Middle East Situation

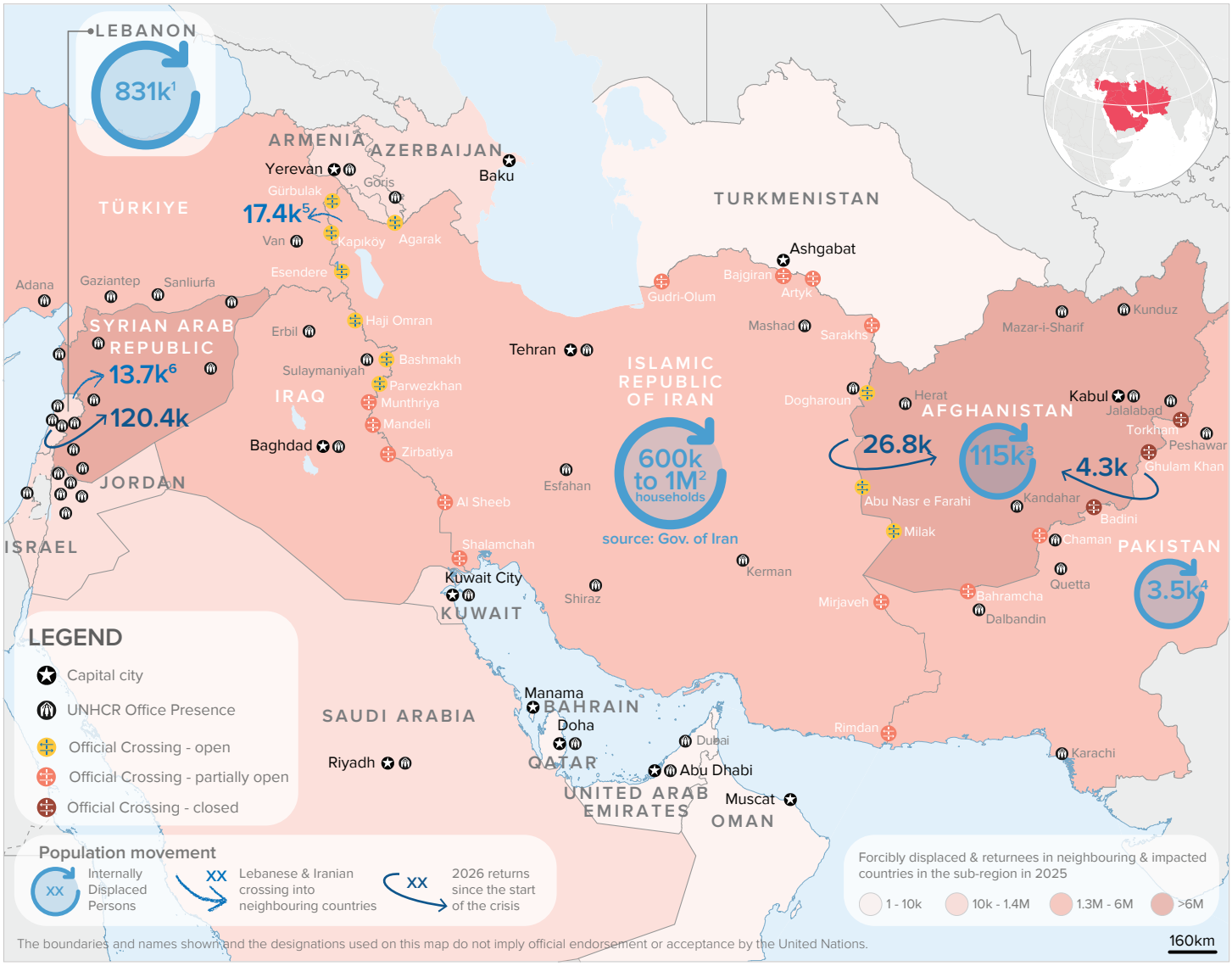
as of 15 March 2026

Overview

The recent escalation of hostilities across Asia and the Middle East has led to a marked deterioration in the humanitarian situation. The affected areas already host 24.3 million forcibly displaced people, many of whom already face significant protection risks and humanitarian needs, alongside host communities. Many countries are supporting the humanitarian needs of forcibly displaced populations with limited funding, making it harder to absorb additional needs and vulnerable populations.

