UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

PROTECTION MONITORING

Situation of Forcibly Displaced Syrians in Lebanon

1st Quarter 2025

Methodology

Since 2019, UNHCR, in partnership with various organizations, has conducted monthly Protection Monitoring (PM) surveys with Syrian refugees across Lebanon. As of January 2024, this activity was centralized and implemented by INTERSOS, using household-level and Key Informant interviews, with a sampling methodology that is representative based on the presence of the Syrian refugee population both at national and regional levels. The PM surveys aim to gather information on refugees' situations, analyze protection trends, assess gaps, and inform responses. This supports evidence-based advocacy and programming under the Lebanon Response Plan and incorporates UNHCR's Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach to identify vulnerabilities. Referrals for specialized services are made when specific needs arise.

Disclaimer for Q1 2025: The escalation of the conflict in September 2024 caused massive displacement of people of all nationalities and considerably impacted the operational context in Lebanon. The regular collection of PM data - in particular household visits -was affected by security restrictions, accessibility issues and the need to support the emergency response. Hence, PM surveys were temporarily paused during Q4 2024 and Q1 2025. The protection trends and information presented in this report exceptionally combine data extracted from various PM initiatives undertaken by UNHCR and partners between January and March 2025. These include protection observation missions, monitoring of displacement and cross-border movements of refugees and asylum-seekers, rapid need assessments and ad-hoc surveys, intended to analyze the protection situation, intentions and impact of the latest regional and national developments on forcibly displaced people from Syria in Lebanon.

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I. KEY HIGHLIGHTS DURING QUARTER 1 2025

Despite the official pronouncement of a ceasefire, election of a president and formation of a reform-oriented government, the socio-economic situation in Lebanon remained fragile, and the country continued to face serious challenges, compounded by intermitted armed escalations and displacement in Q1 2025. Together with all other populations, the conflict and its aftermath have weakened resilience and deepened vulnerability of the refugee community in Lebanon. Women at risk, persons with disabilities, and older individuals are increasingly unable to meet basic needs like food, medication, transportation, and rental fees. These challenges intensify their protection risks and push many refugees to adopt harmful coping strategies like incurring debts or skipping meals, leading to more complex and overlapping vulnerabilities. Additionally, the sharp reduction of humanitarian funding experienced in the first quarter of 2025 already began to negatively impact the situation of Syrian refugees and other forcibly displaced people in Lebanon.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS INTO AND FROM SYRIA: Throughout Q1 2025, movement of Syrian refugees remained complex and fluid. UNHCR[1] estimated that more than 370,000 Syrians had crossed back to Syria via neighboring countries between 8 December 2024 and 31 March 2025, including estimated 123,328 Syrian individuals returning from or via Lebanon, and also those with residency in Lebanon engaging in temporary or pendular movements. In Q1 2025, among those Syrian refugees known to UNHCR, more than 90,000 individuals had been verified or presumed to return to Syria. In addition, the fall of the Assad Government in December 2024 and multiple clashes in Syria in March 2025 resulted in the arrival of almost 100,000 Syrians into Lebanon by the end of March 2025.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIERS have continued to pose ongoing risks to Syrian refugees related to detention and deportation. The lack of documentation including valid legal residency among many Syrian refugees remains a critical concern, that functions as a fundamental barrier to their access to rights and protection from refoulement. **Checkpoints and raids** targeting Syrian refugees without legal documentation continue posing protection risks for Syrians negatively affecting their freedom of movement, livelihood opportunities and raising fears and anxiety to be arbitrarily arrested and consequently deported.

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING HAS BEEN REPORTED as another critical issue among refugees in Q1 2025. Difficulties in securing housing due to damaged infrastructure in the areas where refugees lived before the conflict, coupled with high rental fees specifically targeting refugees, and various administrative restrictions introduced by municipalities post-ceasefire, particularly in the South, have significantly limited the opportunities for refugees to return to their pre-conflict places of residence. At the same time, rising rental costs have continued to increase the risks of eviction and homelessness among refugees, most of whom were already living below the poverty line. [2]

TENSIONS BETWEEN SYRIAN REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES have been reported across the country, primarily driven by a competition for resources, housing, unequal treatment, and political factors. Several sectarian incidents within the refugee community were also observed during the reporting period, mostly driven by tensions between newly arrived groups of Syrians and long-term refugees due to perceived affiliations with the former Assad Government and alleged unfair access to humanitarian assistance.

THE RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR SYRIAN CHILDREN continued to be a serious concern in Q1 2025 causing profound and far-reaching impacts. The requirement to present valid legal residency or UNHCR registration certificate placed an insurmountable barrier for many Syrian children to be enrolled into a school in Lebanon. The inability to attend school increased vulnerability among Syrian children who become more susceptible to life-altering risks such as violence, forced labor, human trafficking, early marriage and exploitation. In addition, tuition, capacity, and transportation costs also play an adverse role in compounding the difficulties in access to education.

A rise in GBV cases has been reported during Q1 2025, after a decline in reports during the conflict. Economic hardship has increased incidents of domestic violence, in addition to pressuring women into informal labor. Women and girls also face an increased risk of GBV incidents due to overcrowded accommodation, which lacks adequate privacy. Compounding child protection risks affecting Syrian children have also been observed throughout the quarter, such as early marriage and family separation. Children are regularly forced into child labor, often for low-paying and sometimes hazardous work.

