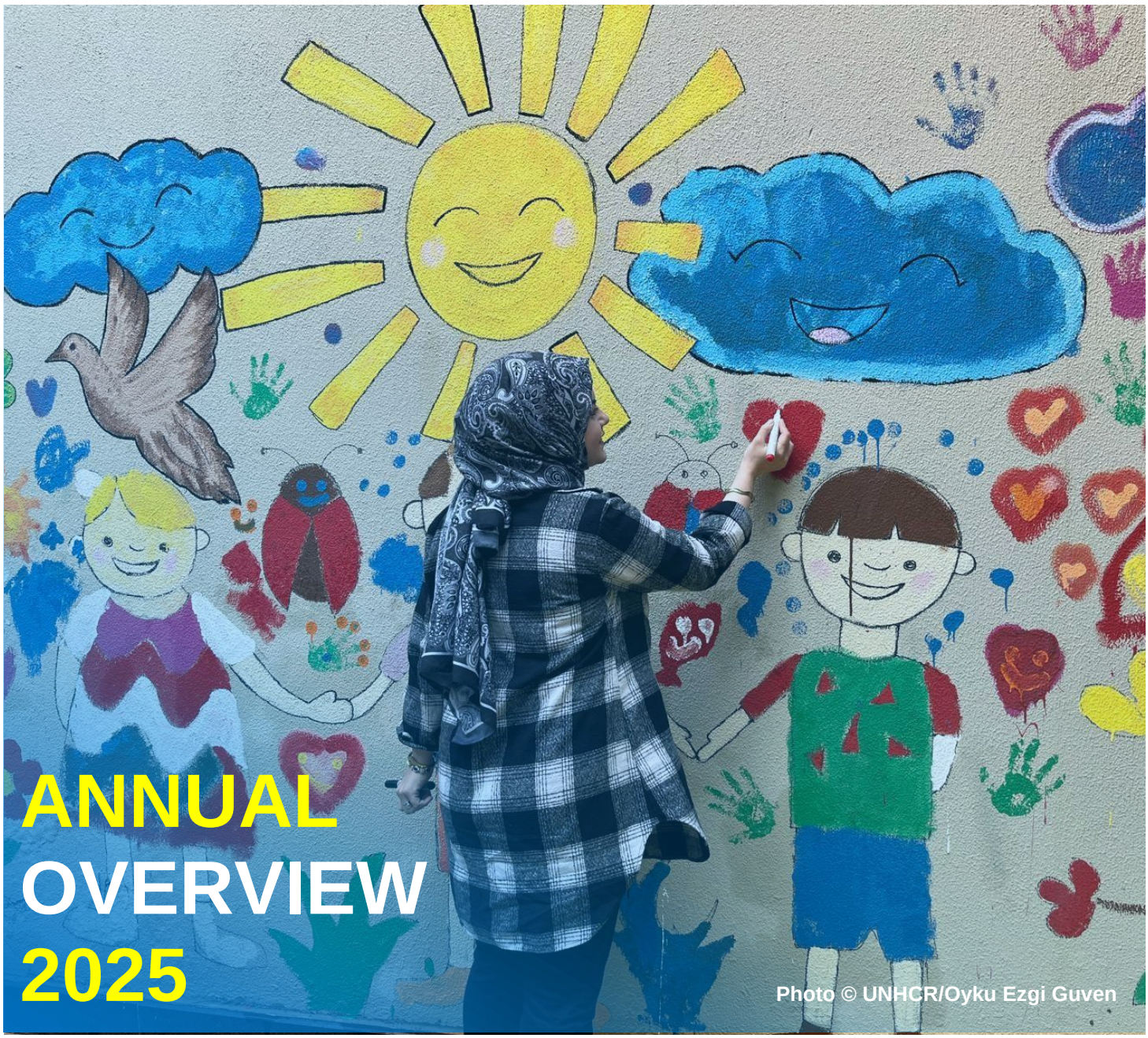

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A Year of Hope and Uncertainty

The year 2025 brought a turning point toward hope. In Türkiye, many refugee families began to see a clearer path toward returning home. Together with the Turkish authorities, UNHCR supported Syrian nationals who felt ready to return to Syria based on a well-informed decision. Yet for many refugees who chose to stay and the communities that host them, this has been a year of profound challenges. Global funding shortfalls further placed millions at increasing risk—especially women, children, and those with heightened vulnerabilities.

