

# Middle East Situation

30 March 2026



Lebanon. Hundreds of displaced families have found refuge in Beirut's waterfront, sleeping in tents or in their cars. 17 March, 2026© UNHCR

## Key Highlights

- On 26 March, UNHCR and inter-agency partners launched the [Iran Flash Inter-Agency Refugee Response Plan](#) to support Afghan refugees and vulnerable host communities in Iran covering 1.65 million refugees and others in need of international protection, 1 million host communities and 150,000 Afghans of other status.
- Since the start of the crisis, over 60,600 Iranians crossed into Türkiye and 46,000 returned to Iran with volume remaining below pre-conflict levels. Over 28,600 Lebanese nationals have crossed into Syria. 179,000 Syrians from Lebanon and more than 44,500 Afghans from Iran and Pakistan crossed back to country of origin. According to the Islamic Republic of Iran, 600,000 to one million households are estimated to have temporarily left their residences due to the conflict. There are over 1 million internally displaced persons currently recorded in Lebanon and around 115,000 IDPs in Afghanistan.
- For the latest information on population movements, see the latest [UNHCR CORE Update](#) and [newly launched Operational Data Portal](#) page on the Middle East situation.

## Country Updates

### Iran

- Amid the volatile security situation, Afghan refugee households continue to relocate from Tehran to Mashhad, Bojnourd, Semnan and northern provinces requiring urgent financial assistance for shelter and basic needs. In Kerman, an increasing number of Afghan refugees who have not approached UNHCR for almost a decade have requested support for urgent financial assistance, as the vulnerability of households increases.
- An interagency [Flash Refugee Response Plan for Iran](#) was launched on 26 March, requesting USD 80 million to support 2.8 million people in need (1.65 million refugees and others in need of international protection, 1 million host communities and 150,000 Afghans of other status) from March- May 2026.
- Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted over 42,400 Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multi-purpose cash assistance and psychosocial support. UNHCR's hotline received over 3,300 calls between 24-28 March, with the largest proportion of individuals seeking financial assistance to meet basic needs, followed by those expressing health related concerns, particularly among persons with disabilities, and parents of young children noting difficulties to access formula and paediatric services.

### Afghanistan-Pakistan

- Since the start of the crisis, over 44,500 Afghans have returned. Returns from Pakistan remain below typical levels due to the volatile security situation at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Returns from Iran are also below typical levels. In 2026, more than 320,200 have returned from Iran and Pakistan adding to the nearly 3 million who returned in 2025.
- Between 26-29 March clashes between the two countries resulted in civilian casualties, displacement and disrupted humanitarian access. In Pakistan, the Landi Kotal transit centre, which had recently resumed operating, was closed again following cross-border firing at the Torkham border crossing and the subsequent border closure. Afghans returning to Iran and Pakistan continue to report heightened protection risks on their journeys, including increased arrests, detention, deportation, family separation, confiscation of assets, extortion and physical mistreatment.
- In Afghanistan and Pakistan, cross-border clashes have internally displaced an estimated 115,000 and 3,500 people respectively, while inter-agency protection assessments conducted across six Afghan provinces indicate significant displacement and unmet needs, particularly in food, shelter, and health, alongside heightened protection risks linked to trauma, displacement, and child protection concerns. Heavy rainfall and flash floods caused widespread disruption across multiple regions in Afghanistan, further constraining humanitarian access and response in hard-to-reach areas.

### Turkmenistan

- All four border crossings with Iran remain open to all nationalities.

### Iraq

- As of 30 March 2026, all border points between Iraq and Iran, including those in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq are operating as normal for commercial and civilian traffic. No new changes in population movements have been observed.

- Together with other UN agencies and partners, UNHCR is finalising a contingency plan for potential refugee movements from Iran, in support of the Government of Iraq, which leads national contingency planning and emergency response. UNHCR continues to monitor border movements, engage with authorities on preparedness measures, and maintain outreach to Iranian refugees. Operations continue at a reduced scale, including support provided through the helpline.

## Lebanon

- The number of self-registered displaced people on the Government platform stands at 1,049,328, with data cleaning ongoing. Of these, 136,147 are staying in 663 government-designated collective shelters, many of which are operating at or near full capacity. The destruction of key bridges and transport roads in southern Lebanon continues to restrict movement and impede humanitarian access, cutting off parts of the south and affecting an estimated 150,000 people who face increasing isolation and difficulties accessing services.
- Overcrowding, uneven site standards, and limited access in hard-to-reach areas continue to heighten protection risks, including risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection concerns. Prolonged displacement and pressure on services are contributing to rising tensions in both collective shelters and host communities, increasing the risk of secondary displacement. Partners continue joint advocacy with authorities to promote inclusive access for all those displaced.
- Within the Government-led response, UNHCR has assisted over 73,870 individuals across 442 collective shelters with around 198,120 essential relief items, including mattresses and blankets. To address overcrowding, UNHCR has partitioned sleeping spaces in 206 classrooms, benefiting 423 families, and completed sanitation, water access, and weather-proofing improvements in three shelters. UNHCR and shelter sector partners, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, have completed site assessments in 90 locations and are conducting repairs in 26 sites in Bekaa-Baalbek-Hermel. Since the escalation, 738 emergency protection cash grants have reached 3,611 individuals.
- Protection partners, co-led by UNHCR with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Oxfam, have reached over 47,750 displaced people with protection, child protection, and GBV services – including over 24,250 through information sessions, 15,810 with psychosocial support in collective sites, and close to 6,900 women and girls with dignity kits.