[1] *UNHCR Lebanon. Syrian returns and movements snapshot, 31 Match 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[2] *UNHCR. 2023 Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR). 13 June 2024. Accessible at : https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/109319.*

II. OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: SITUATION POST-CEASEFIRE AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS

The present report outlines the escalating protection risks faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon during the first quarter of 2025 that are driven by a complex interplay of various factors. These include forced displacement, severe socio-economic constraints, administrative and legal barriers, rising social tensions, increased interest towards returns to Syria [3] and deep uncertainty surrounding the future of refugees in Lebanon — particularly considering the political transition in Syria after the fall of the Assad Government in December 2024. These developments have sparked cross-border movements through official and unofficial border crossing points[4], further complicating the operational landscape.

The first months of 2025 were marked by several key developments affecting both refugees and host communities in Lebanon:

- **Impact of the post-ceasefire,** including large-scale return of Internally Displaced People (IDP)s, damaged residential buildings and infrastructure, and heightened protection concerns that adversely affected the ability of displaced populations, including refugees, to return to their pre-conflict places of residence.

- **Sporadic military activity,** including air and drone strikes, continued occupation of border areas by Israeli military forces, and persistent tensions along the Lebanese Syrian border, particularly in the Baalbek-Hermel region.

- **Intensified cross-border movements between Syria and Lebanon,** involving new arrivals, spontaneous returns to Syria from and through Lebanon, pendular movements and re-entries of those Syrians who had previously fled Lebanon under duress during the 2024 escalation.

- **Political and humanitarian shifts,** notably the formation of a new Lebanese government in February 2025 after a prolonged two-year deadlock, and the decline in humanitarian funding.

a. Displacement, post-ceasefire and impact of the conflict on Syrian refugees

During the first quarter of 2025, Lebanon continued to grapple with the enduring consequences of the recent conflict and the displacement it triggered. While a significant number of IDPs – including Syrian refugees—have returned to their areas of origin in the country, many remain displaced. This ongoing displacement has exacerbated their protection vulnerabilities.

Following the ceasefire agreed on 27 November 2024, Lebanon witnessed a rapid and large-scale return of IDPs, with nearly 903,000 individuals—out of an estimated 1 million displaced—returning to their areas of previous residence within two weeks. UNHCR estimations indicate that more than 100,000 refugees were displaced during the conflict [5] . By 27 March 2025, only 64% of secondarily displaced Syrians had returned, compared to 82% of displaced Lebanese [6] . As of late March 2025, over 93,000 individuals remain displaced in Lebanon, the majority of whom were in the South and Nabatieh governorates—regions heavily affected by the conflict and destruction of housing and infrastructure [7] .

Chart 1. Internally displaced persons IDP (source: DTM)

[3] *UNHCR. Flash Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria. February 2025, accessible at: https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/flash-regional-survey-syrian-refugees-perceptions-and-intentions-return-syria-february-2025-enar.*

[4] *UNHCR. Lebanon – Syrian Returns & Movements Snapshot. 01 April 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[5] *NHCR, Displaced Refugees Tracking, as of 31 March 2025*

[6] *UNHCR, Protection Sector Analysis Report: December 2024-March 2025. 16 April 2025.Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[7] *IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix. Mobility Snapshot – Round 83. 03 April 2025. 16 April 2025.Accessible at: https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mobility-snapshot-round-83-03-04-2025?close=true.*

Displaced Syrian refugees have faced several challenges in returning to their pre-conflict locations in Lebanon: widespread destruction of housing, lack of basic services such as water and electricity, ongoing security risks including unexploded ordnance, and continued shelling in some areas. In the aftermath of the ceasefire, restrictive measures were introduced by 40 municipalities and 8 non-state actors in southern Lebanon. These measures have explicitly disallowed Syrians from returning to their pre-conflict places of residence, effectively prolonging their displacement.

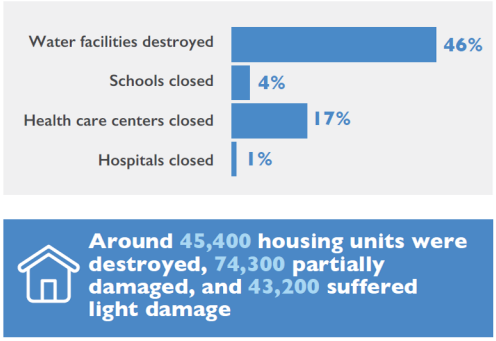
Restrictions on returns to certain municipalities and inflated rental prices in urban areas have further limited options for finding safe and dignified shelter by secondarily displaced Syrian refugees. In contrast to Lebanese IDPs, who have seen higher rates of return and more community-based support, Syrian refugees remained among the most marginalized and at-risk populations in Lebanon. Their displacement became prolonged not only because of physical and economic barriers but also resulting from legal and social exclusion, leaving them in a state of deep uncertainty and vulnerability. In the South, participants of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with Syrian refugees reported having to reduce food consumption, sell their assets, and struggle with debts to address the impact of their displacement. The political developments in Syria have also played a significant role in shaping the decisions of Syrian refugees. While some families decided to spontaneously return, many remained hesitant to go back due to the volatile situation in Syria, uncertainty about the future, fear of persecution, and the absence of guarantees for safety and stability.

In addition to the widespread displacement caused by the conflict, Lebanese authorities have reported over more than a thousand **ceasefire violations** between 28 November 2024 and 24 March 2025 [8]. These incidents have resulted in more than 100 fatalities and over 330 injuries, underscoring the fragility of the current security environment.

The continuous Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) military activities, in particular in the South, have heightened feelings of insecurity and triggered widespread psychological distress among refugees. Many key informants reported that residents, both from the host and refugee community, fear daily airstrikes and shelling, especially in high-risk areas such as Bint Jbeil, Marjayoun, Tyre, and Nabatieh, where border proximity makes local communities particularly vulnerable. The perception among residents is that the conflict has not ended, with many living in a constant state of alert and emotional exhaustion due to the unpredictability of the situation.