Key Developments in 2025

The year 2025 marked a pivotal period for Syrian refugees in Türkiye, shaped by Syria's political transition, evolving regional dynamics, and intensified efforts to support voluntary, safe, and dignified returns while safeguarding protection standards for those who remain. Türkiye reaffirmed its commitment to facilitate voluntary returns. Throughout the first half of the year, Türkiye implemented "go-and-see" visits, allowing Syrian refugees to temporarily travel to Syria to make informed decisions about return while retaining their legal status. This measure, concluded in July, represented an important confidence-building step.

UNHCR was present at borders and at Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) to monitor and confirm that returns are voluntary and well-informed. UNHCR also supports infrastructure improvements to ensure safe, dignified, and humane conditions. During his visit to Türkiye in January, Mr. Filippo Grandi, the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, reaffirmed UNHCR's support for Türkiye's refugee response and voluntary returns.

Regional and global developments further shaped the return environment. Cooperation in education-related matters between Türkiye and Syria expanded significantly, while the resumption of direct flights to Syria strengthened people-to-people connectivity after more than a decade. Evidence-based policymaking remained central. TurkStat's decision to include Syrians under temporary protection in GDP per capita calculations marked an important step toward recognizing refugees' economic presence.

Cooperation frameworks - such as the Protocol on Sharing Personal Data within the scope of joint activities between the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) and UNHCR, and the 2026–2030 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework strengthened coordination and refugee inclusion.

UNHCR assessed refugee perspectives through the community pulse survey conducted in February 2025. The findings indicated that around half of the respondents expressed their intention to return to Syria one day, underscoring the need for sustained support and conditions conducive to sustainable return.

According to the figures published by the Ministry of Interior, more than 600,000 Syrian refugees have voluntarily returned home from Türkiye since 8 December 2024. Currently, Türkiye hosts 2.3 million Syrians under temporary protection and around 166,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and other countries under international protection.

In 2025, funding reductions forced UNHCR and NGO partners to scale back operational presence. Hundreds of interpreters and social workers have been laid off, and refugees found it harder to access support. Access to government services also tightened, including changes in health provision, narrower referral pathways, and additional cost burdens that delay or deter care, especially for people with chronic conditions or disabilities, children, and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). As vulnerability rises, more households resort to negative coping, including child labour, early marriage, debt, irregular onward movement, and, for some Syrians, premature return decisions. The refugees who continue to seek protection in Türkiye still need enhanced inclusion and hope. Sustained and predictable funding is essential to keep critical services running.

Between Global Refugee Forums, the Progress Review held in December served as a vital forum where the participants reviewed progress on pledges made at previous Forums and announced new commitments to accelerate solutions.

Looking ahead, UNHCR's 2026 Global Appeal identifies Türkiye as the second-largest operation in Europe, with funding needs of USD 210 million. As 2025 demonstrated, Türkiye remains central to regional solutions for displacement, requiring continued international solidarity to protect refugees, support host communities, enhance third-country resettlement, and enable complementary pathways, as well as durable, dignified returns.

At a Glance: UNHCR's Response in 2025

12,526
refugees received legal services

177,851
refugees received various protection services

200,000
refugees supported through the counselling line

6,652
children received protection support

90,412
refugees with specific needs supported

Over 60,000
refugees supported at the protection desks

2,972
refugees received higher education support

600,000
Syrian refugees' voluntary returned since 8 December 2024 and UNHCR monitored **73 per cent** of all recorded returns

12,264
refugees supported with access to employment opportunities

3,766
refugees departed Türkiye through resettlement

Protection Assistance

In 2025, UNHCR's protection response in Türkiye remained central to ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers could exercise their rights, access services, and secure durable solutions. Protracted displacement continued to place significant pressure on individuals and families, many of whom faced legal uncertainty, language barriers, social isolation, and heightened protection risks.

Protection Desk

UNHCR's support to Protection Desks within the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMMs) remained a key pillar of the protection response in 2025. Operating in 50 provinces, these desks played a vital role in identifying persons with specific needs during registration, data updates, and other administrative procedures. UNHCR-provided Protection Desk interviewers and social workers, fluent in refugees' languages, who conducted protection interviews, provided counselling, and facilitated referrals to relevant national institutions and service providers for over 60,000 refugees. Regular joint monitoring by UNHCR and PMM, complemented by satisfaction surveys and statistical analysis, helped maintain service quality and identify protection trends. UNHCR-supported capacity-building initiatives further enhanced the skills of desk personnel, reinforcing protection-centred interviewing techniques and awareness of specific risks.