Against this backdrop, the rapid escalation of hostilities is placing increased strain on humanitarian capacities and host communities, with heightened protection needs, the risk of internal displacement and possible new outflows and onward movements towards neighbouring countries. UNHCR is closely monitoring developments and strengthening preparedness efforts to support protection and the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to affected populations across these regions.

Situation Overview



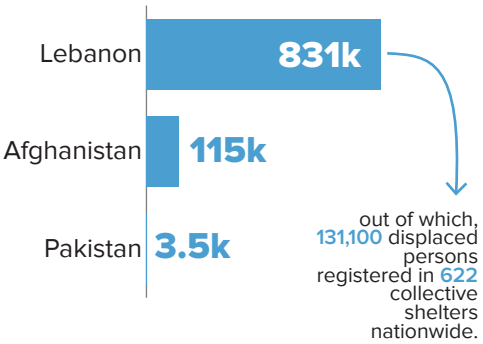
Türkiye estimates, IDPs and Afghan returns' estimates (from Iran & Pakistan), and crossings to Syria (Syrian returns and Lebanese nationals) as of 15 March.

[1] Source: Government of Lebanon. [2] Source: Government of Iran. [3] Source: OCHA Afghanistan. [4] Source: Government of Pakistan.
[5] Source: UNHCR and Government of Türkiye. Some Iranian nationals may be entering Türkiye under the visa-free short-term stay regime (up to 90 days). Such movements may reflect precautionary or temporary travel while individuals assess the situation in Iran.
[6] Source: Government of Lebanon.

Population Movements

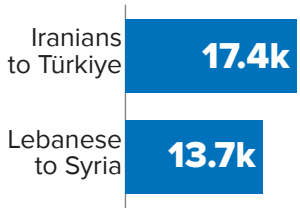
numbers are in thousands

New IDPs since the start of the crisis



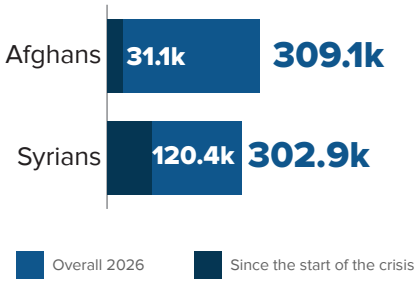
According to the Government of Iran, between **600,000 to 1 million households** are estimated to have temporarily left their homes to seek safety across the country. Using the average 3.2 family size provided by the most recent national census this amounts to **1.9 to 3.2 mililion individuals**. Most Iranian households are temporarily fleeing from Tehran and other major urban centres, towards the north of the country and rural areas to seek safety.

Lebanese & Iranian nationals crossing into neighbouring countries



While the number of Lebanese crossing into Syria has increased, the number of Iranians crossing into Türkiye has remained stable and below the levels observed prior to recent developments. In addition, between 4 and 15 March, **over 17,300 Iranian nationals were recorded crossing from Türkiye back into Iran**. For some Iranian nationals entering Türkiye under the visa-free short-term stay regime up to 90 days, movements may reflect routine purposes, such as visits, tourism, or transit to catch a flight, or precautionary or temporary travel while individuals assess developments in Iran.

Individuals crossing into their country of origin



Afghan return figures are preliminary and expected to fluctuate upon validation on a weekly basis.

Syrians crossing the border include those who had planned to return before the conflict and others compelled to cross due to current conditions. **38,208** reported intending to return permanently.

Profiles

As a result of the Afghanistan-Pakistan military escalation, in **Afghanistan, 71% of the IDPs are women and children**. 56% intend to return to their area of origin in the next 60 days. The top three priority needs identified for women are shelter (66%), health (54%) and food security (34%).