Moreover, the continued presence of explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance poses a threat to civilian safety, particularly in areas heavily affected by the conflict. Eight casualties were recorded by Lebanese Mine Action Centre (LMAC) between December 2024 and March 2025. [9] Additionally, recovery efforts have been further hampered by the destruction and disruption of essential infrastructure — such as water supply systems, electricity networks, transportation routes —which remain non-functional or severely limited in several conflict-impacted regions [10] in Q1 2025.

Chart 2: Damage of infrastructure due to the conflict[11]



[8] *As referenced in Lebanon Protection Sector Analysis Report: December 2024-March 2025. 16 April 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[9] *Protection Sector Analysis Report: December 2024-March 2025. Ibid.*

[10] *UN OCHA. Lebanon: At a Glance - Escalation of hostilities in Lebanon, as of 20 March 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[11] *Lebanon Protection Sector Analysis Report: December 2024-March 2025. 16 April 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115744. details/115880.*

b. Cross-border and pendular movements

Throughout the first quarter of 2025, the movement of Syrian refugees remained complex and fluid. Due to the conflict, at least 557,000 individuals - 63% of whom were Syrian - were estimated to have **fled Lebanon under duress** and crossed into Syria between September and November 2024. A significant portion of these individuals were not registered with UNHCR Lebanon. Among those who were, 44% returned to Lebanon within three months after the ceasefire, often due to continued insecurity and lack of economic and housing opportunities in Syria[12].

Since the fall of the Assad Government and until the end of March 2025, approximately 371,900 Syrians crossed back into Syria from neighboring countries[13]. Movements are currently occurring through both official crossing points and unofficial crossing points where UNHCR border monitoring indicates a substantial proportion of pendular or temporary movements.

Many Syrians have undertaken temporary visits to Syria, to evaluate conditions in their areas of origin before deciding whether to return permanently. From Lebanon, these cross-border movements are taking place through both official (mainly Masnaa and Qaa OCP) and unofficial border crossings, that makes it difficult to obtain an accurate number.[14] Reports from Key Informants, FGDs, and community sources indicate that such movements are in a continuous state of change and often utilize the services of smugglers.[15]

As of February 2025, UNHCR started regular interviews of Syrian individuals at the Masnaa official border crossing point. The interviews take place at the departure terminal, to better understand return trends among Syrian refugees. The majority were either **transiting through Lebanon for short visits to Syria or had sponsorship visas in Lebanon and were going to Syria for short visits.** A minimal number of individuals reported returning permanently through this official crossing point. The number of returnees is likely to increase following the launch of the official programs facilitating the return of Syrian refugees. During Q1 2025, the official border crossing points in the North remained closed, while movements, including spontaneous returns, through Wadi Khaled, Zamarani and Sheikh Ayash unofficial border crossing points continued despite some interruptions due to cold weather and increased LAF presence.

c. Returns and intentions to return to Syria

UNHCR estimates some **123,328 Syrian individuals returned to Syria from or via Lebanon between December 2024 and end of March 2025**, including up to 50% Syrians from abroad transiting through Lebanon or those with residency in Lebanon engaging in temporary or pendular movements. UNHCR in Lebanon regularly verifies reported returns of Syrians against its records[16] .**As of the end of March 2025, 97,021 individuals have been inactivated from UNHCR's registration records** in Lebanon due to verified or presumed return, including 65,417 individuals who fled during the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon in 2024 and who remained in Syria. [17]

[12] *UNHCR Lebanon. Syrian returns and movements snapshot, 31 Match 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[13] *UNHCR Syria Situation Crisis: Regional Flash Update #21. 03 April 2025. Accessible at: https://reporting.unhcr.org/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-21*

[14] *UNHCR. Lebanon – Syrian Returns & Movements Snapshot 30 April 2025. 07 May 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/116135.*

[15] *Field Protection Observation (INTERSOS Protection Monitoring Reports Q1 2025).*

[16] *Please note the situation is fluctuating and the figures change daily. For the latest information, consult the UNHCR Data Portal at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/lbn.*

[17] *UNHCR. Lebanon – Syrian Returns & Movements Snapshot 31 March 2025. 01 April 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

Consultations with refugee communities regarding their intentions to return to Syria varied significantly, reflecting a shift in sentiment from the early days following the fall of the government to four months later. Initially, many hoped to return home as soon as conditions allowed, driven by emotions of missing their homeland. However, over time, increased security concerns in Syria have emerged, alongside socio-economic barriers such as limited access to services, housing, and livelihoods. Additionally, concerns regarding the lack of law and order, widespread use of weapons, and overall political and economic uncertainty have led to some waiting for clear indications of long-term viability, while others have no intetion of returning.

Participants of the **Community Dialogues**[18] organized by UNHCR and partners in March 2025 expressed both hope and uncertainty about their return plans given the evolving situation in Syria and lack of clarity around services, with the following AGD-specific insights:

• **Youth (16% female and 13% males):** Hesitant due to lack of community ties, concerns about limited education and work opportunities, fears of reliving trauma.

• **Women (23% and additional 11% female heads of household):** Influenced by children's safety and education, available services and extent of women rights.

• **Men (13%):** Willing to return once situation stabilizes, access to services is ensured and reconstruction is underway.

• **Older persons (9% women and 8% men):** Return contingent on access to services and family support, despite strong emotional ties.

• **Persons with disabilities (7%):** Face considerable barriers, require access to services and family, community and institutional support systems.