## Syria

- According to Syrian authorities, 207,630 persons have crossed the border from Lebanon into Syria including 179,000 Syrians, with more than 51,350 individuals indicating an intention to return permanently, and over 28,630 Lebanese.
- UNHCR supported operations at the three official border crossings by providing legal assistance to over 468 families, supplying water to 30,000 people, delivering relief items to more than 600 vulnerable individuals, and arranging transportation for over 3,550 people to reach their destinations. Infrastructure improvements were also undertaken, including the installation of solar streetlights.
- Humanitarian partners complemented the response with food, water, healthcare, dignity kits, and support for children.

- UNHCR Community Centres have identified and supported more than 20,000 returnees across eight governorates, carrying out needs assessments, registering families for assistance, offering psychological first aid and mental health support, referring vulnerable individuals to specialized services, and extending outreach into host communities through trained volunteers.

## Türkiye

- UNHCR continues to monitor the situation along the border in close coordination with authorities and partners, with the Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) border crossings remaining operational. Following the Eid and Nowruz periods, cross-border movements have begun to stabilize, with arrivals gradually tapering and departures to Iran increasing. Documented movements continue to be largely routine and seasonal, driven primarily by tourism, business, and family visits, with most journeys pre-planned and border processing smooth and efficient.
- An increasing number of Iranian nationals are returning to Iran within a week of entering Türkiye, underscoring the temporary nature of current mobility trends. Returns are primarily linked to family obligations and the completion of short visits, with the general intention to remain in Iran and no indications of a shift toward displacement yet.
- National preparedness plans are being coordinated by the Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management, while UNHCR is reinforcing coordination with UN agencies and partners in both Ankara and the border regions to enhance preparedness and strengthen information management. Response capacities are being systematically mapped and data coordination consolidated to ensure readiness for a potential activation of the contingency plan should Turkish authorities request support in the event of increased movements.

## Armenia

- UNHCR and partners maintain a presence at the main border crossing (Agarak), where movement remains at manageable levels, consisting mainly of routine travel and commercial traffic with no indications of large-scale arrivals. Movements into Armenia outweighed exits to Iran (roughly 30–35 per cent of movements). Only a small number of individuals approached UNHCR for asylum-related information and were referred to the appropriate national authorities, with transportation support provided where necessary.
- Since late February, approximately 130 people have approached UNHCR with enquiries relating to asylum procedures and legal counselling, primarily individual adults, while UNHCR has observed a gradual increase in families in the second half of March.
- Despite the steady number of information and assistance requests, only a small number of individuals have formally applied for asylum, indicating that most approaches continue to be information-seeking rather than immediate asylum applications.

## Coordination

Inter-agency coordination efforts are continuing across the region through existing structures with governments, UN agencies, partners and communities to respond to the needs of refugees and host

communities exacerbated by the conflict, ensure protection monitoring and services and strengthen preparedness efforts in support of national governments.

## Financial Information

UNHCR operations across the affected regions remain critically underfunded at a time when humanitarian needs and operational risks are increasing.

- **In South-West Asia**, UNHCR requires USD 454 million in 2026 to support forcibly displaced populations that fall under the Afghanistan situation. As of end-February, only 15 per cent had been received. Funding shortfalls are particularly acute in Iran (8 per cent funded) and Afghanistan (17 per cent funded), where economic pressures and instability continue to drive humanitarian needs.
- **In the Middle East**, significant funding gaps persist. Lebanon is only 14 per cent funded against a requirement of USD 472 million, while Iraq is 28 per cent funded against a requirement of USD 61 million, limiting the scope for preparedness and emergency response activities. The Syria operation is also critically underfunded at 28 per cent of its USD 324 million requirement, despite continued high humanitarian needs and ongoing return dynamics.
- **In Europe**, funding levels currently stand at 42 per cent for both Türkiye (USD 210 million requirement) and Armenia (USD 9 million requirement).

Severe funding shortfalls risk creating a 'crisis within a crisis' at a time when needs across the affected regions are rapidly increasing. Without additional resources, UNHCR's ability to scale up protection and life-saving assistance in response to further displacement or humanitarian needs may be constrained.

## Contact

For further information on the situation or UNHCR's response across affected countries, please contact the Regional Bureaux: [rbapext@unhcr.org](mailto:rbapext@unhcr.org) (Asia and the Pacific) and [menareporting@unhcr.org](mailto:menareporting@unhcr.org) (Middle East and North Africa). For more information on UNHCR and partners' response across affected countries, please visit the [Operational Data Portal](#) and [UNHCR website](#).