

# Middle East Situation

25 March 2026



Lebanon. Hundreds of displaced families have found refuge in Beirut's waterfront, sleeping in tents or in their cars. 17 March, 2026© UNHCR

## Key Highlights

- Escalating hostilities across Asia and the Middle East have led to a marked deterioration in the humanitarian situation. The affected areas already host 24.3 million forcibly displaced people, many of whom face significant protection risks and have substantial humanitarian needs, alongside vulnerable host communities. With limited funding, many countries are struggling to meet existing needs, making it increasingly difficult to absorb additional pressures and support newly displaced populations.
- The escalation of hostilities since 28 February 2026 is placing increasing strain on humanitarian capacities and host communities. UNHCR is working across the region with national authorities, UN agencies and humanitarian partners to respond to the needs of crisis-affected populations and maintain critical activities including protection services and border monitoring. Inter-agency preparedness is being strengthened amid the evolving situation.
- For the latest information on population movements, see the latest [UNHCR CORE Update](#) and [newly launched Operational Data Portal](#) page on the Middle East situation.

## Country Updates

### Iran

- Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted over 38,200 Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multi-purpose cash assistance and psychosocial support. Demand remains high, with over 3,500 calls received between 19 and 24 March, leaving [helpline](#) response capacity overstretched. Despite the security situation, people continued to approach UNHCR offices in Tehran, Esfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz and Kerman. Reports from Afghan refugees highlight serious hardship as they flee strikes, with some families who had not previously approached UNHCR now returning to seek assistance for shelter, basic needs and health care. With refugee response partners' resources stretched to the limit, a flash inter-agency refugee response appeal will be launched on 26 March.

### Afghanistan-Pakistan

- Since the start of the crisis, over 41,600 Afghans have returned. In 2026, more than 317,300 have returned from Iran and Pakistan in 2026, adding to the nearly 3 million who returned in 2025. Returns from Iran and Pakistan remain below typical levels, with fewer than 600 people crossing daily over the past five days due to border restrictions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and reduced returns from Iran during Nowruz and Eid festivities although returns are expected to increase.
- In Afghanistan and Pakistan, cross-border clashes have internally displaced an estimated 115,000 and 3,500 people respectively, while joint assessments to evaluate newly displaced as result of the most recent clashes in Afghanistan are ongoing. Insecurity along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border continues to expose civilians to significant protection risks. An Eid-linked ceasefire led to a brief reduction in the intensity of clashes, but reported hostilities persist. Movement restrictions due to the security situation are constraining humanitarian presence and response in hard-to-reach areas. UNHCR and partners are continuing to advocate for de-escalation, the protection of civilians and unimpeded humanitarian access.
- Border monitoring of Afghan returnees indicates ongoing protection pressures in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, including arrest, detention, harassment, extortion, confiscation of belongings as well as limited access to food, water and health care prior to return. Some also reported poor detention conditions, family separation and loss of wages or housing deposits. Many returnees face significant challenges in Afghanistan, particularly in accessing jobs, housing and basic services, underscoring the need for stronger support and increased funding to facilitate sustainable reintegration.

### Turkmenistan

- All four border crossings with Iran are open to all nationalities.

### Iraq

- Large-scale population movements between Iran and Iraq have not been observed in light of the current conflict. The population movement taking place remains consistent with routine activities, such as commercial trade or accessing reliable telecommunications services. As detailed

in IOM's Displacement Tracking Monitoring, small numbers of Iraqis have returned from Iran. Overall, the border situation remains fluid.

- UNHCR with UN agencies and partners is finalizing an interagency contingency plan for any potential refugee arrivals from Iran, to support the Government of Iraq in response efforts. UNHCR continues to monitor border activity, coordinating with authorities and partners.

## Lebanon

- Displacement continues amid intensified hostilities and large-scale evacuation orders. Over 1 million individuals have self-registered as displaced on the Government of Lebanon's online platform with over 134,900 people currently sheltering in 657 collective sites nationwide, many of which are overcrowded and operating at or near full capacity. The humanitarian situation remains critical, with over 1,070 fatalities and nearly 3,000 injuries reported, including at least 83 refugee casualties (23 fatalities and 60 injuries), while ongoing airstrikes and access constraints continue to drive repeated displacement and heightened protection risks.
- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Affairs and within the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP), UNHCR continues to scale up its emergency response. So far, UNHCR has reached over 72,800 displaced individuals in 431 collective shelters and communities with over 195,100 essential relief items, while also supporting shelter upgrades, repairs, water and sanitation, privacy, and safety enhancements in overcrowded sites.
- Displaced people continue to reach out to UNHCR through helplines and other feedback channels to seek information on shelter, cash, and protection support. To date, UNHCR has delivered Emergency Protection Cash Assistance to over 3,100 displaced refugees and provided case management, referrals, and psychosocial support, prioritizing highly vulnerable groups including children, persons with disabilities, and single caregivers.
- At the inter-agency level, protection partners are reaching people at scale. Over 25,500 displaced individuals have received protection services, over 5,000 women and girls received dignity kits, and 10,200 children and caregivers were supported across 187 locations. Across 660 collective sites, 79% now have at least one protection, child protection, or GBV partner present.
- Shelter and relief partners continue large-scale distributions of core relief items and are improving conditions through accessibility assessments and GBV safety audits in over 100 sites to enhance safety and reduce risks.
- Despite the response scale-up, significant gaps remain due to funding shortages, access constraints, and overcrowding in shelters. Limited shelter capacity, rising numbers of family in need, and restrictions affecting refugees—particularly Syrians—are exacerbating vulnerabilities. Misinformation, including fake evacuation calls, and growing child protection and GBV concerns are further compounding risks. Humanitarian partners continue to advocate for safe, equitable access to shelter and services, while the UN [Inter-Agency Flash Appeal](#) seeks urgent resources to support up to 1 million people affected by the crisis.