UNHCR released its **Operational Framework for Voluntary Return,** which outlines UNHCR's plans to assist the voluntary return of Syrian refugees and IDPs to their homes and to support their reintegration in areas of origin. The framework was divided into three main operational modalities, including support to structured General Security Office (GSO)-facilitated Go-and-See visits, support to GSO-facilitated voluntary return and support to self-organized, voluntary return.

As reported by refugees consulted on their intentions, go-and-see visits were seen as useful, but financial constraints, safety concerns, and perceived re-entry challenges limited the interest of refugees in taking part in such visits [19]. Some interviewees prefer to wait at least two more years for conditions to improve before deciding on return. Many respondents flagged the lack of sufficient information about available assistance and job opportunities in Syria for those who consider returning. Results of the interviews also include a higher likelihood of men to undertake the visits for safety, practical and logistical reasons, concerns with consistency in implementing guarantees such as fee waiver, travel ban and maintaining an active UNHCR file and worries about retaining jobs in Lebanon while undertaking the visits. As of the end of Q1, over 1,500 Syrian families known to UNHCR had contacted UNHCR's National Call Center to register their interest in UNHCR's supported voluntary return programmes, with many waiting for the end of the school year at the end of June and early July, and more favorable weather conditions to prepare their return home.

[18] *UNHCR Lebanon. Community Dialogues on Return and "Go and See" visits. 20 May 2025. Accessible at: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unhcr-lebanon-community-dialogue-return-and-go-and-see-visits-may-2025*

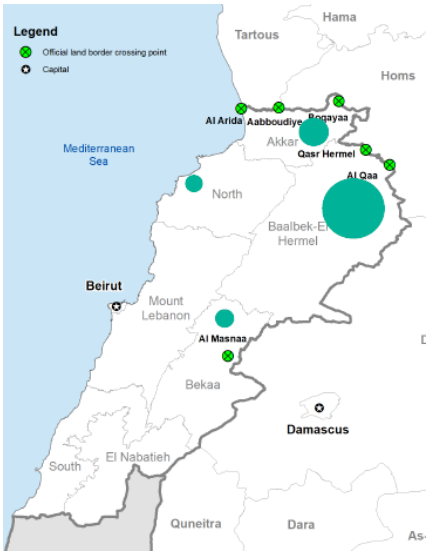
[19] *UNHCR Lebanon. Community Dialogues on Return and "Go and See" visits/ 20 May 2025, Accessible at: https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unhcr-lebanon-community-dialogue-return-and-go-and-see-visits-may-2025.*

d. New Arrivals from Syria

Throughout the first quarter of 2025, Lebanon experienced a significant number of Syrian new arrivals from diverse religious and political backgrounds, including minority groups such as Alawites, Shia, and Christians. The first wave began at the end of 2024, with the majority of individuals settling in the Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel Governorates. A second wave followed in March 2025, triggered by intensified hostilities in Syria's Tartous, Lattakia, Homs, and Hama Governorates. Fearing for their safety, many from these regions—again largely from minority groups—fled to Lebanon, this time primarily seeking refuge in Akkar and the North Governorates [20].

By the end of the first quarter, a total of 98,988 [21] new arrivals had been recorded across Lebanon. Of these, 71,068 individuals have been reported to arrive in Bekaa and Hermel, while 24,045 were monitored in Akkar and the North, underscoring the geographic and temporal patterns of displacement during this period.

Chart 3. New arrivals by region (as of 31 March 2025)



Most of the population newly arrived to Baalbek-Hermel Governorate were mobile and fluid, with many initially residing in community-based or religious collective shelters while others relied on private accommodation, were hosted by families, or found sub-standards housing arrangements. Based on FGDs, partner observations and community sources, the main basic needs identified among these new arrivals included **shelter, protection** (particularly legal, documentation issues and freedom of movement)**, health, food and non-food items, WASH, education, and livelihoods.** Under the protection sector, concerns around l**egal status and lack of documentation stood out**, closely linked with restricted access to territory, fear of deportation and inability to report violence. This includes GBV concerns, as individuals feel unable or unsafe to come forward. Women particularly expressed concerns about the lack of privacy and absence of confidential spaces in communal living environments and overcrowded shelters.

New arrivals have reported experiencing severe hardship due to persecution in Syria and stigmatization in Lebanon, mainly related to religious differences and perceived political affiliations. As per the reasons to leave Syria, 80% of new arrivals interviewed in Bekaa and Baalbek cited generalized violence associated with the recent political changes, widespread criminality and tensions within the communities.

Upon arrival in Lebanon, some – especially from Alawite and Shia backgrounds - reported being subjected to verbal harassment by the host community or long-term Syrian refugees due to competition of resources and sectarian tensions, which affected the choice of some to move to other areas in Lebanon, for example Beirut and Southern Lebanon. Reports also included cases of physical and mental abuse, abduction and death threats, with the nature and frequency of these incidents varying significantly by area of residence [22]. Shiaa new arrivals relocating to the South and Nabatieh generally reported to be accepted by the local community, while most Alawite groups remained in Northern Lebanon.

According to assessments conducted with newly arrived individuals in Beirut and Mount Lebanon[23], the absence of legal documentation significantly limits their ability to access livelihood opportunities and maintain financial stability for securing shelter and food. While some of these individuals previously held professional roles and earned stable incomes in Syria, they are now compelled to accept low-paying jobs to support their families. Child labor has become widespread, driven by the lack of income and limited access to education.

