

# Regional Flash Update #9

## Syria situation crisis

10 January 2025

### Key Highlights

- UNHCR estimates that more than 125,000 Syrians have returned to the country since the fall of the Assad government one month ago. The primary areas of return are Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Dar'a.
- In the last month, UNHCR has gradually resumed programming throughout the country. Interventions include shelter repairs and winterization, provision of critical basic assistance to the most vulnerable, and ongoing protection services through 102 open community centres across Syria. UNHCR and partners are also present at several border crossing points to observe immigration processes, provide immediate assistance and speak with people returning home about their experiences and priorities.
- Insecurity remains a concern. Clashes between the new authorities and armed groups are ongoing, particularly in eastern Aleppo and coastal areas. There are regular reports of unexploded ordnance causing civilian casualties. Humanitarian access also remains a challenge, notably in areas of northeast Syria where the latest hostilities have damaged critical infrastructure.



Abd Alhameed Alhashemi, whose family recently returned to southern Aleppo, stands in front of his home, which received UNHCR shelter repair interventions to ensure the doors and windows are sturdy enough to withstand the winter cold. © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

## Country updates

### Syria

As of 8 January, UNHCR estimates that more than 125,000 Syrians have returned in the one month following the change in government, primarily to Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Dar'a. This is based on a triangulation of information from both outside and inside Syria, including official government data, and includes Syrians refugees who are registered with UNHCR as well as other groups of Syrians.

Of the 1.1 million people internally displaced by the escalation of hostilities at the end of November, approximately 627,000 people remain newly displaced, 75% of whom are women and children. Meanwhile, nearly 523,000 people have returned to their areas of origin, mainly in Hama and Aleppo governorates.

On 4 January, Turkish authorities transferred the management of all border crossings with Türkiye in northern Aleppo (Jarablus, Al Rai, Bab Al-Salama and Jinderes) to Syrian caretaker authorities.

Ongoing clashes are still reported across the country, and damage to infrastructure, particularly in the northeast, remains an impediment to humanitarian access and delivery. Civilian casualties due to remnants of war occur almost daily. Between 27 November and 5 January 2025, the Syria Civil Defence (White Helmets) reported that at least 32 civilians have been killed by explosions of war remnants.

UNHCR's assistance and early recovery programming for IDPs and returnees are fully up and running. In Aleppo, UNHCR has resumed installation of shelter repair kits for returning families and solarization of rehabilitated health centres. Distribution of core relief items and winterization materials to the most vulnerable is ongoing, including in As-Sweida, Dar'a, Aleppo and Qamishli governorates. In Dar'a, UNHCR and partners are also providing immediate support to families crossing through Nassib border point and rehabilitating damaged apartments. In Deir-ez-Zor, a community-led initiative to rehabilitate the water and sanitation facilities, doors, and windows of a primary school was finalized. In order to improve reception conditions, UNHCR is supporting maintenance of immigration facilities at the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point, which had been looted in early December.

In response to the growing needs, UNHCR assisted more than 80,000 people with critical protection services via community centres across the country from 27 November until the end of 2024.

### Türkiye

As of 1 January, Çobanbey / Al Rai and Zeytindalı / Jinderes border crossings are open for processing go-and-see visits. According to the Presidency of Migration Management, go-and-see visits can be conducted a maximum of three times by the head of household. If the head of household is unable to exit, another adult family member can go instead. Those who use their authorized exit right must re-enter Türkiye from the same gate they exited. Between 1-8 January, 1,766 people have utilized this temporary visit to travel to Syria.

On 9 January, Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya [visited](#) Cilvegözü / Bab al Hawa border crossing where he announced that 52,622 people have voluntarily returned to Syria from Türkiye since 8 December. The Minister noted that the voluntary return process is carried out in accordance with national and international law, with UNHCR witnessing the process.

## Lebanon

Three official border crossings remain open between Lebanon and Syria, with the Masnaa official border crossing in Bekaa being the only crossing open for vehicle traffic. Movements continue on a daily basis at a low but steady rate with approximately 1,000-1,500 crossings per day at the official border crossings, mostly through Masnaa. Irregular and often pendular movements continue to take place through unofficial crossing points; while numbers are more difficult to quantify, these crossings are more likely to be shorter visits to and from Syria.

As of 7 January, the government's Disaster Risk Management reports approximately 87,000 arrivals from Syria in Baalbek Governorate, including 20,000 Lebanese. Among the arrivals, some 35,000 people, mostly Syrians, are living in 187 informal Collective Shelters and another 52,000 are living in the community. These numbers have remained quite static since the fall of the previous government in Syria. UNHCR undertook a mission to Al Qasr and Hermel on 3 January, meeting with the mayor and visiting three collective sites together with UNICEF and OCHA. Heating/fuel, hygiene facilities and food are urgently needed, with cross-sectoral assistance ongoing.

