

Regional Flash Update #10

Syria situation crisis

17 January 2025

Key Highlights

- As of 15 January, UNHCR estimates that **more than 195,000 Syrians** have crossed back into Syria since 8 December 2024.
- Syrian refugees in host countries continue to indicate their interest to return in interactions with UNHCR, while others express caution. Some refugees are explicitly requesting financial and other support to be able to return and re-build their lives and homes inside Syria. In Jordan, UNHCR will shortly begin a pilot transportation project from Jordan to Syria, combined with counselling, assessment of the voluntary character of return and other safeguards.
- Inter-agency planning for refugee return is moving at pace, through working groups under the UNHCR and UNDP-led Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) coordination system, with partner UN agencies and NGOs. Such planning is grounded in protection principles and refugees' choices, including that any refugee return to Syria should be voluntary, in safety and dignity. In parallel, protection space and funding for refugee and host community programmes in host countries should be maintained.



UNHCR staff meets with a group of women who have recently returned to Aleppo at a distribution point for winterization items to support families as they return home. © UNHCR/Hameed Maarouf

Country updates

Syria

As of 15 January, more than 195,000 Syrians are estimated to have crossed back into the country since 8 December. This is based on a triangulation of information from both outside and inside Syria, including official government data, and includes Syrians refugees who are registered with UNHCR as well as other groups of Syrians.

Protests [erupted](#) in northern Syria this week following the imposition of increased customs tariffs, which triggered a surge in the prices of essential, imported goods, including fuel, by up to 500%. According to caretaker authorities, the revised tariff aims to protect local products, encourage local industry, attract investment and raise the standard of living.

Whilst shelling and air raids have significantly decreased, landmines and unexploded ordnance continue to affect civilians across the country, resulting in regular fatalities and injuries. This week, UNHCR conducted awareness raising sessions on the danger of unexploded ordnance in Hama and As-Sweida governorates.

As of 13 January, some [627,000 people](#) remain newly displaced in Syria since 27 November 2024. According to the CCCM Cluster, over 37,700 people departed displacement camps in north-west Syria between 3 December 2024 and 11 January 2025.

This week, the UNHCR Representative in Syria concluded a two-day mission to Aleppo. During the visit, he met with the caretaker authorities' Humanitarian Action Coordinator (HAC) for Aleppo and Idleb, refugee returnees and the [Council of Christians](#). He also visited the Bab al Hawa border crossing to observe immigration and return processes. UNHCR reaffirmed its continued commitment to promote social cohesion and co-existence, and readiness to support the caretaker authorities to enhance their coordination capacity, particularly regarding returns and reintegration interventions.

Türkiye

On 16 January, Turkish Airlines [announced](#) the resumption of flights to Damascus as of 23 January, with three flights per week.

Processing of voluntary returns continue in provinces and at five border crossings, while three border crossings are open for processing go-and-see visits. This follows the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) announcement on 13 January that the Karkamış / Jarablus border crossing in Gaziantep has also been designated for processing temporary visits along with Çobanbey / Al Rai and Zeytindalı / Jinderes, while the latter will no longer be used for regular voluntary return processing.

UNHCR is currently monitoring return interviews in 12 provinces and at four border crossing points in the south-east. Individuals returning alone continue to make up the majority of voluntary returns, often due to the absence of dependent family members in Türkiye or to assess conditions in Syria before reuniting with their families. While improved security and political changes in Syria are primary drivers, family reunification and nostalgia also play significant roles in the decision. Most returnees aim to return to their province of origin, with Aleppo, Idleb, Damascus and Hama being the top destinations. Factors such as property destruction, family relocation and security concerns influence choices; a significant portion of returnees report damage or destruction to property. Documentation issues are also widespread, with many lacking essential civil records. Employment and livelihood opportunities in Syria remain critical concerns as well as lack of access to basic services.

Lebanon

Three official border crossings remain open between Lebanon and Syria, with the Masnaa official border crossing in Bekaa being the only crossing open for vehicle traffic. Movements continue daily at a low rate at the official border crossings, mostly through Masnaa.

