

UNHCR cherishes partnerships with academia and advocates for promoting higher education for refugees.

Thousands of refugee scholars and graduates are utilising their education and skills to secure employment, while also advancing innovation and research that can improve lives. UNHCR, in coordination with the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), and academic institutions, continues its endeavours to ensure that young people who have been forced to flee their homes are not deprived of their right to learn, to grow, and to contribute to the societies in which they live.



UNHCR Representative Ms Angela Li Rosi, along with Mr Mahmut Özgener, President of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the Board of Directors of İzmir University of Economics, and Prof. Dr Yusuf Hakan Abacıoğlu, Rector of İzmir University of Economics, at the 2025-2026 Academic Year Opening Ceremony.

Highlights

- According to the latest figures shared by the Minister of Interior on [social media](#), as of 29 September 2025, over **509,387** Syrians have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria since the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024. During the same period, UNHCR monitored and interviewed over 70 per cent of all recorded returns.
- On 22 September, UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi delivered the inaugural lecture titled *“The Power of Education: Inclusion, Solidarity and Shared Futures”* as the guest of honour of the 2025-2026 Academic Year Opening Ceremony of İzmir University of Economics. During the lecture, Ms. Li Rosi reflected on the growing trends of displacement, their impact on young people and their education. Ms. Li Rosi commended the courage and determination of refugee students to continue their studies despite immense challenges. UNHCR supports thousands of refugee students in Türkiye each year through the [DAFI programme](#) and cash grant for higher education. (Read more: the [story of Eman](#), a determined refugee student.)

Recent Developments

National

On 4 September, the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA) [signed a cooperation protocol](#) aimed at “protecting and promoting the fundamental rights and freedoms of foreigners and facilitating the professional activities of lawyers”. The protocol also aims to ensure consistency in the implementation of foreigner’s law and enhance institutional cooperation.

On 29 August, the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) [announced](#) that starting from the second quarter of 2025, Syrian refugees under temporary protection will be included in Türkiye’s gross domestic product (GDP) per person calculations. Past data from 2013 to 2024 has also been updated using figures from the PMM. This change will be reflected in future national, sectoral, and provincial economic reports.

Regional

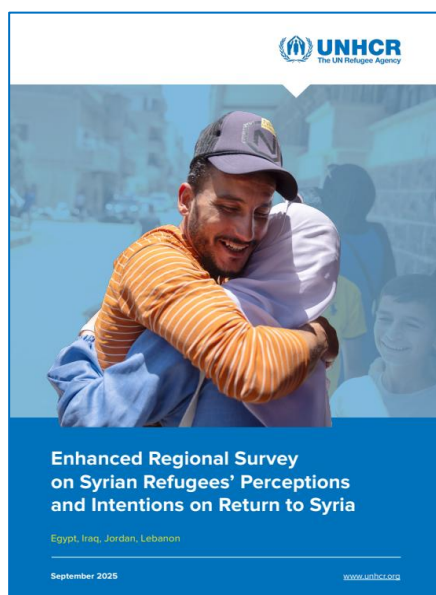
On 2 September, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Ms. Kelly T. Clements concluded a [five-day visit to Lebanon and Syria](#). During her visit, Ms. Clements met with Lebanese and Syrian officials, refugees who have recently returned to Syria, as well as newly arrived refugees in Lebanon.

To capture refugees’ perspectives in this rapidly evolving context, UNHCR and the World Bank launched a joint effort to generate timely, relevant data on refugee return intentions, motivations, and barriers - that would inform policy, programming, and investment decisions. On 11 September, UNHCR published the report of the [Enhanced Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees’ Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria](#) (conducted in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon). The key findings suggest that **18 per cent** of the Syrian refugees still residing in the host countries intend to return home **within the next 12 months**. Overall, **80 per cent** of respondents express a desire to return to Syria one day.

As of 24 September, since the fall of the Assad government on 8 December 2024, within just nine months, **1 million** Syrian refugees hosted in the neighbouring countries returned to Syria - with almost half of them returning from Türkiye. Sustained support from the international community is needed so millions more can follow. In addition to those returning from outside Syria, another 1.8 million people who were displaced inside the country have also returned to their areas of origin – a sign of the great hope and high expectations Syrians have following the political transition in the country. In a [press release](#), UN High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Filippo Grandi said, “**This is a rare opportunity to resolve one of the largest displacement crises in the world**. The international community, private sector, and Syrians in the diaspora must come together and intensify their efforts to support recovery and ensure that the voluntary return of those displaced by conflict is sustainable and dignified, and they are not forced to flee again”.

Global

The 94th meeting of the Standing Committee of UNHCR took place from 8 to 9 September 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. During the meeting, the EU [reaffirmed](#) its strong support for UNHCR’s core protection mandate and its ability to respond to both acute emergencies and protracted situations, with particular attention to persons in vulnerable situations. The EU representative also expressed concerns about the growing funding gap and urged partners to contribute to sustainable responses.



Cover page of the survey report on return intentions.