[20] *UNHCR. Syria Situation Crisis: Regional Flash Update #21. 03 April 2025. Accessible at: https://www.unhcr.org/media/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-21*

[21] *UNHCR. Lebanon – Syrian Returns & Movements Snapshot 31 March 2025. 01 April 2025. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115880.*

[22] *UNHCR focus group discussions with new arrivals in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South, April 2025.*

[23] *Ibid.*

III. PROTECTION SITUATION AND TRENDS

a. Legal residency

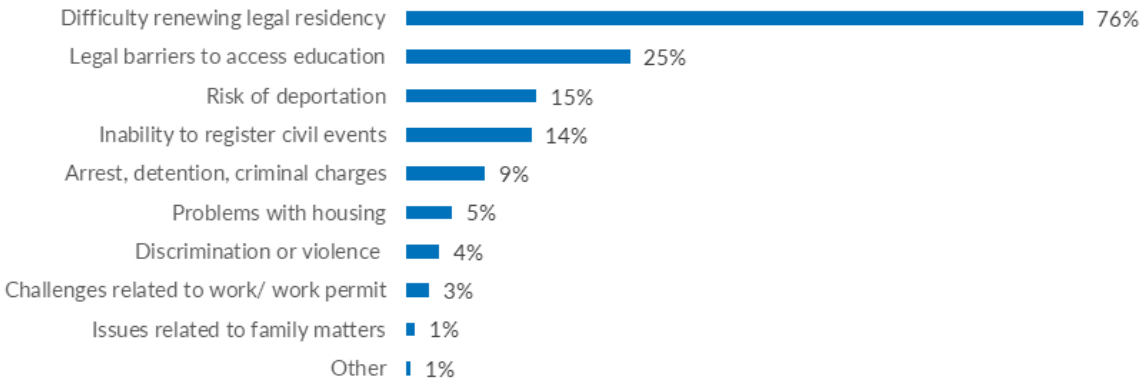
The **lack of legal residency** persists as a paramount concern among Syrian refugees throughout Lebanon, affecting 93% of Syrian households in the country [24]. Its impact is multifold:

• it limits their freedom of movement and ability to access essential services, healthcare, and employment and increases safety concerns related to detention and deportation.
• affects their psychological wellbeing, limits their social interactions and increases their need to borrow money.
• makes them more vulnerable to incidents as their access to justice is limited by legal, financial and social barriers.

Renewal of legal residency in Lebanon was reported as a major challenge by 76% of Syrians consulted on their legal aid needs [25] .Delays in processing applications for extension of residence permits at the General Security Office (GSO) were cited as one of the main causes, together with difficulties finding and paying fees for renewal of residency based on sponsorship. Also, the closure of GSO centers in some parts of the country because of the conflict has caused delays in renewal of expired documents resulting in the need to cover the **late renewal fees**, in addition to the regular fees, by refugees.

Legal barriers to education emerged as the second most frequently reported challenge, closely linked to the lack of valid residency, followed by the risk of **deportation** and the inability to **register civil events**[25].

Chart 4. Main legal issues faced by Syrian refugees in Lebanon[26]



> **It's hard to feel safe when your situation is temporary. Every renewal of documents is a struggle, and you never know what tomorrow brings.**
>
> - Syrian refugee in the Bekaa

On 17 March 2025, the Council of Ministers extended the **waiver of the one-year birth registration deadline for Syrian children born in Lebanon since 2011.** This extension allowed all Syrian children born in Lebanon from 1 January 2011 to 17 March 2025 to register their births administratively, without the need to turn for court proceedings, even if they have exceeded the one-year deadline.

[24] *UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF. Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. 2024 preliminary findings.*

[25] *Snap survey on legal aid needs of Syrian refugees, UNHCR & INTERSOS, March 2025.*

[26] *Ibid*

b. Social Tensions

Throughout Q1 2025, inter and intra-communal tensions escalated across all regions, as observed by protection monitors and reported by key informants and community sources. Ongoing tensions over competition for resources, housing, and livelihood opportunities have persisted, resulting in reports of verbal harassment and violence. Additionally, changes in Syria in December 2024 resulted in a new displacement and shifting perceptions among both refugee and host communities, contributing to the increasing communal tensions.

While local communities expressed frustration over perceived inequities in the distribution of humanitarian assistance, Syrian refugees continued to highlight unequal treatment in the labor and rental markets. Refugees reported that they receive lower wages for the same jobs compared to Lebanese nationals, and landlords prioritize Lebanese tenants over refugees[27]. Competition over resources have also led to a rise in the number of theft incidents that were reported in multiple areas in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and South Governorates.

Since the fall of the Assad Government, Syrian refugees have increasingly been subjected to verbal harassment by the local communities urging refugees to return to their country of origin. This practice was particularly reported in the South, with key informants flagging multiple incidents of verbal and sometimes also physical violence against Syrian refugees. In addition to this, 25 non-municipal initiatives from youth groups in various locations in the South released statements opposing the presence of Syrian refugees in their villages, threatening with four-day notice evictions.

The South and Southern Suburbs of Beirut (SSOB) have seen increasing tensions between the local **community and the Syrian population** over perceptions of the latter's potential affiliation or alignment with the new government in Syria. These exchanges highlighted a rising sectarian tension and polarization, with potential implications for intercommunal coexistence and stability. In the Bekaa and Baalbek, unverified information and threats spread across social media at the end of January 2025 played a negative role in raising tensions. In addition, verbal harassment urging long-term Syrian refugees to return was also reported from refugees of other nationalities, who view Syrian refugees as competitors for limited resources, including livelihoods, assistance, and services.

