

Middle East Situation

21 April 2026



Lebanon. Displaced by hostilities- 07 March 2026, © UNHCR/Magnum Photos/Emin Ozmen

Key Highlights

- Since the onset of the military escalation, the Islamic Republic of Iran has reported that around **3.2 million** people (800,000 households) have internally relocated, based on an updated assessment. **75** per cent of the relocated population is in Tehran, followed by Hormozgan (**8** per cent), Bushehr (**5** per cent), and Khuzestan (**3** per cent). In some locations, nearly **17** per cent of the population lacks access to clean water due to overcrowding.
- Iran continues to host **1.65 million** refugees and others in need of international protection. Based on UNHCR helpline data, the top three priority needs reported by Afghan refugees in Iran are financial assistance for basic needs and relocation, safe shelter and physical safety from attacks, and access to healthcare.
- Since 28 February 2026, approximately **127,000** Iranian nationals have crossed into Türkiye via the Kapıköy, Gürbulak, and Esendere border crossings, while around **108,600** Iranians have crossed from Türkiye to Iran. Some **6,600** Iranian nationals crossed into Pakistan between 1 March and 9 April, per IOM and UNHCR joint border monitoring via Taftan. Movement volumes have largely remained below daily pre-conflict levels, with crossings primarily

reflecting routine mobility, family travel, and precautionary movement rather than large-scale displacement. **52** per cent of Iranians crossing into Türkiye are families.

- In Lebanon, more than **1.05 million** people remain internally displaced – 35 per cent of them children – with over **111,600** staying in 690 government-designated collective shelters.
- Since the start of the crisis, **251,000** Syrian returnees* and **47,800** Lebanese refugees have crossed from Lebanon into Syria; **71,057** Syrians reported an intention to return permanently.
- Over **190,900** Afghans have returned* from Iran and Pakistan since the start of the crisis (**80,300** from Iran, **110,600** from Pakistan). **76** per cent of UNHCR-assisted returnees were women and children. Top provinces of intended return are Kabul (**12** per cent) and Nangarhar (**11** per cent). Top three reported needs are financial support (**85** per cent), housing (**67** per cent) and core relief items (**65** per cent)
- **UNHCR considers that Iranian nationals and Lebanese nationals outside their countries of origin – whether already present in or newly arriving to third countries – may have international protection needs on account of the armed hostilities in Iran and Lebanon, or other reasons.** The armed hostilities in Iran, together with return pressures, may compel Afghans in Iran to return to Afghanistan or move onward; UNHCR maintains that a **substantial number of Afghans will have international protection needs** regardless of documentation status, in line with UNHCR’s September 2025 [Guidance Note](#). Similarly, the armed hostilities in **Lebanon** have already compelled significant numbers of Syrians to return to Syria in adverse circumstances; among them there may also be Syrians with continued international protection needs.

**Returnees Includes people returning under adverse circumstances due to the situation in countries of asylum. For Syrians, return dynamics vary and some returns may be temporary (including households where some family members remain in Lebanon). Afghan returns is an umbrella term that includes all returns including deportations, assisted repatriation, and other returns of Afghans of all statuses such as PoR, ACC, Amayesh cardholders, headcounted slip holders and undocumented, excluding passport holders.*

For the latest information on population movements, see the latest [UNHCR CORE Update](#) and [newly launched Operational Data Portal](#) page on the Middle East situation.

See the latest information on the [Protection Concerns Among Afghan Refugees in Iran – Helpline and Field Insights in March 2026](#).

Country Updates

Iran

- From 1 March to 19 April, the UNHCR Helpline received around **45,600** calls. Between 13–19 April, **1,038** people approached UNHCR offices in person, a **33** per cent increase from the previous week.
- Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted **81,900** Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multipurpose cash assistance, and psychosocial support.
- The overall situation remains highly fragile, with continued reports of insecurity, psychological distress, and mental health needs. Severe economic pressure persists due to unemployment, rising rents, and the increasing cost of basic needs.

Human Story: Fifteen-year-old Hamid was sleeping when an explosion tore through his home and plunged everything into darkness. He was pulled from the rubble by a friend. A blast from a nearby village had sent shockwaves and shrapnel into the house, injuring several family members. Hamid suffered severe wounds and is now confined to a wheelchair. He struggles with basic daily tasks and continues to relive that night. The family lost their home and took refuge with relatives. While psychosocial support has aided his recovery, the trauma of the attack remains with the family.

