Middle East Situation

as of 12 May 2026

Overview

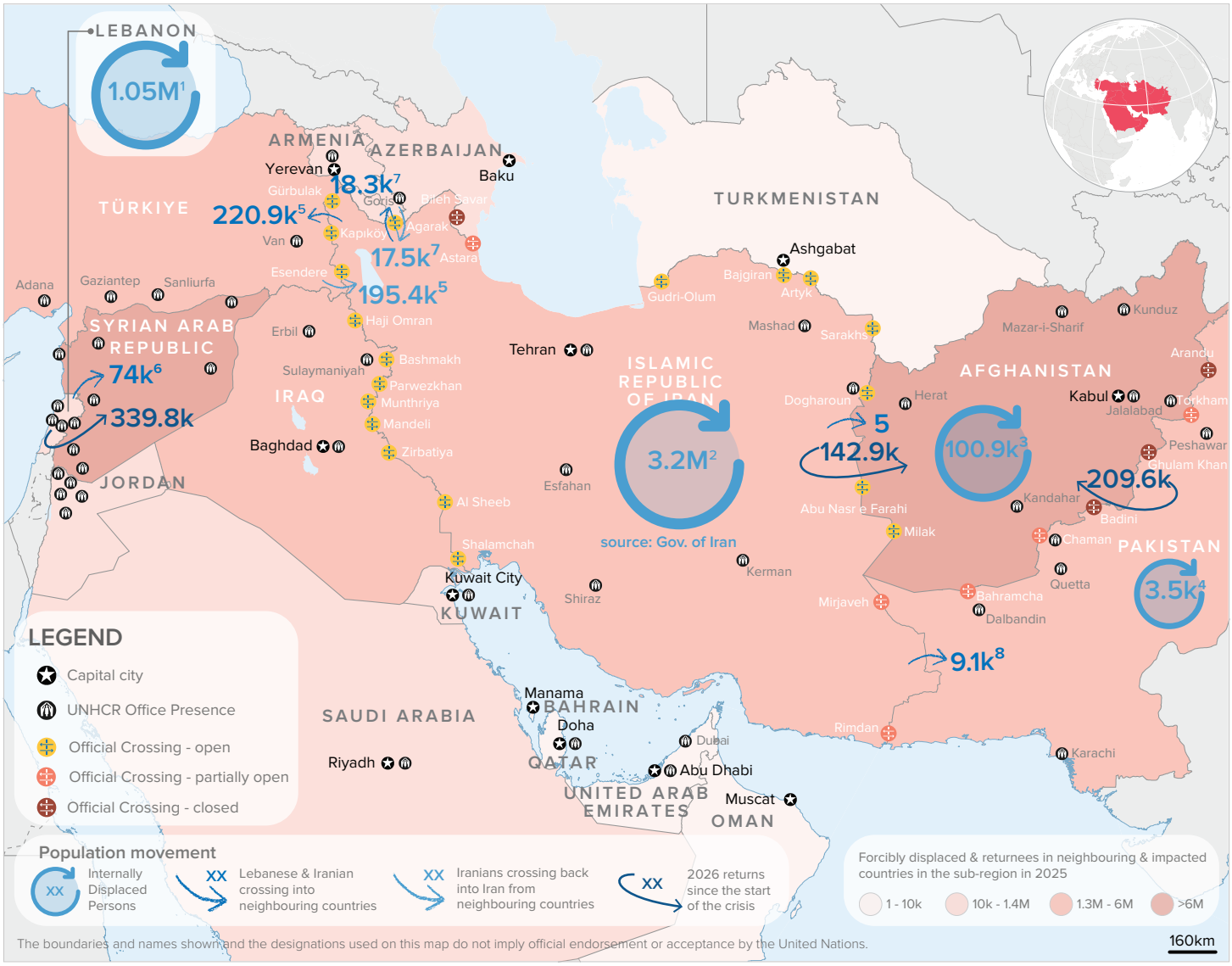
Escalating hostilities across Asia and the Middle East have led to a deterioration in the humanitarian situation. The affected areas already host 24.3 million forcibly displaced people, many of whom, alongside host communities, face significant protection risks and humanitarian needs.

With limited funding, many countries are struggling to meet existing needs, making it increasingly difficult to absorb additional pressures and support newly displaced populations.

Protection needs are rising, alongside heightened risk of internal displacement, new cross-border outflows, and onward movements to neighbouring countries.

An inter-agency emergency response has been launched to address urgent needs across the region. In Iran, the Flash Refugee Response Plan targets 1.65 million Afghan and Iraqi refugees and others in need of international protection, alongside 1 million host community members and 150,000 Afghans of other status. In Lebanon, a USD 308.3 million Flash Appeal aims to support 1 million people with lifesaving assistance and protection.

