenges faced by PDMMs regarding the use of IT platforms developed by PMM, such as GöcBil, GöcNet, and GöcBulut.

On 30 May, UNHCR held a training-of-trainers session focusing on anti-fraud measures, with the participation of the PMM and PDMMs. The training addressed key topics, including fraud identification and prevention, fraud risk management, and the use of relevant tools and materials for future training delivery. A total of 101 PDMM staff attended the training.

**Delivery of core relief items to border authorities:** In May 2025, UNHCR and its partners delivered 4,847 core relief items, including baby food, water, hygiene products, and clothing for over 1,000 individuals through the border authorities and Gendarmerie (the law enforcement force under the Ministry of Interior) in İzmir, Balıkesir, Muğla, Edirne, and Kırklareli to meet the basic needs of individuals who had been rescued. However, due to funding constraints, this assistance will be phased out once the current stock is exhausted.

## Legal Aid and Legal Assistance

Since January 2025, UNHCR, in partnership with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), provided legal assistance to a total of 3,217 refugees and asylum-seekers (including 660 individuals in removal centres and temporary accommodation centres) for 4,791 cases, through six legal clinics across Türkiye. Furthermore, the legal clinics reached out to 829 individuals, including refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, through awareness-raising sessions.

In partnership with UNHCR, UTBA has launched a new [webpage](#) to publish weekly compilations created by UNHCR Türkiye, featuring Country of Origin Information (Col) from publicly available sources, as well as translated versions of UNHCR's position papers and guides on specific countries of origin. This webpage is accessible to the public, providing up-to-date Col material.

On 17-18 May, UNHCR supported the Ankara Bar Association (BA) by facilitating two sessions with 150 lawyers regarding use of Col material and risk profiles in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, as well as on the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights regarding matters related to administrative detention and deportation. These sessions formed part of the second in-person training organised by the Refugee Rights Centre of Ankara BA for lawyers registered on the legal aid list of Ankara BA.

# Support for Solutions

## Voluntary Returns

On 13 June, Turkish Vice President Mr. Cevdet Yılmaz inaugurated the Gaziantep Voluntary Return Counselling and Support Centre, which will provide institutional support for a dignified, voluntary, and safe return process. UNHCR, through its partner Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (SGDD-ASAM), has allocated two UNHCR-funded staff members to support the centre. Vice President Yılmaz affirmed that Türkiye is determined to make the return process systematic and inclusive by disseminating the Gaziantep Model. He mentioned UNHCR as a key partner in the return process, working closely with PMM, and expressed gratitude to the UN Agencies, along with relevant actors working in the field.



Inauguration ceremony of the Gaziantep Voluntary Return Counselling and Support Centre.

## Resettlement

In May, UNHCR submitted a total of 103 cases involving 331 individuals for resettlement consideration, mostly to Australia and Canada, with a smaller number being submitted to France, Ireland, Sweden, and Finland. In total, 2,237 refugees have been submitted for resettlement in 2025. Approximately 1,479 refugees have departed Türkiye for resettlement in 2025.

## Livelihoods

On 18 June, the UNHCR Representative participated in the **IFC–UNHCR Private Sector Roundtable** in Istanbul. The Representative delivered the opening speech, highlighting the private sector's critical role in advancing refugee economic inclusion. She emphasised the significance of private sector leadership in bridging gaps between legal entitlements and practice, and promoting financial inclusion, aligned with Türkiye's national priorities. The roundtable fostered dialogue and collaborative action for refugee self-reliance and economic resilience.

The UNHCR Representative met with the President of **MUSIAD**, a prominent Turkish business association, and solicited their support to increase formal employment opportunities for Syrians under Temporary Protection who are exempted from obtaining work permits. The discussion underscored the importance of conducting a job market gap analysis to align labour supply with demand. The Representative also met with high-officials of Turkish Airlines and advocated for a potential partnership to support fundraising efforts for voluntary returns of Syrians.

## Social Cohesion:

Since 2023, UNHCR and the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports have engaged in a unique partnership with the **FC Barca Foundation** to support refugee and host community youth through sports initiatives in Türkiye. In June, the parties agreed to extend this initiative for another year. With the extension, UNHCR will reach 1,020 children and approximately 5,000 family members, aiming to enhance social cohesion among refugee and host communities. The project will also assist in developing skills for youth conflict management through sports.

## Inter-Agency Coordination

On 20 May, UNHCR, as part of the National Protection Working Group, co-organised a workshop on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons in Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) interventions, in collaboration with the Ageing and Disability Inclusion Task Team and the Türkiye PSEA Network. The workshop brought together approximately 25 stakeholders to ensure that PSEA interventions are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the specific needs of older persons 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 May 2025.