On 6 January, the Syrian embassy in Beirut stated that the issuance of valid return documents (*laissez-passer*) for Syrians was currently free of charge until new directives are implemented.

## Jordan

While the total number of Syrians crossing from Jordan to Syria is significantly higher, at least some 5,100 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR returned to Syria in December 2024, most of them following the fall of the Assad regime. This brings the total number of registered refugees returning from Jordan in 2024 to some 17,200, representing a significant increase compared to previous months in 2024 as well as to previous years. The number of refugee returns in December 2024 surpassed the total number of returns in all of 2023, which numbered some 4,400. UNHCR is aware that the daily average of registered refugees returning in January 2025 has increased. Many refugees returning from Jordan to Syria originate from Dar'a, though an increasing proportion originate from other areas in Syria, especially Homs. Refugees returned from urban and rural areas of Jordan primarily.

In December, 64% of those returning were men/boys and 36% were women and girls. Of these, 36% were complete family units, meaning that all members of the family were traveling back together. Children (both boys and girls) represent around 27% of total returnees throughout the month, and elderly around 5% of returnees.

Notable numbers of buses from Queen Alia International Airport in Amman are transporting passengers to the Syrian border. The passengers arrived predominantly from Europe, with some coming from the Gulf. Most of the passengers are Syrians who hope to visit their family and friends inside Syria temporarily.

UNHCR's helpline continued receiving calls from Syrian refugees with questions about returns, often seeking clarity on exit formalities to prepare for their return to Syria. Additionally, UNHCR holds regular focus group discussions with refugee communities. Over the past few days, concerns have been raised about private transportation charges. Additionally, UNHCR received reports that refugees were charged fees by transportation companies at the border, which reportedly requested service fees both for transport and the completion of the luggage manifest. However, refugees in Jordan are exempted from customs fees with valid documents.

Financial challenges remain a key concern for refugees' decisions to return, with the cost of transportation to Syria being significant. In Zata'ari refugee camp, shop owners in the informal market street observed that residents have considerably reduced their consumption of non-food items, presumably in order to save money.

## Iraq

An estimated 2,000 Syrians permanently returned from Iraq since 8 December, including 159 Syrians registered with UNHCR. These returns occurred through both the Peshkabout border crossing, located between Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), and the Al-Qaim border crossing in Federal Iraq.

Over the past week, UNHCR has noted a slight decrease in the number of registered Syrian refugees returning through Peshkabout. The overall numbers remain low, with an average of 7 Syrian refugees returning daily. Most Syrian refugees who have returned over the last week have returned to Al-Hassakeh, followed by Aleppo, with returnees citing the improved security situation and the high cost of living in KR-I as the main reasons for their return.

The movement of Syrians crossing into Iraq through the Peshkabout border continued with approximately 500 people on a daily basis. This number increased from previous weeks mainly due to individuals travelling to celebrate the new year with family abroad. Based on sample interviews conducted, most Syrians crossing into Iraq through this border crossing are of Kurdish ethnicity and indicate that they are either coming to the KR-I temporarily for family visits or are using KR-I as a transit point for travel elsewhere and plan to return to Syria afterwards. They are mainly from Al-Hassakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Aleppo. The Al-Qaim border crossing in Federal Iraq remains closed for entry into Iraq.

## Egypt

Between 8 December 2024 and 4 January 2025, 1,810 case closure requests involving 3,374 individuals have been submitted by Syrian refugees in Egypt, averaging 99 requests per day compared to the November 2024 average of 7.

The Government of Egypt introduced stricter entry requirements for all Syrian nationals starting 17 December 2024. The new requirements stipulate that Syrians holding European, American, Canadian, and Gulf country residencies obtain visas and security approvals from Egyptian embassies abroad before traveling to Egypt. This change cancels previous exemptions that allowed Syrians holding residencies in the above-mentioned countries to enter without security clearance. UNHCR is currently analysing the potential protection implications of this change.

On 2 January, the Syrian embassy in Cairo stated via their Facebook page that new measures to facilitate the return home of Syrian nationals had been introduced, including free document certification and a one-time six-month passport extension. The statement notes that the fee exemptions apply only to the document certification process and exclude other services.

## Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #8, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [UNHCR Syria Response Factsheet \(30 December\)](#)
- [Regional Refugee Community Feedback about Developments inside Syria \(19 December\)](#)
- [UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic \(16 December\)](#)
- [Syria Situation Data Portal](#)
- [UNHCR Helpsite](#)

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