Situation Overview



Crossings to Syria (Syrian returnees and Lebanese nationals) are as of 11 May, crossings to/from Türkiye and Afghan returnee estimates (from Iran and Pakistan) are as of 9 May; crossings into Pakistan are as of 30 April, Afghan IDPs are as of 27 April, crossings to/from Armenia are as of 15 April, Lebanese IDPs are as of 1 April, Iran IDPs are as of 30 March and Pakistan IDPs are as of mid-March .

[1] Source: Government of Lebanon. [2] Source: Government of Iran. [3] Source: OCHA Afghanistan. [4] Source: Government of Pakistan.

[5] Source: UNHCR. Some Iranian nationals may be entering Türkiye under the visa-free short-term stay regime (up to 90 days). Such movements may reflect precautionary or temporary travel while individuals assess the situation in Iran. [6] Source: UNHCR and Government of Syria. [7] Source: Official statistics shared with UNHCR by the Government of Armenia, April 2026. [8] IOM-UNHCR Joint border monitoring

Population Movements

Lebanese refugees

74,000
Lebanese refugees arrived in Syria

Since the onset of the crisis, the number of Lebanese refugees arriving in Syria has increased, with arrivals averaging around 1,000 individuals per day.

Border Crossings of Iranian Nationals to / from neighboring countries

248,300
Iranian nationals crossed into neighbouring countries

Türkiye	220,900
Armenia	18,300
Pakistan	9,100

212,900
Iranian nationals crossed back into Iran from neighbouring countries

Türkiye	195,400
Armenia	17,500
Pakistan	n/a

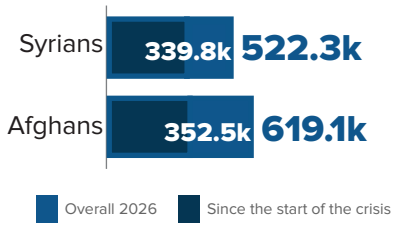
UNHCR considers that Iranian nationals outside the country – whether already present in or newly arriving to third countries – may have international protection needs on account of the armed hostilities in Iran, or other reasons.

The number of Iranians entering **Türkiye** remains below pre-conflict levels. These figures do not necessarily indicate permanent departures, as available data do not clearly distinguish between those who remained and those who later returned to Iran. For some Iranian nationals entering Türkiye under the visa-free regime (up to 90 days), movements may reflect routine travel, such as visits, transit to catch a flight, or precautionary trips while they assess the situation in Iran.

In **Armenia**, crossings remain broadly balanced, indicating continued regular two-way movements, without a significant surge in arrivals. In **Azerbaijan,** land borders remain closed due to public health restrictions except for commercial traffic and limited exceptions such as third-country evacuations.

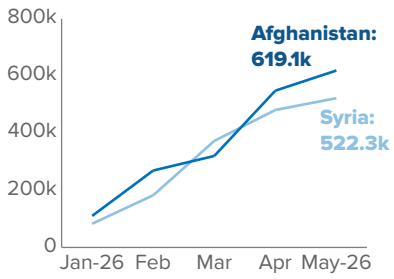
In **Pakistan**, as per IOM and UNHCR joint border monitoring, some **9,100 Iranians crossed** between 1 March and 30 April mainly via Taftan for routine business or family visits. Movements between **Iraq** and Iran remain routine; border conditions are fluid.

Afghan and Syrian returnees[9]

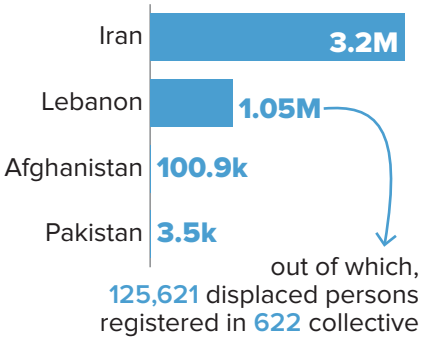


Afghan return[10] figures are preliminary and expected to fluctuate upon validation on a weekly basis.

Syrians crossing the border include those who had planned to return before the conflict and others compelled to cross due to current conditions. **84,322** reported intending to return permanently.



New IDPs since the start of the crisis



According to the Government of Iran, as of 30 March, around **3.2 million people** had temporarily relocated in the country, resulting in one of the largest internal relocations in Iran in recent decades. With public order remaining largely stable since then, increasing numbers of people are likely returning to their places of habitual residence.

In Afghanistan, an estimated **100,900 people** have been newly displaced across six provinces, mostly in **Khost, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, with about 27% in each province**, followed by 18% in Paktia.

[9]'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).
[10]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.

Afghans in Iran - Movement intentions

Iran continues to host **1.65M** refugees and others in need of international protection. Refugee focal points, UNHCR-hired lawyers and psychosocial counsellors, interact regularly with Afghan refugees and other Afghans in need of international protection, across 17 provinces to understand their protection situation and movement intentions. Refer to Protection Overview for further information.