Protection-Assistance & Advocacy

Communicating with Communities

In August, UNHCR disseminated information regarding the **Refugee-Led Innovation Fund** and actively encouraged engagement from relevant stakeholders. The fund offers a valuable opportunity for organisations led by forcibly displaced and stateless individuals to propose and test innovative solutions to the challenges faced within their communities across the world, including in Türkiye. Comprehensive details—including eligibility criteria, the application process, and communication materials—were shared via the dedicated [webpage](#).

Protection and Access to Services

In August 2025, UNHCR and partners delivered **875** core relief items, including baby food, water, hygiene products, and clothing for **nearly 650** individuals through the border authorities and Gendarmerie (law enforcement force under the Ministry of Interior) in İzmir, Balıkesir, and Muğla to address the basic needs of individuals who were rescued. However, due to funding constraints, this assistance will be phased out as soon as the current stock is exhausted.

In August, UNHCR counselled and intervened in **881 cases** involving administrative detention and negative government decisions on asylum applications. Of these, 229 were related to queries and counselling regarding administrative detention and access to the national asylum procedure in Türkiye, and 652 were cases that received negative government decisions (469 rejection of asylum claims, 68 deportation orders, and 115 implicit withdrawals of asylum applications/termination of assessments due to lack of compliance with the regulations, such as not appearing before the authorities for interview on three consecutive scheduled dates). Furthermore, during August, UNHCR Türkiye Counselling Line responded to **17,354 calls** from 77 provinces. The main line of inquiry was resettlement, followed by legal assistance.

Support for people with disability is one of the critical unmet basic needs, along with severe medical conditions (including mental health and psychosocial support). UNHCR is working together with its partners, including Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association (MSYDD) and Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (SGDD-ASAM), to address existing challenges and generate solutions through supportive and preventive referrals, information sessions, advocacy efforts and counselling activities. The partners also ensure translation services, accessible physical spaces, and digital tools that cater to persons with disabilities.



A service-providing centre in Istanbul supported by UNHCR.

Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

On 8 August 2025, UNHCR delivered an in-person training in Mardin (southern Türkiye) for 25 participants from 11 NGO partners actively working in the field. The training focused on access to asylum in Türkiye and covered key topics including the International Protection Law, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), and Appeal Procedures. The session continued with a segment on the use of Country-of-Origin Information (COI) and decision-making stages, supported by case studies.

Legal Aid and Legal Assistance

UNHCR, in partnership with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), continued its support to six Legal Clinics (LCs) to provide legal assistance and legal counselling services to refugees and asylum-seekers in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Van, Hatay, Kilis and Malatya, including in Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs) and Removal Centres (RCs). From January to August 2025, these six LCs provided legal assistance to **5,328** refugees and asylum-seekers (including **nearly 900** individuals in removal centres and temporary accommodation centres) for over **8,100** cases. Additionally, from January to August 2025, the legal clinics reached out to **1,298** individuals, including refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, through awareness-raising sessions.



Support for Solutions

Voluntary Returns

Within the scope of the "Strengthening National Mechanisms for Voluntary, Safe, Dignified and Orderly Returns to Syria" project, funded by the European Union (EU), UNHCR, and PMM organised the first capacity building activity in Ankara. The session, organized on 17-18 September, was attended by 39 personnel from 28 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) who are engaged in the voluntary return procedures of Syrians. Through this cooperation with the EU, UNHCR and PMM, along with PDMMs, jointly work in ensuring that the voluntary returns to Syria are safe, dignified, and orderly, by strengthening safeguards and assisting refugees expressing willingness to return in line with international standards.

Currently, UNHCR monitors returns at 22 PDMM offices in 22 provinces and at six border crossings in the south-east of Türkiye. UNHCR is also present at İstanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports in İstanbul and at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara. Voluntary returns from Adana Sarıçam TAC are also being monitored.

Social Cohesion

On 1 September, UNHCR participated in the launch of the [UNESCO World Heritage Volunteers 2025 project in Pergamon](#), organized by Dokuz Eylül University, to promote youth awareness of the site's cultural significance, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014. UNHCR referred four refugee students (two Syrian, one Iranian, one Palestinian) to join 26 student volunteers from universities in İzmir, in activities also highlighting local cuisine and traditions.



Participants of the World Heritage Volunteers project in Pergamon.

Education, Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion

UNHCR Türkiye has launched the Coursera Social Impact Programme to support refugee youth, especially those receiving DAFI scholarships and Higher Education Cash Grants, as well as members of refugee-led organizations. The programme is a global partnership between UNHCR and Coursera, offering free online courses from top universities and institutions worldwide. These courses cover various subjects, including business, data analysis, marketing, and art - available in multiple languages. Participants receive official certificates upon completion. UNHCR plans to distribute 3,000 Coursera coupons to eligible refugee youths allowing free access to the courses.

Inter-Agency Coordination

On 10 September 2025, UNHCR facilitated the fifth information session on voluntary returns with around 100 participants, aimed at strengthening partners' understanding of the current context and procedures. The meeting covered updates on Inter-Agency Protection Needs Assessment (IAPNA) Round 9, the regional refugee and resilience plan for 2026, sector reporting, and risk assessment regarding protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).

Funding Information

UNHCR is grateful for generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Türkiye (as of 31 August 2025).

US\$ 280 million

UNHCR requested for the operation in Türkiye for 2025.

