Middle East Situation

16 April 2026

UNHCR staff visits conflict affected areas in Beirut– 13 April 2026, Houssam Hariri © UNHCR

Key Highlights

- Since the onset of the military escalation, the Islamic Republic of Iran has reported that around **3.2** million people (**800,000** households) have internally relocated. **75%** of the relocated population is in Tehran, followed by Hormozgan (8%), Bushehr (5%), and Khuzestan (3%). In some locations, nearly 17% of the population lacks access to clean water due to overcrowding. Iran continues to host 1.65 million refugees and others in need of international protection. Based on UNHCR helpline data from March, the **top three priority needs reported by Afghan refugees in Iran are financial assistance for basic needs and relocation, safe shelter and physical safety from attacks, and access to healthcare.**
- Since 28 February 2026, some **118,300** Iranian nationals have crossed into neighbouring countries (**113,000** to Türkiye; **5,400** to Pakistan, as per IOM and UNHCR joint border monitoring between 1 March and 9 April mainly via Taftan). Around **95,000** have returned from Türkiye to Iran between 3 March and **15 April**. Movement volumes have largely remained below daily pre-conflict levels, with crossings primarily reflecting routine mobility, family travel, and precautionary movement rather than large-scale displacement. **52**% of Iranians crossing into Türkiye are families; in Iran, **60**% of IDPs are women and children.

- In Lebanon, more than **1.05** million people remain internally displaced — **35**% of them children — with over **141,600** staying in **690** government-designated collective shelters.
- ~**236,800** Syrians and **43,900** Lebanese have crossed from Lebanon into Syria since the start of the crisis; 68,084 Syrians reported an intention to return permanently.
- Over **155,200** Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan since the start of the crisis (**71,200** from Iran, **84,000** from Pakistan). **76%** of UNHCR-assisted returnees were women and children. Top provinces of intended return are Kabul (**12%**) and Nangarhar (**11%**). Of the Afghans who returned from Iran in the last week, 58 per cent were deportees, confirming that returns from Iran continue to be largely driven by deportation.
- **UNHCR considers that Iranian nationals and Lebanese nationals outside their countries of origin – whether already present in or newly arriving to third countries – may have international protection needs on account of the armed hostilities in Iran and Lebanon, or other reasons**. The armed hostilities in Iran, together with return pressures, may compel Afghans in Iran to return to Afghanistan or move onward; UNHCR maintains that a **substantial number of Afghans will have international protection needs** regardless of documentation status, in line with UNHCR's September 2025 Guidance Note. Similarly, the armed hostilities in Lebanon have already compelled significant numbers of Syrians to return to Syria in adverse circumstances; among them there may also be Syrians with continued international protection needs.

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.

See the latest information on the Protection Concerns Among Afghan Refugees in Iran – Helpline and Field Insights in March 2026.

Country Updates

Iran

- From 1 March to 15 April, the UNHCR Helpline received around 40,200 calls. Between 9–15 April, 782 people approached UNHCR offices in person, a 25 per cent increase from the week prior.
- A new UNHCR report titled "Protection Concerns of Afghan Refugees in Iran," published this week, highlights escalating protection risks following the increase in hostilities in late February. Drawing on more than 26,000 helpline calls and interactions with more than 4,170 Afghan refugees in March, the analysis shows that safety and shelter concerns remain acute. Deepening financial insecurity has made cash assistance for basic needs the most reported concern. Access to health care is deteriorating amid disruptions to public health insurance, alongside widespread psychological distress. Legal insecurity linked to documentation gaps and fears of deportation also persists. The findings also reveal clear geographic patterns of risk, driving secondary displacement and placing increased pressure on host communities, underscoring the urgent need to scale up support across shelter, cash assistance, health care, legal aid, and mental health services.
- Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted some 68,300 Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multipurpose cash assistance, and psychosocial support.

Lebanon

- From 14–16 April, Hezbollah and Israel reportedly exchanged dozens of strikes in Lebanon and Israel. Media reporting suggests that Lebanon has urged a ceasefire, while the United States has encouraged de-escalation. Meanwhile, the European Union expressed support for Israeli–Lebanese talks and reiterated its willingness to assist Lebanon in addressing Hezbollah's armed presence.
- On 14 April, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Barham Salih, concluded his first official visit to Lebanon, meeting government leaders, Member States, and displaced Lebanese and refugee families in collective shelters in Beirut and the Bekaa. The High Commissioner reaffirmed UNHCR's solidarity with Lebanon and called for sustained international support for the government-led response.
- As of 15 April, 141,600 people are sheltering in 690 government collective shelters. Among refugee households known to UNHCR, 12 per cent are in collective shelters, 9 per cent are without accommodation, and the remainder are staying with family, friends, or renting. Nationwide casualties have reached 2,170 fatalities and 7,060 injuries, including 48 fatalities and 116 injuries among Syrian refugees.
- Humanitarian response activities are scaling up. Protection partners, including UNHCR, have reached close to 49,750 children and caregivers through recreational activities, psychosocial support, awareness-raising, and information provision, with the highest reach in the South, Beirut, and Mount Lebanon. In parallel, 31,500 women, girls, and GBV survivors have been supported through awareness sessions and dignity kits. Case management and psychosocial services remain limited due to restricted safe spaces and challenges in identifying sensitive cases. Security constraints, particularly after heavy shelling in El Nabatiyeh, continue to limit partner presence and suspend some in-person activities.
- Assessments of 195 shelter sites found that while basic infrastructure is largely in place, overcrowding remains a key concern, with nearly one-third of sites failing to meet minimum space standards. UNHCR and partners are mitigating risks through repairs, partitioning, and upgrades; works are underway in 236 sites and completed in 140.
- Information management and needs analysis are being strengthened. The Emergency Rapid Needs Assessment for populations inside and outside collective shelters has been endorsed by the Ministry of Social Affairs; rollout is underway in coordination with sector partners and government counterparts. The assessment aims to harmonise targeting, strengthen evidence-based prioritisation, and inform coordinated response planning.

