

Syrian Arab Republic

May 2026

Syria's operational environment is increasingly defined by large-scale returns and persistent humanitarian vulnerability.

While around **1.6 million** refugees and **1.9 million** internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned since December 2024, humanitarian needs remain severe, with **15.6 million** people requiring humanitarian assistance.

This evolving context is driving a gradual operational shift from an emergency displacement response toward return and reintegration support, in line with Syria's *National Recovery Priorities* and the Government's "No Tents, No Camps" vision, while maintaining protection and humanitarian assistance for highly vulnerable populations.

The sustainability of returns continues to be constrained by damaged housing, limited access to services and livelihoods, the need for civil documentation and overstretched local absorption capacity.

UNHCR advocates that movements out of camps or collective shelters remain voluntary, informed, safe, and dignified, and supported by conditions that enable sustainable reintegration. UNHCR also provides protection and assistance to the most vulnerable refugee and IDP returnees while working to increase institutional capacity.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1,000

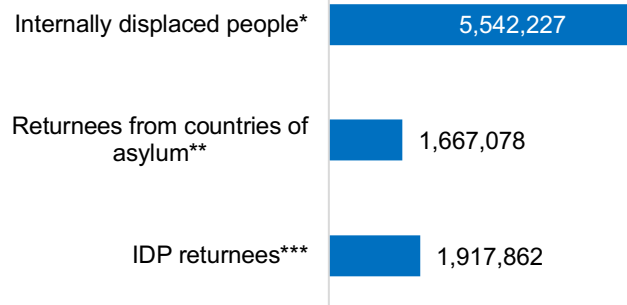
individuals who received UNHCR's livelihood assistance in 2025 have indicated positive outcomes and sustained income in 2026

2,291

individuals in camps and collective shelters were supported by UNHCR in May to return to their areas of origin

3,500

Kurds received legal assistance to support their applications for Syrian citizenship



*Source: OCHA, August 2025

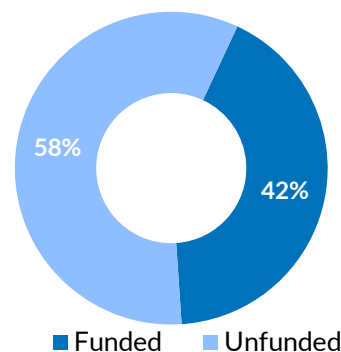
**Source: UNHCR, since December 2024. This is calculated by triangulating multiple data sources, including population-movement reporting and border-monitoring data.

***Source: OCHA and UNHCR, from December 2024 to May 2026

FUNDING (AS OF 31 MAY 2026)

USD 323.9 million

requested for the Syria Operation in 2026



UNHCR's partner, the Child Care Society receives Syrian refugees returning from Jordan through an organized convoy and facilitates onward transportation to their areas of origin in Homs Governorate, providing tailored support to families with specific needs. ©UNHCR

Operational Context

Syria is experiencing a cumulative increase in both refugee and IDP returns, while internal displacement remains widespread and humanitarian needs across the country continue to be substantial. Conditions remain volatile in parts of the country, while economic hardship and insufficient access to basic services continue to undermine recovery prospects and sustainable reintegration.

On 13 May, UNHCR co-organized with Syria's Ministry of Emergency and Disaster Management a [workshop](#) in Damascus to advance the government's "No Tents, No Camps" vision, in line with Decree [No. 59 of 2026](#). The workshop brought together government entities, UN agencies, and partners to develop a shared understanding of this vision and identify concrete pathways to support the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of over 870,000 displaced people currently residing in camps in Syria. Discussions focused on strengthening coordination, aligning humanitarian and development efforts, and fostering an enabling environment for sustainable returns.

The second round of the [Enhanced Regional Perceptions and Intentions Survey](#), covering Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt and published by UNHCR and the World Bank in April, found that only 14% of refugee households intend to return within the next 12 months, while 77% continue to express a long-term aspiration to return. This indicates that willingness to return remains higher than confidence in current conditions inside Syria.