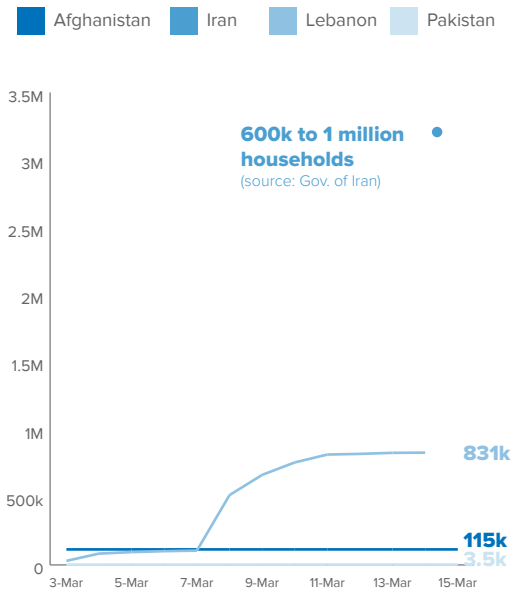
In **Pakistan**, internally displaced persons moved to safer areas, where the district administration has established two IDP centers, one in Drosh and another in Akroye. **57% are children, and 28% are women.**

In **Türkiye**, based on the 428 interviews conducted by UNHCR with arriving Iranian nationals between 4 and 12 March, the age and gender breakdown was as follows: **56% adult men, 30% adult women, 7% girls, and 6% boys**.

Since the start of the crisis, **75% of Afghan returnees assisted by UNHCR were women and children,** returning from both **Iran and Pakistan**.

Trends
numbers are in thousands

New IDPs since the start of the crisis per country (cumulative)



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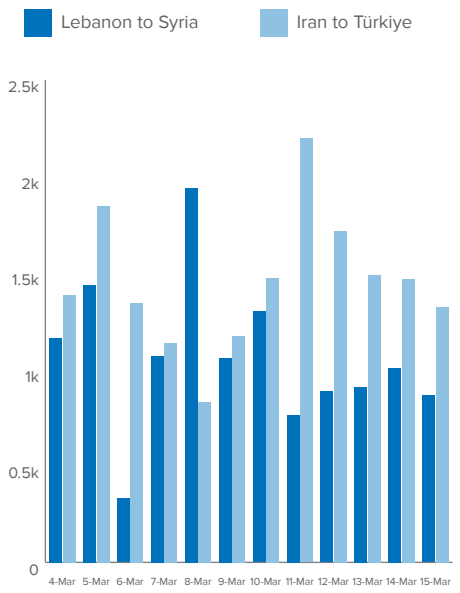

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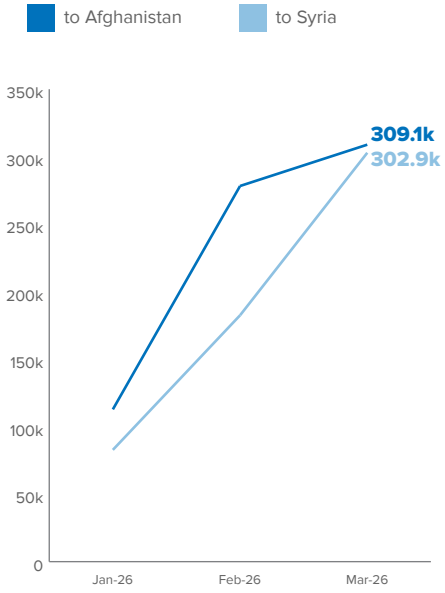

UNHCR Preparedness and Coordination

UNHCR is leading cross-regional preparedness and response coordination for potential cross-border refugee movements, working with authorities, UN agencies and humanitarian partners. The Regional Bureaux for Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa, and Europe are working closely with country operations to monitor developments and advance preparedness and response planning.

Should a response be required, emergency financial aid would be the primary assistance modality, supported by systems already in place in Afghanistan, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Türkiye and through our global stockpiles and UNHCR's mechanism to reinforce staffing capacity.

Operational Presence

Forcibly displaced persons & returnees in neighbouring & impacted countries in the sub-region in 2025. For more information on Forcibly Displaced definition and methodologies, click here.