Syrian Arab Republic

January 2026

The UN estimates that in 2026, 16.5 million people across Syria need humanitarian assistance.

Since the political transition in December 2024 until the **end of January 2026**, over 1.3 million Syrians have returned home from countries of asylum. Moreover, since January 2025, around 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their places of origin or preferred destinations in Syria.

Based on actual and projected return numbers and in response to calls from Syrian refugees for UNHCR to support their return, UNHCR is facilitating voluntary return to the country.

This gradual operational shift is anchored in the voluntary character of return and refugees' well-informed and free choices.

This effort, however, remains constrained by challenges, including funding shortfalls, limited absorption capacity in areas of return, access restrictions, and the extensive scale of humanitarian needs.

UNHCR continues to provide protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, returnees, stateless people, and host communities based on identified needs, vulnerabilities and available resources.

HIGHLIGHTS

1,259

returnees from Areesha camp were provided with transportation to their home areas in January

1,513

outreach volunteers assist populations in all governorates who do not have easy access to the UNHCR-supported community centres

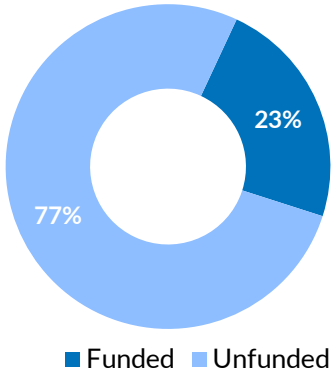
8,220

vulnerable families in Syria received core relief items in January

FUNDING (AS OF 31 JANUARY 2026)

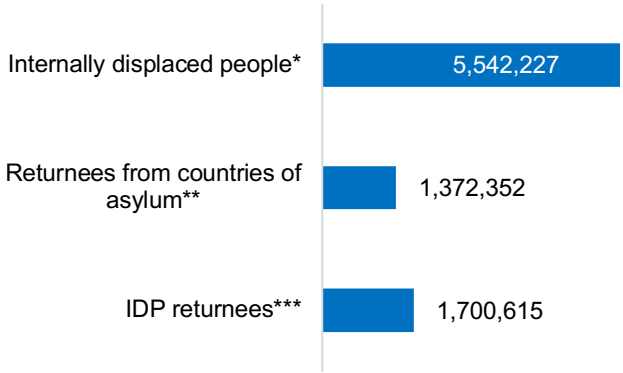
USD 323.9 million

requested for the Syria Operation in 2026



UNHCR distributes core relief items at the Tartab collective centre in Qamishli (Al-Hasakeh Governorate), which is hosting families seeking safety following recent hostilities in northern Syria. These items help vulnerable families meet their urgent needs during their displacement. ©UNHCR/F.Moberg

RETURNEES AS OF JANUARY 2026



**Source: OCHA, August 2025*
***Source: UNHCR, since December 2024. This is calculated by triangulating multiple data sources, including population-movement reporting and border-monitoring data.*
****Source: OCHA and UNHCR, from January 2025 to January 2026*

Operational Context

Syria is experiencing an increase in the number of refugees and IDPs returning home, yet the number of internally displaced persons in the country remains high (over 5.5 million). The UN and humanitarian partners also estimate that in 2026, around 16.5 million people in Syria need humanitarian assistance.

The security situation in the country is still unpredictable in some areas, and humanitarian and economic conditions remain dire, with limited access to basic services in many parts of the country.

UNHCR's Enhanced Refugee Perceptions and Intentions to Return to Syria Survey published in September 2025, which analysed the intentions of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon to return to their home country, indicated that the political transition had triggered a sharp and almost immediate increase in refugees who stated intentions to return within a year. Among those still residing in host countries, the survey found that 18% of the respondents intended to return within a year, and 80% expressed a desire to return to Syria one day. However, housing availability and property damage, limited employment opportunities, and safety and stability within Syria remain key factors in the refugees' decision-making and are likely to influence return trends.