This context reinforces the fact that displacement dynamics are increasingly linked to access to housing, basic services, livelihoods, and food security, positioning broader recovery outcomes as central to sustainable reintegration.

Through the [area-based](#) and [community-based approaches](#), UNHCR supports refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, host community members, and refugee and IDP returnees. 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.

In 2026, UNHCR collaborates with 24 partners, including ministries, international and national non-governmental organizations in all 14 governorates.

Operational Updates

Response to the situation in Lebanon

Amid continued hostilities affecting southern Lebanon and Beirut's Southern Suburb, 551,839 individuals (444,389 Syrians and 107,450 Lebanese) crossed into Syria between 2 March and 31 May. While some Syrians indicated intentions to remain, the majority expressed plans to return to Lebanon once conditions improve.

On 4 May, Syria's General Authority for Borders and Customs opened the Jisr Qamar crossing point linking Homs Governorate with Wadi Khaled in Lebanon, with movements now recorded alongside Jdaidet Yabous (Rural Damascus), Joussieh (Homs), and Arida (Tartous).

At border crossing points, assistance focused on immediate protection and basic needs, including transportation for the most vulnerable, legal counselling, and referrals. In areas of return, UNHCR and partners continued post-return monitoring and facilitated access to services, notably through community centres.

While assistance at border points continues, needs are increasingly shifting to areas of return, where rising demand is placing additional strain on available resources.

Regular response



Protection

- UNHCR advanced its protection interventions to strengthen individuals' access to essential services and the enjoyment of their rights, contributing to more sustainable and durable reintegration outcomes for returnees.
- By the end of May, UNHCR supported 55 [community centres](#) and 71 mobile units across the country, assisted by a network of 967 community outreach volunteers in all 14 Syrian governorates.



UNHCR and its partner Namaa relocated a community centre from Aleppo to Jisr Al-Shughour (Idleb) to respond to higher service needs in the area. ©UNHCR/H.Maarouf

- UNHCR’s advocacy with the Ministry of Interior supported the implementation of the Decree [No. 13 of 2026](#) concerning the acquisition of Syrian nationality by Kurdish population, extending the citizenship application’s deadline. By the end of May, over 10,000 applications had been submitted. UNHCR’s partners supported the registration and outreach, with around 360 awareness sessions conducted for the benefit of over 4,300 individuals, as well as 3,500 people being provided with legal assistance.
- From 11 to 13 May, UNHCR conducted a training for 34 partners’ staff in Damascus and Rural Damascus to strengthen their capacity in using the Refugee Assistance Information System (RAIS). The training focused on registration, data management, referrals, and end-to-end case processing. It also included an orientation on protection principles and vulnerability considerations to ensure these are systematically integrated into registration processes.
- UNHCR and its partners have supported the implementation of [community-led initiatives](#) proposed by Women’s Committees in Daraya (Rural Damascus). The initiatives included literacy and digital skills programmes, vocational training, referrals to protection and mental health services, and partnerships to enhance access to community resources and strengthen local institutions. Despite challenges such as limited funding and increasing needs, the initiatives contributed to empowering women, improving community awareness, and fostering social cohesion.
- From 19–21 May, UNHCR and its partner Al-Nada conducted a three-day training course on case management of [gender-based violence](#) (GBV) for 10 partner staff to strengthen their skills in assessment, planning, implementation, and follow-up. The training covered key GBV concepts, survivor-centred approaches, communication skills, and case management processes.
- UNHCR, through its partner Shafak, continued to deliver protection services in Akburhan camp (Aleppo) hosting residents relocated from Al-Hol camp (Al-Hasakeh), including psychosocial support, awareness sessions, and group counselling to address concerns such as child marriage. [Legal assistance](#) efforts resulted in the issuance of 1,340 civil registry documents, while ongoing assessments have identified gaps in birth registration, which are being addressed by UNHCR and its partner the Syrian Development Organization (SDO).
- In May, UNHCR and its partners delivered four training courses under the Inclusive Care Programme—supporting persons with disabilities, older persons, and their caregivers—reaching 100 participants from 30 organizations, including NGOs, specialized institutes, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The sessions strengthened frontline capacity to improve identification, referral,

inclusion, and caregiver support, while promoting more coordinated approaches across actors.