Through its close contact with Syrian refugee communities in Lebanon, UNHCR has been monitoring refugee sentiments and concerns around return since 8 December. Most Syrians are expressing an interest in temporarily visiting Syria to assess the situation. Some Syrian refugees are reportedly exploring a phased approach to return, with some members of the family returning first to assess the situation and prepare for the rest of the family to join.

Jordan

On 11 January, the Ministry of Interior [reported](#) that over 52,000 Syrians have left Jordan through the Jaber border crossing since 8 December 2024, including refugees registered with UNHCR, other Syrians in the country and Syrians who transited through Jordan from other countries.

The first half of January saw a shift in returnee demographics, with the overall percentage of women and girls returning to Syria increasing to 45% from 36% in December. Accordingly, the percentage of men and boys decreased from 64% in December to 55% in January. The percentage of children returning also increased in January, from 27% in December to 44% in January. The numbers returning as a complete family household increased by 10% from December and now stand at 46%. A slight majority (54%) of overall returnees continue to return alone or as incomplete family units.

On 12 January, the Ministry of Interior [announced](#) that Syrian citizens residing in European countries, the Americas, Australia, Japan, South Korea and the Gulf Cooperation Council states can enter Jordan without prior approval. The decision applies to Syrians holding valid residency permits for a minimum of four months in their respective countries of residence. Also on 12 January, the Syrian Embassy in Amman [announced](#) that Syrians residing in Jordan can use the 'service card' issued by the Ministry of Interior of Jordan as the travel document.

Syrian vehicles can now enter Jordan following the Ministry of Interior's [announcement](#) on 9 January regarding the resumption of cross-border transport services. In recent days, heavy traffic was observed at the Jaber border crossing, including Syrian vehicles. Since these changes, refugees report the cost of transportation for people and luggage is between JOD 200-350 (USD 282-493), depending on the destination, down from an average of JOD 500-700 (USD 705-987) in previous weeks.

Syrian refugees in Jordan continue to indicate their interest in return in interactions with UNHCR, citing reasons including missing home, a desire to reunite with families and check on their property in Syria and lack of livelihood opportunities in Jordan. At the same time, refugees express concerns about security inside Syria; some women also reported fears about an erosion of women's rights and access to education. Some refugees also cited financial difficulties, including transportation costs and accumulated debt, as one of barriers to return. Refugees indicate a prevailing preference for the opportunity to conduct temporary 'go and see' visits before making long-term decisions about return.

In response to an increase in requests received by UNHCR from refugees to support their return, UNHCR is preparing a pilot project to provide bus transportation from Jordan to Syria for refugees who wish to return voluntarily. UNHCR will provide counselling to refugees prior to their departure. UNHCR has also uploaded a set of questions frequently asked by Syrian refugees concerning returns to Syria, along with respective answers on its [Help site](#), which is regularly updated.

Iraq

The numbers of Syrians returning from Iraq has remained stable over the last week, with no significant changes. Since 8 December, over 3,000 Syrians have returned from Iraq to Syria,

including 190 registered refugees. This includes Syrians who have returned through the Peshkhabour border crossing and the Al-Qaim border crossing. The improved security situation in Syria, high living costs in the Kurdistan Region and the abolition of compulsory military services are frequently mentioned by Syrians as reasons for their return.

Compared to trends prior to 8 December, the number of Syrians, including registered refugees, returning from Iraq to Syria through the Peshkhabour border crossing has decreased. This decline can be attributed to the fact that many Syrian refugees in Iraq come from northeast Syria, a region still experiencing instability. As a result, most Syrian refugees in Iraq maintain a cautious, 'wait-and-see' attitude toward returning.

Egypt

The increase in case closure requests from Syrian refugees living in Egypt continues. Between 8 December 2024 and 15 January 2025, 3,100 closure requests involving 6,050 individuals were submitted, averaging 119 requests per day compared to the November 2024 daily average of 7 requests.

On 12 January, Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Ambassador Tamim Khallaf confirmed that the Egyptian Embassy in Syria remains operational.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #9, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [UNHCR Syria Response Factsheet \(30 December\)](#)
- [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](#)
- [UNHCR Helpsite](#)

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