

UNHCR Legal Assistance in Syria

January - December 2022

186,680
 participants in
 awareness-raising

49,539
 persons represented before
 courts and administrative
 bodies

110,840
 individuals received legal
 counselling

LEGAL DOCUMENTATION



19,838 individuals obtained national identity cards



5,495 marriages documented

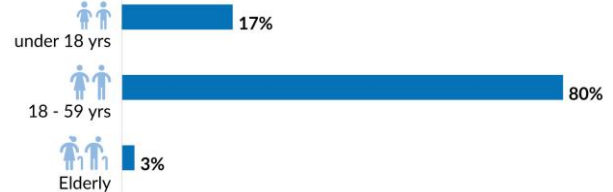


6,143 individuals obtained family booklets



3,918 children registered and obtained birth certificates

346,716 beneficiaries of legal assistance

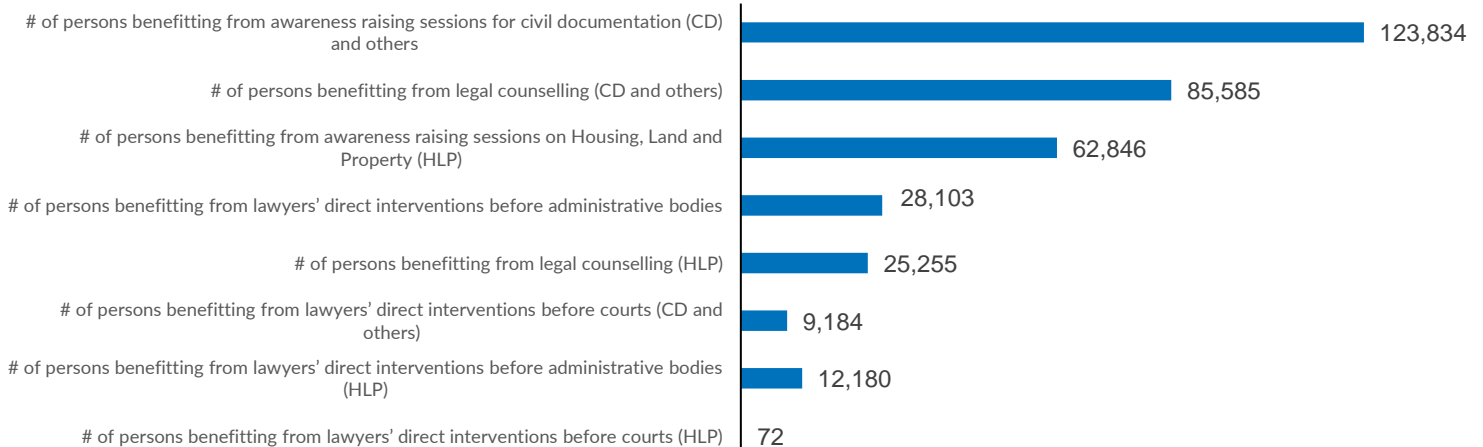


Legal Interventions

📍 14 Governorates

⚖️ 260 Lawyers

👥 148 Volunteers



UNHCR Legal Assistance for IDPs, Returnees and Host Communities

UNHCR provides legal services through its partner NGOs, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Syria Trust for Development, to internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, host communities, asylum-seekers and refugees.

The objective of the legal assistance is to provide support on the following four legal/protection thematic areas:

- **Documenting vital events** such as births, marriages, divorces and deaths.
- **Obtaining personal civil status documents** including, but not limited to, identity cards, family booklets and civil extracts.
- **Protection risks encountered by women and children** including custody, alimony, inheritance and domestic violence cases.
- **Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights** including obtaining lost or damaged deeds and proof of ownership as well as authenticating transactions.

The legal services are offered in different forms, including **legal representation** before courts and other governmental bodies, individual **legal advice** and **legal awareness-raising** sessions.

Interventions before courts or other governmental bodies support vulnerable individuals who have protection concerns, limited capacity to follow the legal procedures and requirements, difficulties to reach the administrative and legal bodies, or encounter financial constraints.



Receiving personal documents at the civil registry centre in Tel Ed Daman, Aleppo Governorate. ©UNHCR/H. Maarouf

The legal assistance is provided in all **14** governates, primarily through mobile teams, legal centres as well as UNHCR-supported community centres.

The legal mobile teams consist of **260** experienced lawyers who are working closely with **148** legal outreach volunteers (ORVs). The legal ORVs include law students, trainee lawyers and senior lawyers. Some of the legal ORVs are selected from the IDP and returnee communities, and they contribute, on a voluntary basis, to the legal assistance programmes through dissemination of information on the legal programmes, identification of individuals in need, and referrals. Also, legal ORVs are capacitated on a regular basis to provide people with basic legal information and conduct awareness-raising activities on general legal matters.

UNHCR, in coordination with its partners implementing its legal aid programme have established six legal centres (one by Syria Trust and five by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent) located in Damascus, Al-Hassakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Hama.

Legal assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers

UNHCR provides legal services for refugees and asylum-seekers related to any significant protection issues, including **obtaining and renewing residency permits, birth registration** and other legal documentation, **non-refoulement, detention and exit visas** as well as other legal/protection-related matters such as **gender-based violence and child protection**.

The legal services are provided either directly by UNHCR legal teams and contracted lawyers or by its partners in the legal and community centres located in different Governorates.

Restoring capacities of national institutions

Identity documents, birth certificates and documents relating to vital events are essential for the enjoyment of basic rights such as freedom of movement and access to schools, hospitals, livelihoods and to the smart cards required to receive subsidized rations and items. To enhance protection of these rights, UNHCR provides support to civil registries, citizens service centres and immigration authorities. UNHCR has also started to provide similar support to cadastral offices in order to enhance HLP legal responses.

In 2022, UNHCR completed the process of restoring the capacity of **six** civil registries, **two** cadastral departments and **two** citizen service centres. Due to a shortage in capacity and the challenges related to fuel and electricity, UNHCR also provided basic ICT equipment and solar kits to the Directorate of Immigration and Passports and the Directorate of Civil Affairs given their pivotal role in the protection of refugees, IDPs and returnees in Syria.

As a result of the rehabilitation and technical support projects that were implemented during the last few years, and according to civil affairs records, **1,793,607 identity documents were successfully obtained** by Syrian citizens across the country in 2022 including identity cards, family booklets and birth certificates.

Additionally, UNHCR supported the establishment of a mobile unit in coordination with the Directorate of Civil Affairs. This unit is equipped to perform as a mobile civil registry that records vital events and issues the relevant civil documents. The mobile unit operates in Ma'aret Al-Numan, Idleb Governorate, reaching out to persons in need for civil documents and living in the remote areas that are far from existing civil registries.

Capacity building of legal service providers

To enhance the protection capacity of legal service providers, UNHCR conducted **three** protection trainings targeting 150 partner lawyers and legal ORVs. The protection trainings covered topics such as UNHCR's mandate, international protection and basic humanitarian principles, HLP as well as legal assistance related to gender-based violence.

Legal advocacy

On 21 December 2022, **Legislative Decree 24/2022** was issued granting a general amnesty for some crimes committed prior to the date of issuance. The amnesty waived penalties for some military service crimes, misdemeanours and offences. However, many crimes as well as certain penalties of financial nature were excluded. In response, UNHCR is advocating with the Directorate of Civil Affairs and the Directorate of Immigration and Passports to waive fines through the scope of this amnesty related to the delayed registration of vital events, for both Syrians and refugees inside Syria.