

UNHCR enhances its partnership with the private sector in Türkiye to promote solutions.

UNHCR in Türkiye aims to build a better future for forcibly displaced people through joint initiatives that promote collaboration with various stakeholders, including the private sector.



The cooperation agreement signing between UNHCR and MÜSİAD on 12 February 2026.

Highlights

- On 12 February, the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD) and UNHCR in Türkiye signed a cooperation agreement in Istanbul. The signing ceremony was attended by business representatives and international officials, including MÜSİAD President Mr. Burhan Özdemir and UNHCR Representative in Türkiye Ms. Angela Li Rosi. The partnership aims to increase the economic resilience of refugee communities, support their participation in the labour market, and strengthen social cohesion. The strategic cooperation established with UNHCR is based on developing sustainable solution in the fields of employment, education, and livelihoods.
- On 11 February, in partnership with IFC-UNHCR Joint Initiative, UNHCR, jointly with the Syrian Businessmen Association (SURIAD), convened the “Leveraging Business Dialogue for Inclusive Employment and Market Linkages” in Istanbul. The dialogue brought together private sector actors, business associations, international financial institutions, and humanitarian and development partners to advance discussions on inclusive employment and market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Participants highlighted a growing shift toward viewing displacement through an economic development lens, noting that labour market inclusion supports both refugee self-reliance and host community economy growth.



Ms. Angela Li Rosi, Representative, UNHCR in Türkiye delivering speech at the dialogue.

Recent Developments

National

As of 16 February, 626,212 Syrians have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria since 9 December 2024. During this same period, UNHCR interviewed 75 per cent of all recorded returns. In 2026 alone, UNHCR interviewed 90 per cent of returnees, with over 28,000 interviews conducted.

According to the [decisions of the Council of Higher Education \(YÖK\)](#) and subsequent confirmation, as of 2026, foreign students who are enrolled in or have graduated from secondary education institutions in Türkiye, including refugee students under Temporary and International Protection, will be eligible to apply to universities only through the national Higher Education Institutions Examination (YKS). The 2026 YKS application period runs from 6 February to 2 March 2026, with an examination fee of 700 TRY per session. This change is expected to affect access pathways and planning for higher education support programmes targeting refugee and international students.

Regional

Following the escalation of hostilities in neighbouring Iran and in the Middle East, UNHCR in Türkiye is engaging closely with authorities and partners along the Türkiye-Iran border area to track developments. The border crossings at Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Van) have remained generally open and operational for both entries and exits. Although crossings by Iranian nationals are occasionally suspended due to systemic issues on the Iranian side, UNHCR observations indicate that cross-border movements follow the routine travel patterns, with fewer number of people crossing both ways than usual movements prior to the escalation of conflicts.

The profiles of the arrivals include tourists, workers, students, and individuals visiting family members. The Iranian nationals departing from Türkiye mentioned that they are returning to check on their families as they could not make contact due to ongoing internet outages in Iran.

UNHCR continues to strengthen coordination with partners to support preparedness and information management. ([Learn more](#)).



UNHCR's team at the Kapıköy border-gate in Van.



Protection-Assistance & Advocacy

Protection and Access to Services

In the first two months of 2026, UNHCR Türkiye Counselling Line responded to 25,667 calls from refugees and asylum seekers (44 per cent call received from Afghan nationals, and 12 per cent from Iranian nationals) from 76 provinces. The main line of inquiry was resettlement (50 per cent), followed by legal assistance (19 per cent). During the same period in 2025, UNHCR received nearly 64,000 calls. This decrease can be attributed mainly to the voluntary returns, decrease in third-country resettlement quota, and decrease in provision for protection services through partners due to funding constraints.



One of the 50 multi-lingual compassionate members of the Counselling Line Team.

The Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), with support from UNHCR, is operating Protection Desks in 50 Provincial Directorates for Migration Management (PDMM) across Türkiye to support persons with specific needs. On 24 February, PMM and UNHCR, jointly conducted a Protection Desk monitoring mission in Gaziantep (South-East of Türkiye bordering Syria). During the visit, it was observed that the Protection Desk at Gaziantep PDMM had no backlog and was able to accommodate urgent cases through same-day appointments. Some areas for improvement were identified, including the need to strengthen interview conditions to ensure confidentiality, and improve the visibility and dissemination of Protection Desk information materials. The findings and recommendations from the mission will inform ongoing efforts under the project, in coordination with PMM, to further strengthen the quality and effectiveness of Protection Desk services.



Elderly refugees are among the most vulnerable groups that needs the cash assistance from UNHCR.

In February, UNHCR consolidated an analysis on the protection impact resulting from the discontinuation of Cash for Protection. The findings indicate a rapid and concerning deterioration in living conditions among highly vulnerable groups—including survivors of gender-based violence, minority groups, and youth transitioning out of care. Reported impacts include rising homelessness and evictions, increased resort to survival sex and other negative coping mechanisms, heightened dependence on abusive or unsafe environments, elevated risks of child labour, worsening food insecurity, and growing barriers to healthcare access. Overall, the assessment reaffirms that the Cash for Protection Programme served as a critical, lifesaving protection tool for the most at-risk individuals. Its discontinuation has created significant protection and assistance gaps that now require urgent emergency cash interventions to prevent further harm. UNHCR implemented the Cash for Protection Programme for long, assisting thousands of vulnerable refugees every year, until it had to be suspended in May 2025 due to funding constraints.

Access to Asylum Procedures

On 18 February 2026, UNHCR in the South-Est Türkiye contributed to a workshop organized by the Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services (PDoFSS) to support the development of the Provincial Action Plan on the Prevention of Violence Against Women,



aligned with the National Action Plan. UNHCR contributed to discussions in the two groups most relevant to its mandate: (i) effective legal protection and access to justice and (ii) risk-oriented and expert intervention.

Support for Solutions

Voluntary Returns

During February, voluntary return showed a consistent downward trend, culminating in the lowest monthly total recorded since December 2024. This decline was largely driven by the approach and onset of Ramadan, as many individuals prefer not to travel while fasting.

Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR has monitored the voluntary repatriation of over 470,000 Syrians. Currently, UNHCR monitors returns at 25 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) offices, in 22 provinces and at six border crossings in the south-east. UNHCR is also present at İstanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports in İstanbul and at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara as well as İstanbul Arnavutköy Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC).

Resettlement and complementary pathways

So far in 2026, UNHCR has submitted 716 resettlement applications (160 Syrians, 490 Afghans, 61 Iranians and 5 other nationalities), mainly to Ireland, France, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands. During this period, 170 refugees (86 Afghans, 69 Syrians, 1 Iranian and 14 other nationalities) have departed on resettlement to Australia, Canada, Finland and Ireland.

Education, Livelihoods, and Economic Inclusion

UNHCR finalized the Post-Distribution Monitoring for the 2025-2026 Higher Education Cash Grant Fall Semester. A total of 405 out of 764 beneficiaries responded to the survey (53 per cent response rate), with results broadly reflecting a representative distribution by gender, nationality and programme type. Attendance remained high (94 per cent), with 93 per cent reporting that the grant supported regular participation in classes. The assistance was mainly used to cover tuition and transportation, followed by textbooks and accommodation.

Social Cohesion

With an aim to enhance social cohesion, UNHCR and Barça Foundation jointly provide sports training for children from the refugee and host communities. On 12 February, within the scope of that Project, a friendly tournament was organized in Manisa, bringing together 200 young children, who received training in football, handball, basketball, and volleyball. They demonstrated not only their progress in sport competencies but also their development in social skills such as teamwork, solidarity, and mutual respect.



Funding Information

UNHCR is grateful for generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Türkiye.

US\$ 210 million

UNHCR requested for the operation in Türkiye for 2026.

