

Regional Refugee Community Feedback about Developments in Syria

19 December 2024

Context

Following the December 2024 developments in Syria, UNHCR has remained in close contact with Syrian refugee communities across the region, particularly in Jordan, Lebanon, Türkiye, Iraq and Egypt. The information provided in this document reflects the perceptions and concerns expressed by these communities regarding the evolving situation in Syria. These insights have been gathered through various channels, including information sessions, focus group discussions, UNHCR refugee helplines, outreach volunteers, protection partners, key informants, and other established communication mechanisms with refugee communities. They represent an initial snapshot of refugees' voices since early December, noting these are dynamic and changing as the situation in Syria evolves. Regular quantitative intentions surveys will be conducted in the near future to track these changes and ensure operational planning and response is grounded on the priorities and concerns of refugees.

Key Feedback from the Community

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Assad government, many refugees expressed enthusiasm and a renewed hope for a future in Syria, while remaining cautious. While many are interested in return, most refugees have adopted a “wait-and-see” approach, emphasizing the need for clarity on several critical issues. Their primary concerns center on the stabilization of the political situation, security conditions in their areas of origin, and access to essential services.

Security remains a predominant concern. Refugees highlighted or had questions about the continued presence of non-state armed groups and associated risks, unexploded ordnance and criminal activity. Refugees also expressed concern about limited infrastructure in Syria, whether their homes were destroyed, if their families can access health care or if their children can go to school. Others pointed to the economic challenges in Syria, including the collapse of the Syrian pound and a lack of employment; whether they could provide for their families upon return.

The majority of help-line calls received from refugees related to their stay in host countries. They asked whether there would be policy changes on their status, and whether they can continue accessing services or resettlement processing. Some were worried there would be increased pressure to return. In Lebanon, refugees who have been directly impacted by the recent Israeli military operations, including destruction of homes and property and secondary displacement inside Lebanon, were particularly worried. In Türkiye refugees contacting the UNHCR counselling lines are expressing hesitation about return to Syria, with some noting that their profile may mean that return might not be an option. A few callers had questions about documentation and highlighted the need to resolve legal issues before considering return.

Syrian refugees want to know if they will be assisted with transportation and what type of assistance they could expect inside Syria, with many asking for shelter and cash assistance. They asked whether they could

receive support in relocating to other parts of Syria, or in reclaiming and renovating properties. Questions ranged from how return procedures would work, administrative requirements to be able to return, access to documentation along with other technical details related to education and transportation of belongings to Syria. Some refugees missing family members in Syria are seeking ways to establish contact with relatives or find their loved ones, particularly following reports of the liberation of prisoners. Refugees also sought clarification on UNHCR's policy stance regarding return to Syria.

In Iraq, most refugees originate from north-east Syria and are closely watching and waiting to see how the situation evolves. Refugees express concern about the volatile security situation in north-east Syria. There is little indication of an intent to return in the immediate future. Availability of public services, infrastructure and livelihoods were also key considerations in their decision to return or not in the future.

Refugees across Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye would be particularly interested in "Go and See" visits, where one family member could return first to check their homes, assess the security situation, before deciding whether the whole family should join them. Follow-up questions included whether this would have an impact on access to assistance and education for the family waiting in host countries. For those who would eventually decide to return, refugees expressed interest in a phased approach that would allow for men to return first followed by their families once conditions are suitable for their return. In a few instances, families in Türkiye are considering returning to Syria with men remaining for livelihood opportunities. In Egypt, many expressed reluctance to return, with a small minority indicating interest, but for the most part not within the next twelve months.



The UNHCR-supported refugee camp in Saadnayel, Lebanon, just a few kilometres from Masnaa, on the Lebanon-Syria border, where thousands of Syrian refugees live. Many are monitoring the situation in Syria.

Photo by UNHCR / Ximena Borrazas

For MENA regional and country reports, please visit – [UNHCR Global Focus](#); [UNHCR Operational Portal \(Syria Regional Refugee Response\)](#); and [The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan website](#)