

Regional Flash Update #11

Syria situation crisis

23 January 2025

Key Highlights

- As of 23 January, UNHCR estimates that nearly **210,000** Syrians have crossed back into Syria since 8 December.
- UNHCR is currently analysing findings from the Flash **Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey (RPIS)** conducted with a sample of 3,400 Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt in January 2025.
- Initial findings indicate that, overall, **27% of refugees in the region intend to return home in the next 12 months**. This is a significant increase from the last RPIS conducted in April 2024, which found only 1.7% of refugees intended to return in the next year. The full survey results will be published by UNHCR in the coming weeks.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, **visited** Lebanon on 23 January and **met** with Lebanese president Joseph Aoun in Beirut. The High Commissioner will travel to other countries in the region, including Syria, in the coming days.



After 11 years living in Zaatari camp in Jordan, Mohammad Al-Masry and his family pack up their belongings, with help from neighbors and friends, for their journey home to Syria. © UNHCR/Shawkat Al Harfoush

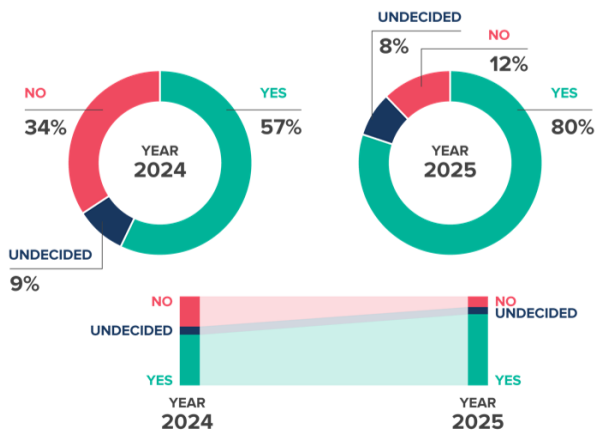
Refugee Intentions

Based on preliminary findings from UNHCR’s January 2025 Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey (RPIS), conducted in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, **an increasing proportion of the refugee population expresses a clear intention to return.**

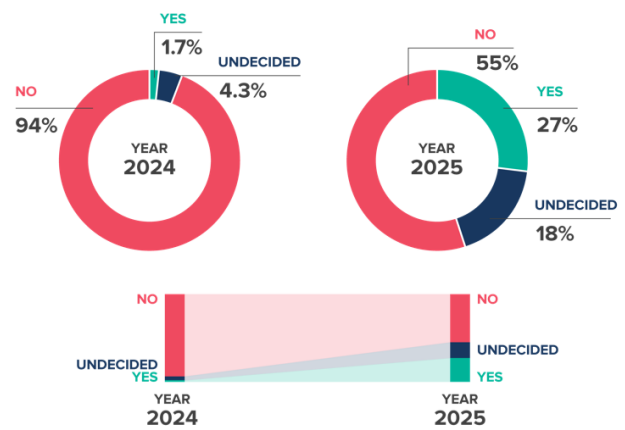
UNHCR is finalizing the survey results, which will be published in greater detail in the coming weeks; however, initial findings note that:

- Overall, **80% of refugees hope to return to Syria one day.** This represents a major shift in refugee return intentions compared to the **last RPIS** conducted in April 2024 when only 57% of refugees expressed the hope to return one day.
- Overall, **27% of Syrian refugees** expressed an immediate intention to return **in the next 12 months.** This is a major increase compared to the previous 2024 RPIS, when only 1.7% of Syrian refugees interviewed intended to return in the next 12 months.

Do you hope to return to Syria one day?



Do you intend to return in the next 12 months?



These results match what refugees have been telling UNHCR through other channels since the fall of the Assad government. UNHCR talks to thousands of Syrian refugees in the region every day, through helplines, return interviews, counselling, focus group discussions and other community outreach mechanisms. Some refugees have expressed a strong interest in returning home. Others remain worried and are waiting to see how the situation inside Syria develops or are waiting for the end of winter, the end of Ramadan, agricultural seasons or the closure of the school year. Many refugees point to significant obstacles to returning, including debts incurred in host countries and damage to their homes in Syria.

For those interested in returning, questions relate to practical issues such as accessing travel documents and procedures for crossing the border. Their main asks include assistance for transportation, cash grants to cover basic needs and support inside Syria to rebuild their homes and their lives.