The political changes in Syria have also been reflected in the relations between the communities in Lebanon. Tensions have been reported between Alawite and Shia new arrivals and the Sunni communities, both long-term Syrian refugees and Lebanese, over perceived association of the new arrivals with the Assad regime. Tensions were also reported between the new arrivals and Lebanese IDPs due to perceptions of unequal aid distribution favoring Syrians. In Beirut and Mount Lebanon (BML), key informants reported growing tensions between Lebanese IDPs and new Syrian arrivals sharing collective shelters, resulting in a number of violent incidents. In the Bekaa and Baalbek-El-Hermel, competition for shelter between new arrivals and long-term refugees due to limited housing availability resulted in overcrowded shelters and a rise of rental prices that further exacerbated already vulnerable situation of Syrian refugees.

c. Administrative measures

Reports of administrative measures during this quarter relate mostly to curfews, impositions of fees and movement restrictions of Syrians in at least 50 municipalities. In total, there were at least 104 incidents of administrative measures introduced in Q1 2025, affecting the movement of refugees, checkpoint arrests, data collection practices, restrictions on livelihoods and accommodation rentals, also imposing of taxes and fees, and requiring tent demolitions.

For example, a curfew in Ras Baalbek prohibited Syrian refugees from moving around between 7PM to 6AM, except in emergency cases, with similar restrictions imposed in the South. In Mayfadoun municipality in Nabatieh, Syrians were asked to pay an annual fee, to be able to freely move around. Some areas in the South issued bans on the return of Syrians who were permanently living there prior to the conflict. Areas such as Chhibiyi, Maashouq, Bourj Chmali and Aytit have prioritized the settlement of Lebanese citizens and have banned Syrian refugees from establishing accommodation in these municipalities.

[27] *SPEAC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Lebanon, November 2024-January 2025.*

Key informants in the North have reported that both new arrivals and long-term refugees are **self-imposing restrictions on their movement,** to avoid potential deportation at checkpoints[28]. This came as a result of the LAF establishing additional checkpoints in areas such as Minieh, and Abdeh, with the reported specific purpose of identifying Syrians without legal documentation. Such fears were also reported by Syrian refugees in the other regions of the country, such as in the South, where participants of FGDs noted that some refugees are forced to pass through checkpoints daily to reach their work, and are consistently risking being arrested and deported. Community sources also reported that continuous security patrols inspect refugee documentation, further heightening deportation concerns. In the Bekaa, major checkpoints such as Harbata, constituted major constraints and many new arrivals in Hermel area faced movement restrictions inside Lebanon, including long-term refugees who wanted to cross from Central to North Bekaa and vise-versa. It was also observed that authorities confiscated ID documents of refugees, who have no or expired legal residency.

Raids targeting Syrian refugees were mostly reported in the Bekaa. During the first quarter of the year, the number of raids in shelters used by Syrian refugees fluctuated significantly, marking a notable shift from the high levels recorded in December 2024. That month saw a peak of 67 raids, 66 in Bekaa and 1 in Akkar, likely driven by intensified security operations following the ceasefire, compared to reduced numbers between January and March 2025. In January, raids dropped sharply to just 6. February saw a partial rebound, with 32 raids suggesting a renewed focus on internal security, potentially in response to increased cross-border movements or concerns over illegal activities, while March recorded a significant drop to just 8 raids.

Protection assessment visits documented incidents where raids on buildings were followed by eviction orders issued by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), including also some cases when refugees held valid residency permits.

d. Evictions and access to housing

The conflict in Lebanon has deepened housing insecurity for refugees and internally displaced populations. Widespread destruction and displacement have driven up rental prices, particularly in areas where IDPs were returning. In some locations, rental fees have doubled or even tripled since the ceasefire. For example, rental fees in villages like Tebnin and Safad have surged from 100 to 400 USD, pricing out many refugees.

Some secondarily displaced refugees lost legal documents during the conflict, making it difficult to renew rental agreements at the pre-conflict places of residence. Lack of legal documents left refugees vulnerable to exploitation, with landlords inflating rents, enforcing arbitrary evictions, and prioritizing Lebanese tenants over Syrians. In Ain Arab, community sources reported that the mayor prohibited Syrian refugees from renting homes in the village, despite this decision being met with resistance from Lebanese agricultural stakeholders who traditionally rely on Syrian laborers in this municipality.

Furthermore, some areas are still inaccessible due to security incidents involving the IDF, further crowding already overpopulated areas. Local municipal policies, community tensions and landlord practices contributed to further deterioration of the situation with access to housing by Syrian refugees.

According to UNHCR records, the number of **eviction notices** issued in the first quarter of 2025 remained consistent with figures from the fourth quarter of 2024. The affected areas in Q1 2025 were primarily located in the Bekaa, North, and Beirut/Mount Lebanon regions. Key informants have reported that in some locations, landlords forcibly evicted Syrian tenants or moved their belongings to a single room, to lease the rest of the property to Lebanese families. Others withheld furniture or denied access to housing based on nationality. Refugees, particularly those without legal status, were often left with no choice but to live in overcrowded, substandard conditions, sharing limited facilities and facing heightened protection risks.

[28] *Field Protection Observation (INTERSOS Protection Monitoring Report Q1 2025)..*

The **influx of new arrivals has further strained the housing market,** especially in the Bekaa, Baalbek-El Hermel, and the North, where landlords exploited the urgency of newcomers by charging inflated rents. Long-term refugees, are unable to keep up, leading to a cycle of instability and displacement. In the South, deteriorating security conditions have compounded these challenges. Informal tented settlements (ITSs), particularly in areas like Tyre, lack basic protective infrastructure, leaving residents exposed to violence and harassment. Reports of targeted attacks and community tensions highlight the urgent need for improved shelter conditions and protection mechanisms.