Communicating with Communities

Access to accurate, timely, and trusted information remained a cornerstone of UNHCR's protection work in Türkiye. The UNHCR Counselling Line continued to serve as a critical first point of contact for refugees, offering information, guidance, and referrals in 13 languages. With over 50 trained counsellors operating under UNHCR's protection-centred standards, the service addressed a wide range of issues, including legal status, access to services, resettlement procedures, financial assistance, and protection risks. Dedicated lines for complaints and GBV further strengthened accountability and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Beyond responding to around 200,000 individual queries, the Counselling Line functioned as an important protection monitoring tool, enabling UNHCR to identify emerging trends, gaps in service delivery, and systemic challenges affecting refugees across the country. It played a critical role in mitigating distress, enhancing well-being, and reinforcing trust between refugees, national institutions, and humanitarian actors. In addition, UNHCR Türkiye continued engaging with over a hundred thousand refugees and asylum-seekers through its four dedicated communication platforms, i.e., upgraded HELP website, Facebook Information Board, and WhatsApp Trees and Information Bot, sharing a whole range of up-to-date informative content, including civil documentation matters related to voluntary return, sexual exploitation and abuse, and anti-fraud awareness.

Strengthening Asylum Procedure

Throughout 2025, UNHCR and its partners, in close coordination with national authorities, provided life-saving core relief items to tens of thousands of people rescued, intercepted, or apprehended at Türkiye's borders, responding to humanitarian needs despite growing funding constraints. At the same time, UNHCR reinforced national asylum systems through extensive training, workshops, study visits, drafting of guidance notes, standard operating procedures, provision of country of origin information (COI) as well as on-the-job support for PMM and its provincial directorates, enhancing refugee status determination, temporary protection procedures, child protection, anti-fraud safeguards, and interpreter capacity. A multi-year project concluded in November, contributing to the efficiency and quality of international protection status determination procedures, the sustainability of the COI system, and gender mainstreaming in asylum procedures, and bridging to a new project to support Türkiye's temporary protection and

international protection frameworks. UNHCR also deepened cooperation with institutions such as the EU Agency for Asylum, ICMPD, ministries, academia, and civil society, and advanced evidence-based protection responses, including protection of trafficking survivors. Collectively, these efforts supported fair, efficient, and rights-based asylum procedures while addressing urgent humanitarian needs across Türkiye.

Child Protection

Protecting children affected by displacement remained a priority throughout 2025. UNHCR worked closely with the authorities and civil society partners to strengthen child protection systems and ensure that refugee children at risk received timely and appropriate support. Through best interest procedures, children facing serious protection risks were identified, assessed, and referred to national services for specialized care, including psychosocial support, health, education, and social assistance. UNHCR continued to co-chair the child protection working group/sector under the inter-agency coordination platform. Community-based child protection activities helped mitigate risks by raising awareness, strengthening protective environments, and engaging children and caregivers through educational, recreational, and psychosocial initiatives. By reinforcing national systems and promoting inclusive, child-friendly services, UNHCR contributed to safeguarding children's well-being and supporting their development.

Legal Aid

Ensuring access to justice remained a critical protection priority for refugees navigating complex legal frameworks. In partnership with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), UNHCR supported 12,526 refugees' access to legal services, encompassing counselling and information sessions through six legal clinics in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Van, Hatay, Kilis, and Malatya, referrals through a digital app, and representation in 55 provinces across Türkiye. Legal aid applications supported a broad range of administrative and civil law matters, including appeals against deportation orders and rejection decisions, civil law cases, and requests for protective measures for women and children. The Interpretation Support Line further ensured effective communication between refugees and their lawyers. Specialized training for lawyers enhanced the quality and consistency of legal representation, particularly for the most sensitive cases, including individuals at risk of refoulement, survivors of trafficking, and aimed at mainstreaming a gender-based approach. In November, with support from the EU and implemented in cooperation with PMM, legal aid was provided to Syrians voluntarily returning to Syria, with the aim of resolving civil law disputes, thereby removing obstacles to returns and ensuring family unity.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence was an integral component of UNHCR's protection response, reflecting the disproportionate risks faced by refugee women, girls, and others. Awareness-raising initiatives and community engagement aimed to reduce stigma, promote gender equality, and encourage help-seeking behaviour. Building on a survivor-centered approach, throughout 2025, UNHCR, with partners, implemented a wide range of activities related to GBV awareness, women's and girls' empowerment, and the mitigation of GBV risks within refugee and host communities. A total of 1,941 individuals benefited from the Cash for Protection Programme, including 43 adolescents who were discharged from child institutions. In several provinces, community-based activities were organized, including GBV awareness sessions. Additional efforts focused on psycho-social support sessions, emotional well-being, and safety planning. In total, 1,400 individuals from various provinces participated in these activities. In 2025, UNHCR co-chaired GBV National Sub-Working Group meetings with UNFPA, focusing on strengthening prevention and response through coordinated action.