It is crucial that any refugee returns are voluntary and that assistance and access to protection are maintained in host countries. At the same time, significant investments inside Syria and support for those choosing to go home are crucial to ensure the sustainability of their return.

Country updates

Türkiye

UNHCR teams continue to monitor return interviews inside Türkiye. Voluntary returns mostly involve individuals returning alone, often due to the absence of dependent family members in Türkiye or because they intend to assess conditions in Syria before reuniting with their families. The primary reasons for returning include improved security, political changes and family reunification, with some citing homesickness or economic considerations. Most returnees aim to return to their province of origin, with Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus and Hama being the most common destinations. Challenges such as property destruction, family relocation, inadequate infrastructure and security concerns influence their choices of destination. Property ownership remains a critical factor, with many returnees owning homes, though some lack the documents needed to claim them. While most returnees hold Syrian civil documentation, gaps in birth, marriage and divorce records are common.

The [first flight](#) from Istanbul to Damascus in 13 years successfully landed today.

Lebanon

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, was in Beirut on 23 January, where he [met](#) with the new Lebanese president Joseph Aoun. He underscored the need for ongoing international support in Lebanon. His visit is part of a broader regional mission that will [focus](#) on how best to support Syrian refugees choosing to return voluntarily to Syria and ensure those returns are sustainable.

Daily crossings at official border points continue at a low but steady rate, averaging between 1,000 and 1,500 crossings per day. The Masnaa official border crossing in Bekaa remains the only crossing open for vehicle traffic.

As of 15 January, the government's Disaster Risk Management reports approximately 86,000 arrivals from Syria in Baalbek Governorate, including 20,000 Lebanese. Among the arrivals, some 34,000 people, mostly Syrians, are living in 210 informal collective shelters, and another 52,100 are living in the community. Visits to collective sites indicate urgent heating/fuel, hygiene and food needs. UNHCR is coordinating closely with the authorities on measures to enhance assistance.

Jordan

As of 20 January, more than 20,100 refugees registered with UNHCR returned from Jordan to Syria since the fall of the Assad Regime on 8 December 2024. More than 91% of refugee returnees were returning to Syria for the first time, compared to 9% who have previously visited Syria.

On 23 January, a [convoy](#) of more than 100 refugees departed Azraq camp, returning to Syria. In response to requests from refugees, on 20 January UNHCR initiated a transportation assistance pilot project in Jordan, facilitating bus transport Amman to Homs for several refugee families who had previously expressed interest in return. UNHCR covered the ticket plus 50kg of luggage per passenger. Prior to departure, UNHCR assessed the voluntary character of return and provided counselling. The pilot transportation project is implemented in close coordination with UNHCR in Syria to ensure that refugees receive support at both departure from Jordan and upon arrival in Syria. UNHCR's staged plan for transportation support foresees buses departing from Amman to select locations in Syria up to six days a week. The pilot will be continuously monitored to inform planning and potential longer-term services and tailored assistance, also based on feedback from refugees.

Since the announcement of UNHCR's pilot transportation initiative, the number of calls to the UNHCR hotline on returns has doubled compared to the previous reporting period. Approximately

60% of calls received between 15-21 January inquired about transportation support, among other questions.

Iraq

Since 8 December, more than 4,000 Syrians have returned from Iraq to Syria, including 295 registered refugees. This includes Syrians who have returned through the Peshkhabour and Al-Qaim border crossing. The numbers of Syrians returning from Iraq have remained stable over the last week with no significant changes.

Egypt

Between 8 December 2024 and 21 January 2025, over 3,700 closure requests involving over 7,050 individuals have been submitted by Syrian refugees in Egypt to UNHCR, averaging 125 requests per day compared to the November 2024 average of just 7.

On 20 January, Ambassador Osama Khadr, acting head of the Egyptian embassy in Damascus, reportedly [confirmed](#) to *Al-Watan* that Egypt has reopened the visa process for several categories of Syrians, including Syrian students enrolled in various educational stages, Syrian investors and their families and spouses of Egyptian citizens. This supersedes a requirement implemented last month by Egyptian authorities, which required Syrians arriving in Egypt from all countries to obtain a security clearance.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #10, 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](#)
- [UNHCR Help Site](#)

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