Through the *area-based* and *community-based approaches*, UNHCR supports refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, host community members, and returnees (refugees and IDPs who have returned to their home areas).

UNHCR's *community-based approach* focuses on community mobilization and building self-reliance. It aims at reducing vulnerabilities and protection risks by providing services through community-based structures and networks. UNHCR's *area-based approach* entails working with partners to enhance support in geographic areas where the needs are greatest. UNHCR and partners continue to reach thousands of returnee families across Syria to support their reintegration and access to basic services.

In 2026, UNHCR collaborates with 22 partners, including ministries, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and national NGOs in all 14 governorates.

Operational Updates

Response to the situation in northern Syria

- On 6 January, armed hostilities between the Syrian Government and the Syrian Democratic Forces escalated in Aleppo city and spread later to other areas including north-east Syria. The conflict caused deaths and injuries among civilians and forced over 190,000 individuals from Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, and Ar-Raqqa Governorates to flee to Qamishli and Al-Malakiyeh within Al-Hasakeh Governorate until the end of January. Most displaced persons were accommodated by host communities, while the remaining populations resided across 266 collective centres with some in Newroz camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate).
  On 30 January, a ceasefire agreement between the two parties was announced and clashes subsided. A decrease in displacement movements has been observed by UNHCR partners since then, along with the return of many families to their home areas.
- UNHCR led protection efforts and was actively engaged on the ground, working with partners to ensure a timely and protection-centred response. UNHCR focused on supporting displaced families in collective shelters and host communities. As Co-Chair of the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network, UNHCR reinforced safeguards by disseminating messages and reporting channels. In addition, as Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) lead, UNHCR validated shelter data, consolidated displacement information, and maintained an updated overview of active sites and service coverage to inform coordination efforts.
- The UNHCR-supported community centres in Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh Governorates were operational, including Sabkha and Al-Karama (Ar-Raqqa Governorate), and the community centre in Al-Hasakeh city. The centres delivered essential protection services, including psychological first aid for families injured during the clashes, mental health and anxiety management sessions, and awareness-raising on the risks of explosive remnants of war.
- UNHCR also enhanced the operational readiness of the Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour in several areas in northern Syria through the provision of essential ICT equipment to reinforce the emergency response, managing protection-related data, and maintaining accurate administrative records.
- UNHCR joined OCHA and UNFPA in an inter-agency mission to Afrin (Aleppo Governorate) to assess displacement dynamics and engage with affected families. UNHCR also participated in a humanitarian and relief aid convoy which carried essential food supplies, relief items, and diesel fuel to Kobani/Ain Al-Arab (Aleppo Governorate).
- As of the end of January, UNHCR had distributed core relief items (CRI) and winter kits to 7,450 displaced families who fled the hostilities. A total of 300 family tents were also delivered to Newroz camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate), along with two large tents to serve as a temporary reception area while family tents were installed.
- As part of its contingency planning, UNHCR prepositioned 1,500 CRI kits, 1,500 winter clothing kits, and 3,000 winter jackets to warehouses in Deir-

ez-Zor, while coordinating closely with partners on protection needs and sector preparedness.

- On 23 January, UNHCR led an inter-agency mission to Al-Hol camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate) — with the participation of UNICEF and WFP—and facilitated the delivery of three bread trucks for distribution to the camp residents. UNHCR continued to access the camp daily, and the team was able to access all zones in the main camp.
  UNHCR also offered technical support to the new Al-Hol Camp Administration to initiate a population verification exercise using the existing Camp Management Database to ensure accuracy and allow for the systematic updating of the database. On 31 January, UNHCR, its partner the Syrian Development Organization and the Camp Administration discussed the methodology and visited key facilities to establish verification points.