Syria

As of 14 April, all three Syria–Lebanon border crossings — Jdeidet Yabous, Joussieh, and Arida — remain open and fully operational, with no significant spike in arrivals recorded. Since 2 March, a total of 280,600 people have crossed the Syria–Lebanon border, including 236,700 Syrians — of whom 68,100 reported an intention to return permanently — and 43,900 Lebanese nationals.

Afghanistan-Pakistan

- Since the start of the crisis on 28 February, some 155,200 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan — 71,200 from Iran and 84,000 from Pakistan — bringing total Afghan returns in 2026 to 431,000, in addition to the 2.9 million recorded in 2025.
- Returns to Afghanistan from Iran remained consistent, with some 13,700 Afghans arriving in the past week. Of these, 58 per cent were deportees, confirming that returns from Iran continue to be largely driven by deportation.

- Returns from Pakistan have been steadily increasing, with around 49,100 Afghans arriving over the past week. Returnees from Pakistan account for approximately 75 per cent of total returnees to Afghanistan so far in April.
- UNHCR is discussing a scale-up of screening capacity for new arrivals at Afghanistan border entry points, including Torkham and Omari camps, following requests for support from the de facto authorities due to overcrowding and delays in processing times. Child protection remains a persistent issue at the Torkham border, where deportees from Pakistan arriving on 12 and 14 April included unaccompanied and separated children, who were referred to UNICEF's local partner for family tracing, reunification and support.
- Following the reopening of the Voluntary Repatriation Centre Azakhel on the Pakistani border on 13 April, an increase in voluntary returns by Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders is anticipated. This is likely to reduce pressure on the Landi Kotal and Nasir Bagh transit centres, where returnees face significant challenges during the waiting period, particularly due to lack of adequate accommodation and WASH facilities. As of 13 April, around 5,000 returnees remain in and around Landi Kotal, with limited access to shelter and basic services; food assistance is largely provided by local welfare groups and host communities.

Türkiye

- UNHCR continues to monitor the situation along the border in close coordination with authorities and partners, with the Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) border crossings remaining generally operational. Following a brief post-Eid and Nowruz stabilisation phase, movement dynamics remain fluid and subject to change. Current cross-border movements remain below pre-conflict levels and largely reflect routine mobility, family travel, and precautionary movement; some individuals have cited recent developments in Iran as their reason for leaving.
- National preparedness plans are being coordinated by the Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management, while UNHCR is reinforcing coordination with United Nations agencies and partners in both Ankara and the border regions to enhance preparedness and strengthen information management. Response capacities are being mapped and data coordination is being consolidated, in preparation for potential contingency plan activation, should the authorities request support in the event of large-scale movements.

Iraq

- Despite the announced ceasefire, drone strikes have been reported in several areas of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, targeting settlements linked to Iranian opposition groups.

Armenia

- Direct observations and triangulated data indicate sustained cross-border movement of Iranian nationals, characterised largely by pendular commercial transit. During the reporting period, entries from Iran into Armenia were estimated at approximately 500 individuals per day, with exit volumes to Iran remaining broadly comparable. This stable two-way flow underscores a pattern of fluid mobility rather than displacement-driven movement.
- Since 28 February 2026, 237 individuals have approached UNHCR Armenia, predominantly as individual cases. Reported needs relate primarily to asylum procedures (83 per cent), followed by legal counselling (19 per cent), financial assistance (19 per cent), and accommodation (17 per cent). Intentions remain mixed across asylum, temporary stay, and onward movement, reinforcing a non-linear mobility pattern. The response has been largely information-based (96 per cent), with approximately 70 per cent of individuals referred to national authorities or

partners for legal advice; direct material assistance was provided in less than 1 per cent of cases.

- UNHCR and UN preparedness focal points continue to maintain a minimal level of preparedness to support government-led efforts, focusing on the harmonisation of assistance packages and standardisation of information materials to ensure a coherent, protection-sensitive approach aligned with national systems.

Turkmenistan

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

Financial Information

The **Iran Flash Refugee Response Plan (Flash RRP)**, launched on 26 March 2026, requests **USD 80 million** to support **2.8 million people in need, including 1.65 million refugees and 1 million host community** in need in Iran. Nine inter-agency partners are participating in the coordinated response, with UNHCR as the lead agency (USD 36.2 million), alongside IOM, UNDP, WFP, NRC, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and INTERSOS.

The **Lebanon Flash Appeal,** issued on 13 March 2026, calls for **USD 308.3 million** for partners to deliver lifesaving assistance and protection to **1 million people** — including vulnerable Lebanese, displaced Syrians, Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, Palestinian Refugees from Syria, and migrants — over the same three-month period.

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 under the Afghanistan situation; as of end-March, only **19** per cent had been received. Funding for Iran is **11**% covered out of a USD 140 million requirement. In the Middle East, significant funding gaps persist: Lebanon stands at only **19** per cent funded against a UNHCR requirement of USD **472 million**, while Iraq is at **38** per cent against USD **61** million. In Europe, funding levels currently stand at **43** per cent for Türkiye (USD **210** million requirement) and **51**% for 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 preparedness, protection and response will be critically constrained.

Contact

For further information on the situation or UNHCR's response across affected countries, please contact the Regional Bureaux: rbapext@unhcr.org (Asia and the Pacific) and 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.