> **The rent goes up month by month, specially that more new people are arriving, like they're pushing us to leave. It's so hard to afford it.**
>
> - Syrian refugee in Anfeh, Northern Lebanon

e. Access to Services: Health and Education

Syrian refugees across Lebanon continue to struggle in accessing basic services partly due to limited availability, conflict-related service disruptions and humanitarian funding cuts, which have affected critical services such as healthcare. According to key informants in the North, health care, including medication, is difficult to access because many of the public health centers either do not have the medication or the refugees cannot afford the medication. Although the distribution of medicine is carried out by local activists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the amount of assistance is insufficient to meet the needs of refugees. Female hygiene items, medication, and mental health services were reportedly main gaps[29]. Moreover, the humanitarian assistance in the Bekaa and Baalbek areas like Ras Baalbek Al-Sahl, El Sharqi, Hermel, and Ain Baalbek are often distributed at collective shelters, leaving little to no support to refugees residing in privately rented accommodations. Unfamiliarity of the displacement area also contributes to refugees' lack of awareness of service availability that further worsens their access to the services, in addition to the multiple systemic barriers such as unequal treatment, high healthcare costs and limited support from NGOs.

Access to healthcare remains a major challenge for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Aside from its high cost, limited availability, and prioritization of Lebanese individuals over Syrian refugees, refugees without legal documents are also restricted to access healthcare[30]. In the South Governorate, healthcare service availability remains insufficient and unaffordable due to high service and transportation cost despite the slight improvement in access to healthcare services following the ceasefire. The lack of access to healthcare has led to various coping mechanisms such as self-medication, home remedies, or forgoing vital treatment altogether.

The lack of legal documentation has had serious impacts on children's ability to **access education**. Upon the decision of the Council of Ministers, requiring children to have either a valid legal residency or UNHCR certificate to enroll in public education, schools across the country have denied Syrian children's access to education if they do not possess valid legal documentation. In some cases, even children with valid documentation have been facing difficulties accessing education in the South. This decision has led children unable to attend school to other child protection risks, such as child labor and child abuse through work exploitation.[31]

> **Our children can't go to school because they don't have legal residency. Instead, they now work in agriculture to help their family survive.**
>
> - Syrian Shawish in Akkar

[29] *Mercy Corps. Voices of Vulnerability: A Needs Assessment in Lebanon's Akkar, Bekaa and Southern Regions. 08 April 2025. Accessible at: https://www.unhcr.org/media/syria-situation-crisis-regional-flash-update-21*

[30] *SPEAC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Lebanon, November 2024-January 2025.*

[31] *SPEAC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Lebanon, November 2024-January 2025.*

Many Syrian refugees cannot afford the cost of education and transportation to school for their children, while others cannot enroll their children in schools due to limited school capacity. In Bint Jbeil and Marjaayoun, transportation costs can reach 20 USD which is unaffordable for many parents. Because of the challenges, some parents have resorted to other means to educate their children. In Borj Hammoud, reportedly some parents sought private teachers for their children while others attempted to have their children attend online sessions provided by UNICEF. However, this brings other challenges for many living without reliable access to internet and necessary devices.

f. Child Protection concerns, risks of Gender-Based Violence and impact on mental health

Child Protection

Economic hardship and rising unemployment rates have been key drivers causing heightened child protection risks. In Q1 2025, among children receiving case management, child labor, emotional abuse and neglect constitute the top three risk categories, as reported by child protection countrywide, followed by violent discipline and child trafficking. 40% of identified children were classified as high-risk cases [32]. More children are forced to work, to help sustain their families and as direct consequences of their inability to access education. Children were reported working in agriculture, small businesses as shopkeepers, and street-based works, activities that significantly strain their well-being and expose them to further exploitation and danger [33].

Barriers to education, such as transportation costs, lack of legal documentation and school shift closures causing children to be out of school contributed to increased child labor across the country. In Chawakir ITS, it was observed that children as young as six years old were working in the shops, on the farms and in public spaces. In Deir Qanoun ITS, children collect plastics to sell for food, while facing physical assaults from members of the host community. In the North, it was reported that children as young as 10 years old were engaged in daily child labor, working in agriculture, construction and as street vendors. One child in the South stated during a protection monitoring with a key informant and said:

> **I left school, but I was a good student. One day, if I return, I will be a good student again.**

Some children were reportedly taken out of school to help support household income. Child labor was also prevalent among new arrivals where children similarly worked in agriculture to support their family.

Aside from child labor, other issues reported through various channels during Q1 include child marriage and violence against children [34]. It is also observed that violence and emotional abuse against children have risen, either within their households and in communities, with reported cases of refugee children being bullied by other children from the host communities or emotionally abused by family at home. Stress and depression caused by economic hardship and prolonged displacement have exacerbated protection risks on children who also experienced their own psychological distress with increase in reported cases of isolation and aggressive behavior among children.

[32] *Child Protection Working Group Dashboard – Q1 2025.*

[33] *Field Protection Observations (UNHCR Situational Reports, 07 February 2025)*

[34] *SPEAC Quarterly Protection Monitoring Report Lebanon, November 2024-January 2025.*

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

By the end of 2024, the escalation of conflict in Lebanon—particularly in the Bekaa/El Hermel region and the South—had a profound impact on gender-based violence (GBV) dynamics. **The closure of a significant number of GBV services in these areas led to a sharp decline in incident reporting**, with decreases of 68% in Bekaa/El Hermel and 37% in the South. Overall, the 2024 GBVIMS data reflected a 38% drop in reported incidents between Q3 and Q4 [35]. This decline, however, **did not reflect a reduction in GBV incidents, but rather a collapse in access to life-saving services.** Approximately 26% [36] of facilities providing Clinical Management of Rape (CMR) services were damaged or closed due to the hostilities, only recently beginning to reopen. As a result, women and girls faced significant barriers to disclosing GBV and accessing support.