## Syria

- According to Syrian authorities, over 189,250 persons have crossed the border from Lebanon into Syria including around 164,770 Syrians – with more than 46,799 indicating an intention to return permanently, and over 24,480 Lebanese. They include Syrian refugees in Lebanon who had already decided to go home, as well as others who have fled the ongoing conflict.
- UNHCR maintains a presence at key border points, providing transportation assistance, blankets and water, and coordinating with authorities. Preparedness measures, including pre-positioned supplies, remain active.

## Türkiye

- UNHCR continues to observe the situation along the Türkiye border, working closely with authorities and partners. The border crossings of Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Van) have remained generally open and operational for both entries and exits. The average rate of arrivals and departures are below the pre-war daily average (4,500 – 5,000 people).
- For some Iranian nationals entering Türkiye under the visa-free short-term stay regime (up to 90 days), movements reflect routine purposes such as visits, study, business, tourism, transit to catch a flight, or precautionary and temporary travel while individuals assess developments in Iran. Most of the individuals crossing from Türkiye into Iran reported traveling to meet family members with whom they had difficulty communicating due to lack of internet connectivity.
- National preparedness plans and measures are being coordinated by the Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management. UNHCR is supporting inter-agency coordination with partners to strengthen preparedness and information exchange.

## Armenia

- Cross-border movement observed at the Agarak border between Armenia and Iran continues at limited levels. It includes primarily routine, commercial traffic and small groups of people. At this stage there are no indications of large-scale population arrivals or displacement. UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with national authorities and partners to monitor developments and maintain preparedness.
- UNHCR continues to receive and respond to inquiries from Iranian nationals approaching the office or contacting the hotline, primarily seeking information on asylum procedures and available assistance in Armenia. UNHCR is providing counselling, information on the asylum process and referrals to relevant authorities. UNHCR also shares information materials and Help Page resources and refers individuals to legal aid and social support partners

## Coordination

Inter-agency coordination efforts are continuing across the region through existing structures with governments, UN agencies, partners and communities to respond to the needs of refugees and host

communities exacerbated by the conflict, ensure protection monitoring and services and strengthen preparedness efforts in support of national governments, given the ongoing volatile situation.

## Financial Information

UNHCR operations across the affected regions remain critically underfunded at a time when humanitarian needs and operational risks are increasing.

- **In South-West Asia**, UNHCR requires USD 454 million in 2026 to support forcibly displaced populations that fall under the Afghanistan situation. As of end-February, only 15 per cent had been received. Funding shortfalls are particularly acute in Iran (8 per cent funded) and Afghanistan (17 per cent funded), where economic pressures and instability continue to drive humanitarian needs.
- **In the Middle East**, significant funding gaps persist. Lebanon is only 14 per cent funded against a requirement of USD 472 million, while Iraq is 28 per cent funded against a requirement of USD 61 million, limiting the scope for preparedness and emergency response activities. The Syria operation is also critically underfunded at 28 per cent of its USD 324 million requirement, despite continued high humanitarian needs and ongoing return dynamics.
- **In Europe**, funding levels currently stand at 42 per cent for both Türkiye (USD 210 million requirement) and Armenia (USD 9 million requirement).

Severe funding shortfalls risk creating a ‘crisis within a crisis’ at a time when needs across the affected regions are rapidly increasing. Without additional resources, UNHCR’s ability to scale up protection and life-saving assistance in response to further displacement or humanitarian needs may be constrained.

## Contact

For further information on the situation or UNHCR’s response across affected countries, please contact the Regional Bureaux: [rbapext@unhcr.org](mailto:rbapext@unhcr.org) (Asia and the Pacific) and [menareporting@unhcr.org](mailto:menareporting@unhcr.org) (Middle East and North Africa).

For more information on UNHCR and partners’ response across affected countries, please visit the [Operational Data Portal](#) and [UNHCR website](#).