

UNHCR Preparedness and Response

Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees (January - June 2025)

Key figures

- ◆ 6 million Syrian refugees primarily in neighbouring countries
- ◆ Up to 1 million projected refugee returns between January-June 2025

Overview

With the dramatic fall of the Assad government, there has been seismic shift in Syria. Refugees in neighbouring countries have expressed elation and hope, together with caution. Should a political transition be successful accompanied by major investments by the donor community, there could be significant numbers of Syrians returning voluntarily from within the region in the next six months. While UNHCR does not promote large-scale voluntary repatriations to Syria at this time, it is preparing to assist those who are choosing to return voluntarily, working closely with host governments in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, and UN and NGO partners in the region. At the same time, it is crucial to maintain support to programmes for the six million refugees primarily in the region, empowering refugees' choices and building their assets and skills for their future.

Regional Preparedness

At the regional and host country level, [inter-agency coordination on return](#) has been in place for several years through the UNHCR and UNDP-led [Regional Refugee Response Plan](#). Contingency plans have been activated, covering [intention surveys](#) and communication with communities, protection services such as regularizing civil documentation, return process design, logistics and support to both spontaneous and host government-organized return movements. With comprehensive registration data and biometrics for over 6 million Syrians in [PRIMES](#), UNHCR is engaging with key partners to enable referrals and assistance both during return and when back home in Syria. In each host country, UNHCR is strengthening extensive outreach and community networks, including helplines, as well as border and return movement monitoring.

Current Syria Response

Inside Syria, UNHCR is present in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Deir-ez-Zour, Sweida and Qamishli and through cross-border operations from Türkiye, supporting millions of IDPs and refugees who have already returned, including those who fled Lebanon since September 2014. IDP tracking and monitoring systems are already in place. UNHCR is gradually reopening border monitoring and programmes, including most of the 114 Community Centres, core relief distributions and protection services. Preparations are underway to restart early recovery programmes, including livelihoods and shelter repairs, as soon as possible.

Within the existing inter-agency response for IDPs, UNHCR leads three sectors at national and field level: Protection, Shelter & Non-Food Items, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management, covering the whole of Syria.

Planned Syria Response

Under the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and in close collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs, UNHCR's primary coordination role will cover refugee and IDP returns, through an approach grounded on protection principles and informed by over three decades of presence in the country. UNHCR's return activities¹ inside Syria will expand existing programming to effectively address various scenarios and evolving population dynamics, building upon years of work supporting refugee and IDP returns as well as the recent rapid return of over 360,000 Syrian refugees from Lebanon under adverse conditions. Integrated with the return response and data on refugees from host countries, these activities will include reception and protection monitoring at the border, logistics and cash grants. In places of return, UNHCR will support the reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs, building on its existing capacity, through shelter repairs, protection monitoring and services, including psychosocial support, legal aid, addressing Housing, Land and Property and civil documentation, prevention of gender-based violence and children protection. Livelihood and early recovery efforts will focus on improving access to services, promoting social cohesion, and creating short-term employment, with an emphasis on job opportunities for local workers, particularly for female-headed households.

For the first time in 14 years, Syrians have a future. They need governance, stability and support.

¹ Resources acquired through this plan will be allocated for emergency preparedness and response across the broader Middle East and North Africa region in the event of significant developments that hinder the implementation of the plan.