The conflict intensified pre-existing GBV risks, particularly amid widespread displacement and deteriorating living conditions. GBVIMS partners reported a surge in intimate partner violence, harmful practices such as child marriage and child labor, and increased GBV risks in collective shelters. Children, especially girls, were exposed to sexual assault and other forms of GBV in overcrowded and poorly protected environments. Women and girls were at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and assault, including by relatives or strangers, particularly in shared accommodations and collective shelters lacking privacy and gender-segregated wash facilities. Syrian refugees as well as other marginalized groups faced discriminatory barriers to shelter access due to their nationality or perceived affiliations, often forcing them to sleep outdoors or in overcrowded, inadequate shelters.

Following the ceasefire, disclosures of GBV began to rise again, particularly from survivors in collective shelters, shared homes, and during domestic or agricultural labor. This rise was attributed to a shift in focus of concerns among individuals: as the conflict had largely subsided, despite ongoing incidents, individuals' focus began to shift away from immediate survival to include other critical issues such as GBV. As individuals had more control over their basic survival needs, case management teams indicated that people were more willing to express their concerns related to GBV. These post-conflict reports underscore the severity of the risks faced during the conflict period and the urgent need to restore and expand GBV services.

In the South, GBV Working Group partners have reported **a significant rise** in emotional abuse, denial of resources, and increased psychological distress driven by economic hardship and the continuation of the conflict in some border areas. New arrivals in the North and BML have reported increased harassment, exploitation, and survival sex, rising online grooming, early marriages, and safety concerns, together with higher GBV risks due to living in overcrowded spaces, tents or unfinished buildings that offered limited privacy. Meanwhile, single Syrian women who newly arrived in Bekaa shared their concerns on risk of GBV, particularly those who live at collective shelters. Key Informant Interviews with newly arrived and displaced women and girls resulted in reports of needed dignity kits and personal care items that help maintain their dignity, health, safety, and mobility when accessing basic services.

LGBTIQ+ individuals, particularly transgender women and LGBTQI+ refugees from Syria, continued facing heightened risks of GBV and discrimination in Q1 2025. Barriers such as job rejections due to mismatched legal documents, lack of safe housing, increased persecution, and stigma—combined with declining referrals and limited protection mechanisms—left many exposed to sexual violence, exploitation, and severe mental health challenges including trauma, anxiety, and social isolation. [37]

Key informant interviews with Syrians in Borj Hammoud indicated that roughly two of every five Syrian women have experienced some form of GBV during the first quarter of 2025. Many of these women attributed incidents of physical abuse to the deteriorating psychological states of their husbands, highlighting a pattern consistent with cases of intimate partner violence (IPV).

[35] *GBVIMS 2024 Annual report*

[36] *Protection Sector Analysis Report, December 2024 – March 2025, Lebanon.*

[37] *GBV Working Group, Beirut and Mount Lebanon Subnational Working Group, March 2025*

These findings are further supported by GBVIMS data, which show that IPV accounted for 53% of all reported GBV incidents in Lebanon in 2023 and 49% in 2024 . Moreover, field observations in the South resulted in reports regarding reduced humanitarian aid contributing to family breakdowns and marital disputes, creating conditions that heightened the risk of GBV. [38]

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

The psychological impact of protracted displacement forced school dropouts, exploitative labor, eviction threats, and exclusion from assistance programs has fueled distress, particularly among women, children, and individuals with specific needs. Throughout the first quarter of 2025, field teams and community sources have been consistently reporting on the worsening mental health environment among children and adults [39.] As per UNHCR community sources, psychological distress remained as one of the most prominent type of risks identified and referred to assistance countrywide. Nightmares, bed-wetting, and aggressive behavior in children, as well as stress and anxiety in adults, were reported. MHPSS concerns are often interconnected with other protection issues especially GBV and child protection, manifesting through emotional abuse, psychosocial disorders, behavioral issues, and coping mechanisms involving violence or self-harm.

Mental health and psychosocial support concerns were highlighted in the North – especially among new arrivals - and in Southern Lebanon by those living in areas highly affected by the conflict. In the North, new arrivals from Syria showed signs that they were in need of psychosocial support. Based on key informant interviews conducted in areas such as Tripoli, Massoudieh, Hissa, and Aboudiyeh, new arrivals from Syria often exhibited signs of psychological distress linked to recent exposure to violence, displacement, and family separation. Key informants reported rising cases of anxiety, bedwetting, and symptoms of trauma, especially among women and children. Community members highlighted the lack of accessible and specialized mental health services in areas that are receiving higher influxes of new arrivals.

> **My children started bedwetting. They're scared all the time since we fled, they haven't felt safe.**
>
> - Female new arrival in Mejdlaya

In Tyre, outreach volunteers and community focal points reported an alarming increase in psychological distress among refugees, linked to deteriorating shelter conditions, social exclusion, and heightened fear of eviction or forced return. The anxiety of losing shelter or being forcibly relocated has led many to express a state of constant emotional breakdown."

> **Everyone here is experiencing deep depression and constant stress at all times due to the housing situation.**
>
> - Syrian refugee in Jwaya, Tyre

Psychological distress is becoming increasingly widespread within communities, particularly where assistance has been lacking. In the Bekaa, psychological distress was reportedly high amongst new arrivals and in areas affected by the conflict. The absence of accessible and sustained MHPSS services in several areas due to various reasons including reduction of funding to provide service limits early intervention, increasing the risk of long-term mental health deterioration. Emotional abuse continues to be a dominant form of violence in GBV cases, while stress-induced aggression is surfacing in both caregivers and adolescent boys.

[38] *Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS). GBVIMS Annual Report 2024 – Lebanon. Accessible at: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115414*

[39] *Field Protection Observation (INTERSOS Protection Monitoring Report Q1 2025)*

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