- The [Syria is Home](#) platform, launched in May 2025 to help Syrian refugees make informed decisions about return to Syria, recorded around 130,000 visits, with most new users in May being from Syria, the US, Lebanon, Germany and UK.
- The Protection Sector led by UNHCR published the Sector Protection Monitoring summary [findings](#) and [dashboard](#). The analysis is based on 3,635 key informant interviews conducted by 54 Protection Sector partners across all 14 governorates between January and March. The report tracked protection risks, identified emerging patterns, and informed evidence-based programming, advocacy, and response planning.



[Shelter/House Repair](#)

- By May, UNHCR had completed the [repair](#) of 250 damaged houses for 1,200 households. A further 800 damaged houses were under repair amid continued widespread housing damage and large-scale return movements. This programme supports the most vulnerable returnees enabling them to live in safe and dignified living conditions.
- UNHCR continues to undertake assessments to inform the planned expansion of the cash-for-shelter intervention in the coming period, prioritizing highly vulnerable families, including those relocated from camps in line with the government’s “No Tents, No Camps” vision.
- In Akburhan camp (Aleppo), the rehabilitation of 1,150 shelter units and their associated cooking areas, as well as the installation of six communal latrines have been completed.



[Core Relief Items](#)

- In May, UNHCR and its partners provided [core relief item](#) (CRI) kits to 8,456 families (43,576 individuals) across Syria, bringing the total number assisted since the beginning of the year to 36,639 families (176,838 individuals). The kits included essential household items such as blankets, mattresses, sleeping mats, jerry cans, plastic sheets, solar lamps, kitchen sets, and winter items.
- As part of this assistance, UNHCR, in coordination with the Syrian Government and its partners the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC), provided CRIs to 148 families (733 individuals) displaced by the 27 May floods along the Euphrates River, primarily in Deir ez-Zor Governorate.



Livelihoods

- Poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, and constrained access to assistance and basic services continue to affect both returnees and host communities.
- In May, UNHCR continued assessing its [livelihoods assistance](#) across Syria. Since the beginning of the year, 465 skilled returnees benefited from small start-up grants, which aims to strengthen self-reliance and support early recovery by linking individual assistance to market-oriented opportunities.
- Monitoring of 1,000 individuals who received UNHCR's livelihood assistance in 2025 have indicated positive outcomes. Approximately 29% of beneficiaries achieved stable income, 86% were able to meet their basic needs, and over 73% reported earning regular income. Around half of supported businesses expanded, over 92% plan further growth.
- Rehabilitation of five vocational training centres in Aleppo, Idlib, and Homs is underway to foster access to skills development and livelihood opportunities in areas of return.



Return and Reintegration Cash Assistance

- From the beginning of the year through May, 18,746 returnee families (73,208 individuals) received return and reintegration cash assistance. Launched in 2025 to support returnees in meeting essential needs upon return, the programme has so far reached 50,748 households (173,812 individuals).



Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of the end of May, 14,116 [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 April, UNHCR also renewed the identification cards of 68 refugees. These cards protect refugees against [refoulement](#), ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** In May, two families (four individuals) were recognized as refugees, helping to facilitate access to basic services and ensure protection from refoulement and detention due to irregular stay.
- **Durable solutions:** UNHCR maintained communication with persons with and for whom it works regarding resettlement opportunities, through weekly counselling over the dedicated [helplines](#).