Regular response

Protection

- In January, four UNHCR-supported community centres were closed in Al Khaldya, Ar-Rastan, Kafr Laha (Homs Governorate) and Janoub Al-Mal'ab (Hama Governorate) due to budget constraints. By the end of January, UNHCR supported 67 community centres and 78 mobile units across the country, assisted by a network of 1,513 community outreach volunteers in all 14 Syrian governorates.
- UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice on 25 January to strengthen the legal environment and support refugee and IDP returnees as well as other affected communities in Syria to enjoy their rights, protection and access to justice across Syria.
- In light of the recent Decree No. (13) of 2026 which recognizes Syrian Kurds as an integral part of the nation, UNHCR and partners are following its implementation and prioritizing legal assistance for birth registration and access to civil documentation for affected Kurdish populations.
- In January, UNHCR completed the refurbishment of the Civil Registry Office in Ain Al-Bayda (Latakia Governorate). This is expected to enhance legal documentation services in the area.
- UNHCR and its partner launched a training programme for community-based organizations (CBOs), aimed at strengthening their organizational, administrative, and technical skills covering governance, project design, financial management, reporting standards, and community engagement. A total of 11 CBOs were nominated to compete for the five available funding opportunities. The programme is designed to enhance the ability of CBOs to independently manage small-scale projects, improve accountability, and contribute to community-based protection interventions.
- The Syria is Home platform, created in April 2025 to help Syrian refugees make informed decisions about return to Syria, recorded around 107,000 visits by the end of January, with most new users from Syria, Lebanon, Türkiye, Jordan and Iraq.

Core Relief Items

- In January, 8,220 families (35,795 individuals) across Syria received core relief item (CRIs) kits. The kits comprised blankets, mattresses, sleeping mats, jerry cans, plastic sheets, solar lamps, and kitchen sets, as well as winter items.
  Beneficiaries included people displaced due to tensions in northern Syria.

Shelter

- In January, UNHCR finalized the installation of 500 solar streetlights across Latakia city and Qadmous (Tartous Governorate). The streetlights contribute to protecting residents through improving the security conditions in these areas.

UNHCR monitors the installation of solar streetlights in the coastal area, ensuring they are properly installed and functioning as intended. ©UNHCR/E.Kabbas

Livelihoods

- In January, UNHCR and its partner Première Urgence Internationale completed the rehabilitation of Latakia city Fish Market and handed it over to authorities. The Fish Market is expected to create jobs and strengthen community resilience.
- The rehabilitation of the Second Commerce School in Aleppo, undertaken by UNHCR and its partner, Al-Taalouf was also completed. The school, which suffered damage during the Syrian crisis, is expected to provide students with market-relevant skills. The rehabilitation included the construction of two computer laboratories. The school will accommodate around 300 students.
- In Hama, UNHCR handed over the rehabilitated Female Arts School (vocational school) in Murak, Hama Governorate to the Directorate of Education,

which has assigned it a principal and initiated the process of incorporating it into the 2026 education plan. The school, expected to serve 150 female secondary-level students per academic year, offers courses in tailoring, embroidery, and fashion design, among others.

- The post-implementation monitoring of the UNHCR small business startup grants in 2025 reached 750 respondents. The exercise revealed key benefits from the support, including recipients' ability to meet basic household needs such as food, water, and heating (88%), having a more regular source of income (73%), and improved capacity to cover educational needs of children and relatives (55%). Additional benefits included enhanced food security (43%), the ability to meet health-related expenses such as medications and surgeries (29%), and better coverage of housing needs (18%).

Cash Assistance

- UNHCR's return and reintegration cash assistance continued. In January, UNHCR provided 10,048 returnee families (36,687 individuals) with this type of assistance, supporting their safe and dignified reintegration through meeting essential needs upon return.
- In January, 211 families (1,248 individuals) received cash assistance to establish or resume small businesses in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Tartous, Rural Damascus, Dar'a, Ar-Raqqa, and Quneitra Governorates. The supported projects included sewing and tailoring, clothing shops, blacksmithing and metalwork services, aluminium works, carpentry, and household goods stores.