No large-scale, self-organized population movements reported. Despite increasing insecurity and hardship, **remaining in Iran is consistently identified as the preferred option.** Most Afghans, particularly families with children, older persons and those needing medical care, emphasize that their lives, livelihoods and social networks are firmly rooted in Iran.

Return to Afghanistan and onward movement are widely seen as unfeasible, dangerous and costly. Perceptions of return and onward movement are shaped by secondary information and community reports of harm to returnees (including incidents linked to Pakistan–Afghanistan hostilities), reinforcing fear and discouraging consideration of going back.

Mobility within Iran is limited to short-term, precautionary internal displacement and small-scale intra-city relocations driven by security and economic constraints, with many households self-restricting movement due to fear, checkpoints and the financial and social burden on host relatives.

Profiles

50% Iranians crossing to Türkiye are **families.** Based on over 3,700 interviews conducted by UNHCR with arriving Iranian nationals between 4 March and 10 May, the age and gender breakdown was as follows: **63% adult men, 27% adult women, 5% girls, and 5% boys.**

In **Lebanon, 35%** of IDPs are estimated to be **children**[11] where as in Iran **60% are women and children**.

In **Afghanistan, an estimated 73% of the IDPs are women and children**. Protection concerns have arisen in displacement sites including involuntary returns of vulnerable IDP families. [12]

In **Pakistan**, IDPs who had temporarily relocated to safer areas, which were district administration-established IDP centres in Drosh and Akroye, have since returned to their places of habitual residence following the stabilization of the security situation. **57% were children and 28% were women.**

Returns to Afghanistan

Among the Afghan returnees assisted by UNHCR in Afghanistan since the start of the crisis, **women and children constitute 82% of those returning from Pakistan and 55% of those returning from Iran.**

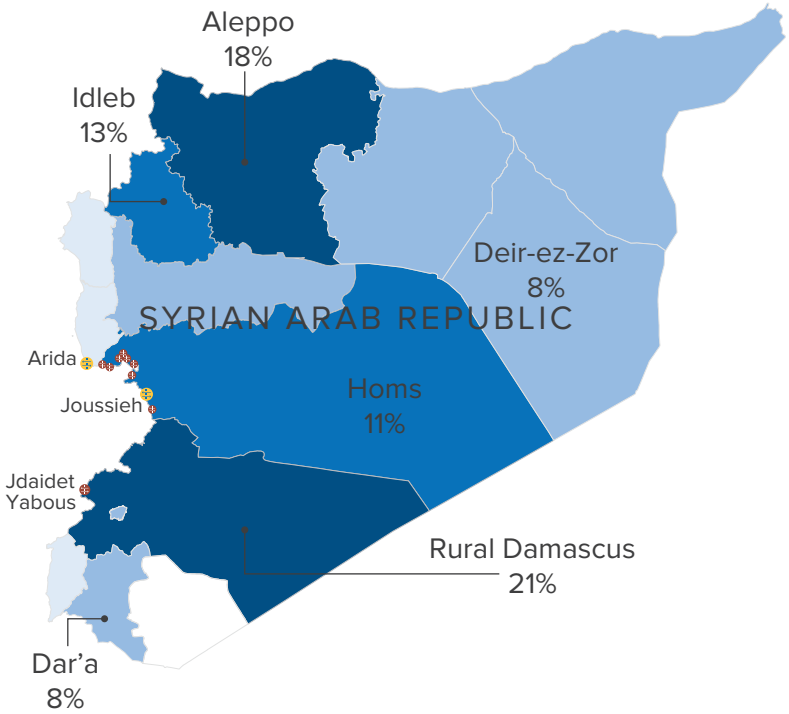
Top Provinces of intended returns

[11]Source: UNICEF. [12]Source: OCHA Afghanistan.

Returns to Syria

Crossings into Syria are primarily **family-based**, with Syrians comprising the majority of those returning. Among the Syrian families interviewed, **females account for approximately 53%**.

Top Provinces of intended returns



Intended returns per province
- 0
- 0.1 - 2%
- 3 - 8%
- 9 - 15%
- >15%

Top 3 needs of returnees in Syria

- **82%** Housing/Shelter
- **80%** Food or nutrition
- **49%** Employment or income opportunities

UNHCR Preparedness and Coordination

UNHCR is leading cross-regional preparedness and response coordination for potential cross-border refugee movements, working with authorities, UN agencies and humanitarian partners. The Regional Bureaux for Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, and Europe are working closely with country operations to monitor developments and advance preparedness and response planning.

Should a response be required, emergency financial aid would be the primary assistance modality, supported by systems already in place in Afghanistan, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Türkiye and through our global stockpiles and UNHCR's mechanism to reinforce staffing capacity.

Operational Presence

Forcibly displaced persons & returnees in neighbouring & impacted countries in the sub-region in 2025. For more information on Forcibly Displaced definition and methodologies, click here.