Return

- Following the political transition in Syria on 8 December 2024 until the end of May 2026, approximately 1.67 million refugees have returned to Syria¹, while an estimated 1.9 million IDPs have returned to their areas of origin. Returns are taking place in the presence of ongoing structural vulnerabilities, rather than as a result of improved conditions.
- UNHCR facilitates voluntary return based on informed decision-making. However, return intentions and actual movements continue to be shaped by structural constraints inside Syria. Field observations indicate that damaged housing, limited access to basic services, documentation barriers, and livelihood shortfalls continue to affect returnees' ability to reintegrate. In many areas, basic services, including health and education, remain overstretched, while shortages of adequate housing persist due to widespread damage and slow rehabilitation. At the same time, economic vulnerability, high levels of debt, and limited income-generating opportunities are increasing reliance on humanitarian assistance and raising the risk of negative coping mechanisms, ultimately affecting the sustainability of returns.
- In May, UNHCR received several [organized convoys](#) from Jordan consisting of around 300 returnees at the Nassib border crossing (Dar'a). UNHCR informed the returnees of the community centres in return areas that could provide assistance upon needs.
- In May, 2,204 vulnerable Syrians were supported with transportation at the border crossing points of Joussieh (Homs-Lebanon) and Bab Al-Hawa (Idlib-Türkiye). This brings the number of refugee returnees provided with UNHCR's transportation support since the beginning of 2025 to around 42,700.
- In May, 1,684 returnee families (6,793 individuals) consented to share their basic information through the Returnee Support Windows² established in coordination with Syria's General Authority for Borders and Customs at official border crossings to advise returnees on available services and assistance. This brings the total of consented families to 32,300 families (131,767 individuals) since June 2025, allowing UNHCR to follow up on their situation in the return areas.
- In May, UNHCR supported multiple organized returns from camps and emergency collective shelters to areas of origin, ensuring that movements were conducted in a safe and dignified manner. A total of 384 families (1,920 individuals) were supported to return from collective shelters in Qamishli to Afrin (Aleppo). In parallel, 91 households (274 individuals) were supported in their return from Areesha camp (Al-

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

2 These windows are currently operating at the following border crossings: Nassib (Syria-Jordan); Jdaidet Yabous, Arida, Joussieh (Syria-Lebanon);

Kassab, Bab Al-Hawa, Al-Salama, Jarablus, Al-Ra'ee, Tell Abyad (Syria-Türkiye); and Alboukamal (Syria-Iraq) borders.

Hasakeh) to various governorates including Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Homs, and Al-Hasakeh. Additionally, UNHCR facilitated the return of a convoy of 18 families (97 individuals) departing Rasm Al-Akhdar camp in Manbij (Aleppo) to Maskana and eastern Aleppo, and Tabqa (Ar-Raqqa). UNHCR provided families with transportation and trucks to help them move their belongings and household items, in addition to protection services, information on community centres' services in their areas as well as CRIs to support them in the first phase of return.

- UNHCR continues to work closely with Syria's General Authority for Borders and Customs to install key structural components of the Dabbousieh border crossing bridge (Tartous), alongside the rehabilitation

of the Zablalani Immigration Centre in Damascus and 12 civil registry offices across the country.

- UNHCR participated in a UN inter-agency field mission to Hazano and Sarmada camps in rural Idleb, led by the UN Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management. The delegation engaged with families who have endured prolonged displacement. UNHCR remains committed to working closely with partners to support displaced communities—not only in returning home, but also in rebuilding their lives with dignity, stability, and resilience.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED

- [Shelter and Infrastructure Factsheet \(June 2025\)](#)
- [UNHCR IDPs and IDP returns overview \(28 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR refugee return overview \(28 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR IDPs and IDP returns overview \(14 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR refugee return overview \(14 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR IDPs and IDP returns overview \(7 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR refugee return overview \(7 May 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR Preliminary Protection Analysis on New Arrivals from Lebanon \(April 2026\)](#)
- [UNHCR Syria Protection and Reintegration Insights Q1 2026](#)
- [Refugee Protection Factsheet \(Q1\)](#)
- [Legal Aid Factsheet \(Q1\)](#)
- [Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) Factsheet \(Q1\)](#)
- [Child Protection, Gender Based Violence \(GBV\) Prevention and Response, and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support \(MHPSS\) Factsheet \(Q1\)](#)

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