

Regional Flash Update #7

Syria situation crisis

27 December 2024

Key Highlights

- Since 8 December, a total of 58,350 Syrians (26% men, 28% women and 46% children) returned to Syria primarily from Lebanon, Jordan and Türkiye. The main destinations of returns are Ar-Raqqa, followed by Aleppo, Homs and Dar'a. This continues the slow but steady increase in refugee returns witnessed over the last few weeks.
- UNHCR teams engaged with the new authorities at several border points inside Syria, establishing working relations and, in view of increasing refugee returns, assessing how border processes could be strengthened.
- Despite the increasing return to normalcy in some areas of the country, military hostilities in the north-east continue, impacting civilians and affecting delivery of humanitarian aid. In the north-west criminal activities are reported in some major urban areas, including kidnapping and theft. Incidents of unexploded ordinance continue to affect civilians.
- The Government of Türkiye announced it will establish a mechanism for temporary go-and-see visits from 1 January-1 July 2025, allowing a head of household to visit Syria three times in the six-month period. UNHCR considers this an important confidence-building measure, allowing refugees to make well informed decisions and preparations in case they choose to return.



Syrian refugees returning from Türkiye cross through the Bab al-Hawa border point on 16 December.
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Country updates

Syria

According to UNHCR and partner monitoring inside Syria, a total of 58,350 Syrians (nearly half of whom are children) have returned to Syria since 8 December, through official border crossings. The main destinations of returns are Ar-Raqqa, followed by Aleppo, Dar'a, and Homs.

Unexploded ordnance and remnants of war continue to have deadly consequences for civilians, a concern that refugees and IDPs have expressed: in the span of two days in north-west Syria at least seven landmine explosions resulted in nine casualties, including a child. Elsewhere, clashes between armed factions reportedly continue, and increases in criminal activity, particularly in Aleppo City, have been observed.

On 24 December, UNHCR teams visited the Jdaidet Yabous (border point with Lebanon), Al-Arida (Lebanon) and Nassib (Jordan) border crossings, engaging with caretaker authorities at each post. At Jdaidet Yabous, authorities reported that they plan to resume operations on 30 December. At the Al-Arida border crossing point with Lebanon, caretaker authorities informed that new border security personnel would be deployed shortly.

UNHCR and partner early recovery and aid programmes have resumed in most areas, supporting refugee and IDP returnees as well those still displaced and the communities hosting them. In north-east Syria's Hassakeh Governorate, UNHCR is expanding the market in Newroz camp with 10 new shops to support IDPs and returnees in securing jobs and providing services to the camp population. In Damascus, UNHCR partners supported education and health awareness programmes with youth-led initiatives. In Aleppo, UNHCR and its partner distributed livelihood equipment, tools and materials, targeting returning families.

Lebanon

UNHCR's network of 570 Outreach Volunteers from the Syrian refugee community continue to be a key conduit in ensuring that refugees' questions and concerns are captured. Refugees raised concerns over access to education and housing inside Syria, and transport costs should they decide to return.

At the Masnaa official border crossing in Bekaa, UNHCR and UNICEF continued monitoring the situation of Syrians attempting to enter Lebanon but who may be stranded in the no-man's land beyond the border crossing point. With Lebanese authorities conducting procedures for those who meet entry requirements including for humanitarian exceptions, the number of those waiting at any one-time was low.

Türkiye

UNHCR is supporting minor infrastructure development at Karkamış / Jarablus border crossing targeting refugee returnees, including safe spaces for children. Further works are planned over the coming weeks.

Temporary go-and-see visits for Syrian refugees in Türkiye will be initiated from 1 January to 1 July 2025. Accordingly, the same family member will be able to travel to Syria a maximum of three times within six months, and departures will be organized through two border crossings. Syrians using the temporary visit option will retain their temporary protection status.

In order to counter misinformation and provide a reliable source of information to Syrian refugees in Türkiye, UNHCR is posting updated information on its [Help Page](#) and disseminating through other refugee communication channels.

Jordan

On 23 December during his visit to Syria and meetings with Ahmed al-Sharaa, leader of the caretaker authorities, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to supporting Syrian refugees, stressing the importance of voluntary return to Syria.

The Ministry of Interior announced updates regarding entry and exit at the Jaber-Nassib border crossing. According to new regulations effective as of 22 December, entry to Jordan is open for Syrian investors and their families and Syrians holding Jordanian citizenship.

Iraq

The movement of Syrians through the Peshkhabour border, located between Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), continued with approximately 400 people arriving per day over the past week. Most Syrians crossing into Iraq through this border crossing are of Kurdish ethnicity and indicate that they are either coming to the KR-I temporarily for family visits and plan to return to Syria afterwards or are returning to the KR-I from their visits to Syria. They are mainly from Aleppo, Hassakeh and Ar-Raqqa.

Between 22 and 25 December, some 240 Syrians seeking to permanently return to Syria crossed back through Peshkhabour border point, the majority of whom are visa holders (85%) while 15% are individuals registered with UNHCR as asylum-seekers. The number of registered Syrian asylum-seekers returning permanently increased slightly this week but remained small, with an average of 12 individuals returning per day, compared to 7 per day last week. Returnees indicated improvements in the security situation in Syria and the abolition of compulsory military service as key factors in their decision to return.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #6, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [Regional Refugee Community Feedback about Developments inside Syria \(19 December\)](#)
- [UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic \(16 December\)](#)
- [Syria Situation Data Portal](#)

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CONTACTS

UNHCR MENA Regional Office in Amman (Jordan)

MENAreporting@unhcr.org

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