Lebanon

- The 10-day ceasefire that was announced on 16 April has reduced large-scale attacks, though it remains fragile. Access to 55 villages south of the Litani River remains restricted, following a 'no return' order issued by the Israeli Defence Forces due to ongoing military activity, including the destruction of homes and infrastructure. On 18 April, a UNIFIL patrol in southern Lebanon was attacked, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper and injuries to several others.
- Displaced people have begun returning to their homes, with **26** per cent of those in collective shelters having left as of 19 April, according to government data. Returns are occurring amid widespread housing damage, limited access to water and electricity, and the presence of unexploded ordnance in the South and Nabatieh, leading some families to return to shelters. UNHCR has advised shelter partners to temporarily pause selected repairs to reassess occupancy, while the UN is working with the government to launch an awareness campaign on risks to people's safety, including those posed by unexploded ordnance.
- UNHCR and partners have intensified protection activities, including family tracing and case management, amid heightened risks such as family separation, reduced child supervision, psychosocial distress, and gender-based violence, particularly among displaced people outside collective shelters who remain harder to reach. In Beirut and Mount Lebanon, **13** separated children were identified and **10** reunified; follow-up is ongoing.
- On 16 April, UNHCR delivered mattresses, blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets and solar lamps to approximately **230** displaced families living outside collective shelters in Nabatiyeh. On 17 April, UNHCR distributed clothing kits in Hasbaya to around **2,900** families in collective shelters and host communities, through municipal channels

Syria

- Since 2 March, **308,441** people have crossed the Syria-Lebanon border, including **251,000** Syrians, of whom **72,896** have expressed their intention to return permanently, and **48,800** Lebanese refugees. Border authorities report movements within normal ranges, slightly below average, with weekend peaks linked to family visits.
- In Dar'a and Quneitra, **2,880** individuals have returned, mainly to rural areas, placing increased pressure on shelter, basic assistance, and protection services. In Ar Raqqa and Al Hassakeh, UNHCR community centres have identified **11,100** returnees, while a further **11,600** have been identified in Deir ez Zor, with significant needs for core relief items, legal aid, and cash assistance. Across return areas, UNHCR community centres are providing integrated protection and psychosocial support, with a focus on women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.

Afghanistan-Pakistan

- Since the start of the crisis on 28 February, **190,900** Afghans have returned to Afghanistan – **81,300** from Iran and **110,600** from Pakistan – bringing total Afghan returns in 2026 to **466,700**, in addition to the **2.9 million** recorded in 2025.
- Return trends from Pakistan continued to increase during the reporting period, with around **56,600** Afghans arriving between 13–19 April, a 39 per cent increase from the previous week. Of those returning during this period, 22 per cent were deportees and 78 per cent were other returnees. Almost 75 per cent of returnees entered through the Torkham border crossing.
- Returns from Iran also increased by 25 per cent, with some 15,900 Afghans arriving between 13–19 April; 73 per cent were deportees and 27 per cent other returnees.
- The composition of returns differs markedly between Iran and Pakistan. Returns from Iran continue to be predominantly deportation-driven, with deportations accounting for 79 per cent of total returns since 1 January 2026, despite the proportion decreasing to 67 per cent since 1 April. By contrast, deportations represent 17 per cent of all returns from Pakistan since 1 January 2026, rising to 21 per cent since 1 April.
- Conflict-related displacement in south-east Afghanistan remains high, with an estimated 115,000 newly displaced since the start of the crisis. Pressure is highest in Khost and Paktia provinces, where a significant influx of new arrivals is placing strain on host communities and local services.
- In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, around 4,000 Afghan returnees experienced three-to-four-day delays while awaiting processing at Landi Kotal due to capacity limits. Some 2,200 individuals are temporarily housed in an under-construction college building and tents. Authorities are distributing tokens to stagger the processing of those awaiting return. Some 400 vehicles carrying returnees' belongings remained stranded at the Torkham border amid congestion and the continued closure of the immigration facility on the Afghan side.

Türkiye

- From late February to 19 April, approximately 127,000 Iranian nationals entered Türkiye via the Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) border crossings, while approximately 108,000 departed to Iran.
- The Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management is coordinating national preparedness plans, while UNHCR is reinforcing coordination with UN agencies and partners in both Ankara and the border regions to enhance preparedness and strengthen information management. Response capacities are being mapped and data coordination consolidated in preparation for potential contingency plan activation, should authorities request support in the event of large-scale movements.
- UNHCR is holding regular inter-agency coordination meetings with civil society actors active in Van. Partner observations confirm that entries and exits at all three border crossings continue routinely, including limited daily crossings by local small and medium business owners. The Turkish Red Crescent confirmed that four trucks carrying hygiene items, blankets, and tents, along with one truck of medical first aid supplies from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, were safely delivered to the Iranian Red Crescent.

- UNHCR continues to monitor the border in close coordination with authorities and partners, with the Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) crossings remaining generally operational. As of 20 April, daily entries exceeded 5,000 for the first time in several weeks, though exits were higher; movement dynamics remain fluid. The most frequently cited reason for crossing is routine travel, followed by business, visiting relatives, and transit. However, a large proportion of individuals in the routine travel category indicated that their decision to cross was influenced by recent developments in Iran. Some of those crossing may have international protection needs.