Theo James, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, meets a returnee who recently came back to his home in Rural Damascus after many years of displacement in Idleb. With UNHCR's cash assistance, he was able to open his own Falafel shop. ©UNHCR/H.Maarouf

Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of the end of January, 14,084 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR in Syria. The majority of the registered refugees are from Iraq and reside primarily in urban areas in Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous, and Latakia Governorates.
  In January, UNHCR renewed the identification cards of 65 refugees. These cards protect refugees against *refoulement*, ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Durable solutions:** In January, UNHCR facilitated the departure of four families (14 individuals) for resettlement to the United Kingdom. UNHCR also maintained communication with persons with and for whom it works through weekly counselling over the dedicated helplines.
- **Education:** In partnership with the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education, UNHCR continued to support 37 refugee students during the 2025/2026 academic year to pursue their university studies, through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme. The programme aims to promote access to higher education for refugees of various nationalities registered with UNHCR Syria.

Return

- Following the political transition in Syria on 8 December 2024 until the end of January 2026, 1,355,532 Syrians returned to the country, mainly from Türkiye and Lebanon, followed by Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.[1]
- UNHCR started the second stage of the rehabilitation of the Dabboussieh border bridge (Homs-Lebanon). The works aim to support safe and dignified refugee returns from northern Lebanon while reducing congestion at the Joussieh border crossing point (Homs-Lebanon).
- To facilitate returnees' movement, UNHCR installed a 50-kw solar power system at the Jarablus border crossing point (Aleppo-Türkiye) in January, providing uninterrupted electricity to the new prefabricated structures installed with UNHCR's support to accommodate immigration offices and waiting halls.
- In January, UNHCR facilitated transport to governorates for some 187 Syrian refugee returnees from Libya arriving on three commercial flights. The returnees were received at Damascus International Airport, provided with information on available services in areas of return, and referrals made for assistance.
- As part of the organized voluntary return support coordinated by UNHCR Syria, UNHCR and IOM Lebanon, and Syria's General Authority for Borders and Customs, 40 Syrian refugees returned from

[1] *This figure is calculated based on a triangulation of data from Syria, Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and beyond.*

Lebanon on 28 January through the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point (Rural Damascus-Lebanon). The returnees were assisted with transportation to their destinations, core relief items, psychosocial assistance, and legal aid. Since the beginning of the programme in July 2025, 2,900 returnees have been assisted.

- UNHCR Syria received seven organized convoys from Jordan consisting of 150 returnees at the Nassib border crossing point (Dar'a-Jordan). The returnees were transported to Dar'a, Homs, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Ar-Raqqa, Idleb, and Aleppo. UNHCR and partners continue monitoring their post-return situation through home visits, while referring those in need to available services.
- In January, UNHCR provided 58 vulnerable Syrian families (300 individuals) with transportation at the Joussieh border crossing point (Homs-Lebanon) to their home areas. This brings the total number of returnees supported since the beginning of 2025 to around 32,000 returnees.
- On 28 January, UNHCR provided transportation assistance for the return of 248 households (1,259 individuals) from Areesha camp (Al-Hasakeh Governorate) to their home areas in Deir-ez-Zor, Aleppo and Damascus.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

- Regional Flash Update #64 (13 February 2026)
- UNHCR IDPs and IDP returnees overview (12 February 2026)
- UNHCR refugee return overview (12 February 2026)
- Regional Flash Update #63 (6 February 2026)
- UNHCR IDPs and IDP returnees overview (5 February 2026)
- UNHCR refugee return overview (5 February 2026)
- Overview of Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Population (31 January 2026)
- Regional Flash Update #62 (30 January 2026)
- UNHCR IDPs and IDP returnees overview (29 January 2026)
- UNHCR refugee return overview (29 January 2026)
- Regional Flash Update #61 (23 January 2026)
- Regional Flash Update #60 (16 January 2026)
- UNHCR refugee return overview (15 January 2026)
- Regional Flash Update #59 (9 January 2026)
- Legal Aid Factsheet (31 December 2025)
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