

Regional Flash Update #8

Syria situation crisis

2 January 2025

Key Highlights

- UNHCR estimates that **over 115,000 Syrians** have returned to Syria since 8 December 2024, based on a triangulation of sources from inside and outside Syria.
- As of 27 December, 664,000 people remain newly displaced inside Syria since the beginning of December, 75% of whom are women and children. Around 486,000 internally displaced people have now returned to their areas of origin.
- Insecurity continues to present a concern inside Syria, with ongoing hostilities and civilian casualties reported across several governorates. Increased criminal activity has also been reported in various parts of the country, notably Aleppo.



UNHCR staff speak with women affected by recent events in Aleppo (11 December). © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

Country updates

Syria

UNHCR estimates that 115,000 Syrians have returned back to Syria since 8 December. This is based on public statements by host countries, contacts with immigration services from inside Syria and UNHCR and partner border monitoring.

In terms of official statements, on 30 December, the Turkish Minister of Interior reported that 35,114 Syrians have voluntarily returned since 8 December. The Government of Jordan also reported more than 22,000 Syrians have entered Syria through Jordan, 3,100 of whom are registered refugees.

As of 27 December, the IDP Taskforce reports that approximately 664,000 individuals remain newly displaced across Syria, primarily in Idlib and Aleppo governorates, since the beginning of December. Women and children account for more than three-quarters of those who remain displaced. Meanwhile, nearly 486,000 IDPs have returned to their areas of origin, mainly in Hama and Aleppo governorates.

Prevailing insecurity – including armed clashes, increased criminal activity, and unexploded ordnance - continues to present challenges for civilians and will likely influence the potential decision to return home faced by Syrians living outside the country.

UNHCR continues to engage with caretaker authorities, including a 29 December meeting with the Dar'a Governor's Office to discuss humanitarian needs in the governorate. Likewise, UNHCR continues to visit active border crossings, monitor processes and listen to Syrians crossing back into the country about their priorities and needs.

Rehabilitation of 200 partially damaged houses in Rural Damascus has resumed, with completion expected in January 2025. UNHCR also distributed core relief and winter items to returnee families in Damascus, Homs and Idlib governorates as well as to IDPs living in collective centres and unfinished buildings across Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hassakeh governorates.

Lebanon

Departure traffic through official border crossings remains low but steady, predominantly through Masnaa crossing, including those who may be crossing for short periods to assess the situation in Syria. Over the last ten days a maximum 100-200 people have been in the no-man's land area at any one time, either being processed to enter Lebanon or going back into Syria. A small number of families were stranded over the new year period and were assisted by UNHCR and UNICEF while waiting to be processed for entry.

In the Hermel area of Baalbek Governorate, official figures from the Government's Disaster Risk Management Unit remain steady at approximately 90,000 new arrivals from Syria (both Lebanese and Syrian). The number of people living in collective sites has fluctuated due to the fluid situation but stands at approximately 36,000 people (mostly Syrians) with the remainder of recent arrivals living in communities. Cross-sectoral assistance in shelters is ongoing, including blankets and bedding to 4,200 households, family hygiene kits for 21,000 people as well as food assistance. Installation of portable showers and toilets is also ongoing.

On 28 December, the Syrian embassy in Beirut announced the suspension of its consular services until further notice. Services suspended include passport issuance and renewal, as well as verification and authentication of official documents, including endorsement of birth certificates issued in Lebanon.

Türkiye

According to official figures shared by the Minister of Interior on 30 December, a total of 35,114 Syrian individuals have returned voluntarily since 8 December. The Minister of Interior also noted that, to ensure a seamless and efficient process, six active border gates now operate around the clock with a combined daily processing capacity of 19,000 individuals, a substantial increase from the previous capacity of 3,020. The government also confirmed that go-and-see visits will be organized through two border crossings (Zeytindalı / Jinderes in Hatay and Çobanbey / Al Rai in Kilis) from 1 January – 1 July 2025.

Jordan

During a [media interview](#) on 28 December, Bassam Al-Dahamsheh, Director of Nationality and Foreigners' Affairs Directorate at the Ministry of Interior announced that approximately 22,000 Syrians have entered Syria via Jordan since 6 December, including 3,100 Syrian refugees. This total figure includes Syrians who used Jordan as a transit country on their way to Syria. The Director also reaffirmed that Jordan will not forcibly return Syrian refugees, leaving the choice for repatriation to them. He also noted that Syrian refugees could leave Jordan without a passport, using international travel documents issued by the Syrian embassy. Relatedly, on 30 December, the government of Jordan confirmed that UNHCR's asylum seeker certificates (ASCs) will be accepted as valid travel documents to Syria, following a request made by the Syrian embassy to the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

UNHCR teams have noticed a shift in demographics of returnees to Syria this week, with more women and children returning rather than men traveling alone. When interviewed, some families reported that the head of household would stay in Jordan for several more months in order to earn money that will support the family's reintegration inside Syria before joining them.

Iraq

The movement of Syrians through the Peshkhabour border, located between Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), continued with approximately 300-400 people reportedly crossing into Iraq on a daily basis. 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 visits elsewhere and plan to return to Syria afterwards. They are mainly from Al-Hassakeh, Ar-Raqaa and Aleppo governorates.

At the Peshkhabour border crossing, since 8 December, 948 Syrians have permanently returned to Syria through official returns processes, including 105 (11%) Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. Over the past week, UNHCR has noted a slight decrease in the number of registered Syrian refugees returning through Peshkhabour, though the overall numbers remain low, with an average of 11 registered refugees returning daily. The number of individuals returning to Aleppo governorate is the highest, with returnees citing the improved security situation and the abolition of compulsory military service as the main reasons for their return.

Between 22 and 28 December, 613 Syrians reportedly departed Iraq via the Al-Qaim border crossing, averaging approximately 87 individuals per day, although the status and type of return are not recorded at this crossing point. This marks a slight increase compared to the daily average of 70–80 Syrians prior to 8 December. The Al-Qaim border crossing remains closed for entry into Iraq.

Egypt

Following recent developments in Syria, UNHCR in Egypt continues to see a higher than average number of case closure requests from Syrian refugees. Between 8 and 29 December, a total of 1,448 closure requests involving 2,695 individuals have been submitted to UNHCR, averaging 97 requests per working day compared to the November average of 7 closure requests.

UNHCR continues to provide counseling support to Syrians seeking information about the situation in Syria. The main questions revolve around whether UNHCR Egypt can assist with repatriation support, whether fines for overstays and delayed residence permits can be waived upon exit, if returning to Syria is safe and which routes should be avoided.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #7, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [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](#)

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