

# Regional Flash Update #12

## Syria situation crisis

30 January 2025

### Key Highlights

- As of 30 January, UNHCR estimates that some 237,000 Syrians have returned to Syria since 8 December 2024. These figures are based on a triangulation of sources from outside and inside Syria and include refugees registered with UNHCR and other Syrians returning from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well as those transiting from beyond the region.
- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, concluded his visit to the region this week, visiting Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye and Jordan. In each country he met with government counterparts, including the new Syrian authorities, as well as Syrian refugees and returnees.
- While calling for continued funding for refugee programmes in and support to host countries, he underlined the importance of engaging and investing inside Syria and assisting those who are choosing to return to Syria to do so in safety and dignity.



Syrians living in Türkiye wait at the Cilvegözü/Bab al Hawa border crossing for voluntary repatriation processing, after which they cross back into Syria. © UNHCR/Emrah Gürel

## Country updates

### Syria

This week, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, [traveled](#) to Syria for the first time since the fall of the former government. His mission, which began in Lebanon, aimed to understand the challenges faced by refugees and host countries, by returnees inside Syria, and to assess the opportunities for expanding aid to those who are already deciding to return home.

While in Damascus, High Commissioner Grandi [met](#) with the leader of Syria's caretaker authorities and newly appointed President, Ahmed Al-Sharaa, and traveled to border crossings with Lebanon and Türkiye to [meet](#) with returning families. He also visited Aleppo where returnees highlighted the lack of shelter, basic services and education opportunities in many parts of the city. Others struggled with lack of civil documentation, and some are relying on loans to survive.

The High Commissioner underlined the urgency for the international community to support not only the immediate humanitarian needs inside Syria but also to invest in longer-term recovery efforts.

UNHCR teams met with refugee returnees in Sheikh Miskin in Dar'a Governorate who have recently come back on their own from Jordan, including some from Zaatari refugee camp. In focus group discussions, refugee men relayed how they had come without their families because they wanted to assess the state of their homes first. The reality they are facing is stark. Some were staying with relatives and friends, unable to find and pay for the materials needed to patch up their houses. Others were concerned about the lack of services – in particular health and education. Their main costs had been transportation and paying off debts incurred in Jordan. Some had part of their debts still to pay.

However, some are now benefiting from UNHCR and other partners' recovery and assistance programmes. This week, UNHCR partners completed the rehabilitation of damaged apartments in Dar'a, but much more is needed.

In all parts of the country, UNHCR programmes are gradually expanding, in particular through shelter and livelihood support. Through its network of more than 100 operational community centres across the country, UNHCR delivered awareness raising sessions on gender-based violence, mine-risk education, psychosocial and legal assistance for IDPs and returnees.

As of 30 January, some 237,000 Syrians have crossed back into the country, including refugee returnees. Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR and partners have met with and supported thousands of returnees as they cross the border.

### Türkiye

On 27 January, High Commissioner Grandi crossed into Türkiye from Syria through Bab al Hawa / Cilvegözü land border crossing. There he met with the Deputy Governor responsible for the border crossing and the President of Migration Management. He visited the voluntary return processing area, speaking with refugee families waiting for return procedures to be finalized before travelling to Syria. On 28 January, the HC [met](#) Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz, Minister of Interior Ali Yerlikaya, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Burhanettin Duran.

On 29 January, Minister Yerlikaya [announced](#) that 81,576 Syrians have voluntarily returned from Türkiye since 9 December.

### Lebanon

Daily crossings at official border points continue at a low but steady rate, averaging 1,000 entry and exit movements per day.

As of 27 January, the government's Disaster Risk Management unit reports that there remain 87,000 Syrians and Lebanese in Baalbek Governorate who fled Syria since December 2024. Among the arrivals, some 35,000 people - mostly Syrians - are living in 224 informal collective shelters. Another 52,100 are living in the community. UNHCR and partners are providing newly arrived families in collective shelters with essential relief items such as blankets, mattresses and pillows.

### **Jordan**

On 24 and 30 January, UNHCR organized four buses for 136 refugees wishing to return to Syria. The buses departed from Amman and brought the refugees to Dar'a, Damascus and Homs governorates. Prior to departure, UNHCR conducted in-person interviews to ensure the decision to return is voluntary and well-informed and provided counselling and information on availability of services inside Syria. There is a close collaboration between UNHCR offices in Jordan and Syria monitoring the UNHCR-organized bus movements from Jordan, at the borders and back home in Syria.

On 30 January, while in Jordan, High Commissioner Grandi, met with refugees departing from Amman to Syria on UNHCR-arranged buses. He spoke with families about their expectations and hopes for returning home after years of displacement.

Compared to the previous reporting period, the number of calls to the UNHCR hotline on returns increased by 36%. Many questions were received about UNHCR's pilot transportation project and the documentation required for travel to Syria. UNHCR continues to maintain regular communication with refugees through various channels.

### **Iraq**

Since 8 December, over 4,800 Syrians have returned from Iraq to Syria, including 330 registered refugees. This includes Syrians who have returned through the Peshkhabour and Al-Qaim border crossing. The number of Syrian refugees returning increased slightly compared to the previous week. Most Syrians cite the improved security situation and reuniting with family as reasons for their return.

### **Egypt**

Since 8 December 2024, more than 4,000 closure requests involving over 8,500 Syrian refugees have been submitted to UNHCR Egypt, averaging 121 requests per day compared to the November 2024 average of just 7. During the past week, UNHCR's Infoline received 131 calls requesting case closure appointments. Overall, 69% of case closure applicants are male, with 44% of applicants originating from Damascus, 25% from Rural Damascus, 11% from Homs, 8% from Aleppo and the remaining 12% from other locations in Syria.

## **Useful links**

- [Regional Flash Update #11, 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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