Support to find Solutions

Economic Inclusion and Social Cohesion

UNHCR's approach to socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Türkiye focused on strengthening development engagement and self-reliance while contributing to national economic growth and social cohesion. Until May 2025, UNHCR worked closely with institutions such as the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and the Directorate General of International Labour Force of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to expand refugees' access to labour market services. With the support of UNHCR and its partners, over 12,500 refugees have benefited from enhanced digital job-matching systems, interpreter-assisted employment services, and employer outreach on work permit procedures. Engagement with international financial institutions and UN partners further advances evidence-based policies, financial inclusion, and market-driven solutions, as well as private sector engagement that benefits both refugees and host communities.

UNHCR and its partners continued their efforts to strengthen social cohesion and foster mutual understanding through various activities, including sports, with the participation of refugees and host community members.

Supporting Refugees through Education

Formal and non-formal education remained vital to UNHCR's response in Türkiye, supporting protection, self-reliance, and durable solutions for refugees. UNHCR worked closely with national authorities, notably with the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Higher Education Council (YÖK) on tertiary education, and with the Ministry of National Education on basic and non-formal education, to expand refugees' access to learning opportunities. In 2025, through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), UNHCR supported 713 refugee students in Türkiye. In parallel, UNHCR supported more than 2,000 refugees with semester-based higher education cash grants to continue their studies. Academic counselling, online learning initiatives implemented in cooperation with YTB, Turkish language courses, and vocational training delivered through Public Education Centres and refugee-led organizations further enhanced refugees' academic readiness and future employability.

Voluntary Repatriation

Efforts to support voluntary, safe, and dignified returns while safeguarding protection standards were the cornerstone of UNHCR's response in 2025. With funding from the EU and implemented in cooperation with PMM, UNHCR provided cash assistance across all 81 provinces, targeting beneficiaries of the Social Safety Net (SSN), Complementary SSN (C-SSN), and people with specific needs who expressed an intention to return. UNHCR monitored over 73 per cent of all returns at 25 PDMM offices in 22 provinces and at six border crossings in the south-east. UNHCR was present at İstanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports, and at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara, and also conducted ad hoc monitoring at Adana Sarıçam and İstanbul Arnavutköy Temporary Accommodation Centres.

Finding Solution through Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

In 2025, 3,766 of the most vulnerable refugees were resettled from Türkiye to 14 countries that demonstrated commitment towards international responsibility-sharing, including (but not limited to) Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and the USA. Resettlement remains a vital protection tool for the most vulnerable refugees for whom returning home is not an option. 2025 was a difficult year, with far fewer resettlement spots than in the past years, and fewer quotas allocated to Syrian cases. UNHCR prioritised some of the most vulnerable refugees, including women at risk, delivering a permanent solution at a time when the protection space is shrinking. In addition, UNHCR has expanded complementary pathways, particularly through education opportunities for refugee students to further their studies in Italy, France, Japan, and Slovenia.

Interagency Coordination

In 2025, UNHCR played a central role in strengthening inter-agency coordination in Türkiye through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), a strategic framework developed in close collaboration with the Government of Türkiye to address both humanitarian and resilience needs of refugees and host communities. Co-led by UNHCR and UNDP, the 3RP promoted responsibility sharing, efficient use of resources, and coherence between humanitarian and development interventions. UNHCR continued to chair the Protection and Basic Needs sectors, and to lead the Information Management working group ensuring harmonized approaches and common standards across partners. UNHCR and partners conduct joint needs assessments, develop collective standard operating procedures, and invest in capacity development for government and civil society actors. In December, the inter-agency coordination platform organized a networking and partnership fair that brought together 200 actors from authorities, NGOs, and the donor community to showcase the work accomplished through 3RP coordination and to sustain support for refugees and members of the host community.

Support from Donors

With generous contributions from government and private sector donors, UNHCR was able to provide a wide range of support to refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye. UNHCR is grateful for the support from our top government donors in 2025, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. UNHCR is also grateful for the generous contributions from the private sector and individuals.

ANNUAL OVERVIEW 2025

Published by UNHCR in Türkiye

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