Iraq

- NTR

Armenia

- Since 28 February, daily border movements have averaged 400–700 entries and exits, with a total of 255 Iranian nationals approaching UNHCR – roughly 70 per cent male and 80 per cent seeking asylum information. Between 14 and 19 April, movements remained broadly stable at 500–650 entries per day, while approaches fell to 30 individuals. The demographic profile and primary need held steady – 70 per cent male and 83 per cent seeking asylum information – suggesting a consistent, information-driven caseload despite the lower volume of approaches.
- Cross-border movements remain stable at moderate to elevated levels, with no clear indication of large-scale displacement. Based on UNHCR and partner observations triangulated with available information, daily movements are estimated at approximately 500–650 entries, with comparable or slightly higher exits, suggesting continued two-way mobility. Observed crossings remain primarily commercial, routine, or short-term. Variations in daily flows, including higher exit volumes on some days, suggest circular or short-duration patterns rather than sustained directional movement.
- Trends remain broadly aligned with current preparedness assumptions, which anticipate limited, non-displacement-driven movements under current conditions. Recent consultations with Government counterparts reaffirm that current dynamics do not indicate a mass influx scenario and that engagement remains focused on anticipatory preparedness rather than response activation. Inter-agency discussions further confirm that a large-scale influx remains unlikely at this stage, while highlighting the importance of scenario-based planning for secondary impacts, including supply chain disruptions and localised pressures. Preparedness efforts continue to focus on coordination readiness under Government leadership, information provision and communication tools including Farsi-language materials, and scalable response mechanisms should the situation evolve.
- Among individuals crossing the border, available monitoring indicates that most are seeking information on asylum procedures and legal status, engaging in short-term or circular movement, and in some cases considering onward movement. Among those approaching UNHCR during the reporting period, 83 per cent requested asylum-related information, 30 per cent requested accommodation support, and 23 per cent requested financial assistance. Reported intentions included temporary stay (40 per cent), onward movement (37 per cent), and consideration of asylum (23 per cent), indicating mixed, short-term decision-making consistent with transit dynamics.

- Inter-agency efforts during the reporting period focused on preparedness and communication readiness, including the development and translation of information materials in Farsi covering asylum procedures, gender-based violence, health, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; expansion of hotline and communication channels including Farsi-speaking capacity; mapping of safe spaces, referral pathways, and service providers, particularly in Syunik region; pre-positioning of core relief items including dignity kits and health supplies; and preparation of sectoral response plans covering health, protection, and food security.
- Government–UNHCR consultation reaffirmed that preparedness remains Government-led, with UN agencies and partners providing technical support aligned with national systems. Emergency Preparedness Working Group discussions focused on alignment of communication and accountability-to-affected-populations materials, scenario-based planning, and identification of sectoral gaps and response capacities. Inter-agency coordination continues to emphasise complementarity of roles, preparedness without activation, and consistency in messaging toward Government counterparts.

Turkmenistan

- All four border crossings with Iran remain open to all nationalities.

Financial Information

The [Iran Flash Refugee Response Plan \(Flash RRP\)](#), launched on 26 March 2026, requests **USD 80 million** to support **2.8 million people in need, including 1.65 million refugees and 1 million host community** in need in Iran. Nine inter-agency partners are participating in the coordinated response, with UNHCR as the lead agency (USD 36.2 million), alongside IOM, UNDP, WFP, NRC, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and INTERSOS.

The [Lebanon Flash Appeal](#), issued on 13 March 2026, calls for **USD 308.3 million** for partners to deliver lifesaving assistance and protection to **1 million people** – including vulnerable Lebanese, displaced Syrians, Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, Palestinian Refugees from Syria, and migrants – over the same three-month period.

UNHCR operations across the affected regions remain [critically underfunded](#) at a time when humanitarian needs and operational risks are increasing. In South-West Asia, UNHCR requires USD **454 million** in 2026 to support forcibly displaced populations under the Afghanistan situation; as of end-March, only **19 per cent** had been received. Funding for Iran is **11%** covered out of a USD 140 million requirement. In the Middle East, significant funding gaps persist: Lebanon stands at only **19 per cent** funded against a UNHCR requirement of USD **472 million**, while Iraq is at **38 per cent** against USD **61 million**. In Europe, funding levels currently stand at **43 per cent** for Türkiye (USD **210 million** requirement) and **51%** for Armenia (USD 9 million requirement).

Severe funding shortfalls risk creating a 'crisis within a crisis' at a time when needs across the affected regions are rapidly increasing. Without additional resources, UNHCR's ability to scale up preparedness, protection and response will be critically constrained.

Contact

For further information on the situation or UNHCR's response across affected countries, please contact the Regional Bureaux: rbapext@unhcr.org (Asia and the Pacific) and menareporting@unhcr.org (Middle East and North Africa). For more information on UNHCR and partners' response across affected countries, please visit the [Operational Data Portal](#) and [UNHCR website](#).