

Regional Flash Update #16

Syria situation crisis

27 February 2025



Children of refugee and internally displaced returnee communities gather at a UNHCR-supported Community Centre in Rural Idlib, where they are enrolled in child protection services. © UNHCR Syria/Hameed Maarouf

Key Highlights

- As of 27 February 2025, UNHCR estimates that **some 297,300 Syrians** have returned to Syria via neighboring countries since early December 2024. The figures are based on a triangulation of sources from outside and inside Syria and include refugees registered with UNHCR and other Syrians returning from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, as well those transiting from beyond the Region.
- On 24 February, the European Council **decided** to suspend a number of restrictive measures on Syria as “part of the EU’s efforts to support an inclusive political transition in Syria, and its swift economic recovery, reconstruction, and stabilization”. This decision is a critical step forward as sanctions remain a major obstacle to large scale and sustainable voluntary return of refugees.
- On 25 February, the **Syrian National Dialogue Conference** in Syria took place in Damascus. The final statement highlighted that dialogue among Syrians of all background will remain a continuous process in this new phase in Syria.

Country updates

Syria

As of 27 February, UNHCR estimates that **297,300 Syrians** have crossed back into Syria from neighboring countries since 8 December 2024.

Furthermore, **885,294 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** have returned to their homes since 27 November 2024, based on the most recent data from UNHCR and OCHA, as of 26 February 2025.

As per the **political developments** in the country, on 25 February, the Syrian National Dialogue Conference was held in Damascus, bringing together around 600 participants. The closing statement of the conference focused on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria; condemned Israeli incursions and demanded its withdrawal. The statement also highlighted the issuance of a temporary constitutional declaration; forming an interim legislative council and preparing a draft permanent constitution that promotes freedom and human rights. It further mentioned the importance of upholding human rights, promoting women's participation in all sectors, promoting peaceful coexistence among all components of Syrian society, and fostering a culture of dialogue within Syrian society by continuing national discussions at various levels and establishing mechanisms for their implementation.

In terms of **UNHCR's response**, the UN Refugee Agency continued to provide life-saving assistance through its Community Centres, with 106 out of 122 operational, in addition to a network of 115 mobile units and over 2,250 community outreach volunteers across all 14 governorates.

In view of the **pressing need** for shelter amongst refugee and IDP returnees, UNHCR continued to conduct regular home visits and shelter rehabilitation missions to assess the needs and provide alternatives to those struggling. Moreover, due to rise in psychological distress observed in returnees, UNHCR and partners enhanced their individual and group Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sessions facilitated at CCs.

Through its partner the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA), UNHCR provided essential assistance to over 260 IDP families (1,178 individuals) in the Stadium of Tabqa city who were affected by severe rainfall and flooding last week.

Since December 2024, a significant rise in Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) incidents have been observed across Syria, particularly in the Aleppo governorate. Of the total 208 verified UXO incidents, around one third occurred in Aleppo, becoming the area with the highest number of incidents in the country. In response, UNHCR is expanding Mine Risk Education (MRE) activities for returnees, including awareness-raising campaigns, as well as more structured and frequent risk education sessions by UNHCR's partners to both adults and children.

Türkiye

As of 29 January 2025, according to Türkiye's Minister of Interior, **81,576 individuals** have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria since early December.

As of 26 February, Çobanbey / Al Rai and Zeytindalı / Jinderes are open for processing go-and-see visits for Syrians under temporary protection as well as all Syrian nationals legally residing in Türkiye and those who acquired Turkish citizenship.

UNHCR continues to monitor returns in 12 provinces, as well as at key BCPs, including Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Keseb, Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salama, and Karkamış/Jarablus in the southeast, along with Istanbul International Airport.

Regarding the latest **political developments**, during his visit to Syria, Abdullah Eren, **President of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB)**, emphasized that Syrian graduates educated in Türkiye will play a key role in rebuilding their country, highlighting that YTB has provided nearly 20,000 scholarships to Syrian students. UNHCR has been cooperating with YTB on providing DAFI scholarships to Syrian students to access tertiary education where 2000 scholarships have been provided since 2014.

Through its **monitoring efforts**, UNHCR found that significant number of returnees continue to travel alone, often due to the absence of dependent family members or to assess conditions before reuniting with their families. The returnee population is diverse, with children making up a large share and men outnumbering women.

The main **drivers of return** are political changes, improved security, and family reunification. While most returnees aim to return to their province of origin, challenges such as property destruction, security concerns, and inadequate infrastructure persist. Many lack valid documentation to support property claims, and gaps in civil documentation remain.

Economic reintegration is a key concern, with **uncertainty around income** and **limited access to essential services** in some areas. Focus group discussions with Syrians who participated in go-and-see visits indicate that political changes, a sense of duty, and improvements in infrastructure and public services influence return decisions. While financial assistance is helpful, sustainable job opportunities are seen as the most critical factor. Some returnees feel a strong sense of belonging and plan to return permanently, though economic hardships, limited education opportunities, and governance challenges remain significant obstacles.

Lebanon

In the Bekaa, daily crossings at the Masnaa official crossing point (OCP) / Jdaidet Yabous BCP continue at a low but steady rate, **averaging 800 entry and exit movements per day**, according to the General Security Office (GSO). The border crossing traffic at Masnaa and Qaa OCPs was slightly lower on 22 and 23 February, likely due to the bad weather. In North Lebanon, no OCP are currently open, though a new one is planned due to increased smuggling activities.

As of 25 February, the government's Disaster Risk Management reported approximately **89,000 arrivals** since 8 December 2025 from Syria in Baalbek Governorate, North Bekaa, including 31,400 in 182 informal collective shelters, with 57,600 in community including 20,000 Lebanese returnees. A **household profiling** exercise is currently underway with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and UNHCR's partner Intersos in Hermel and Baalbeck governorates. So far, 6,200 households have been profiled, with the aim, to identify needs and refer the most vulnerable individuals to the available assistance programmes. Key gaps include inadequate hygiene facilities, limited privacy, and the need for winterization support.

Jordan

As of 22 February 2025, the total number of UNHCR registered refugees returning to Syria since 8 December (last confirmed figures from the authorities) is 43,704 individuals. Since 8 December:

- 24% of returnees were residing in Amman.
- 34% of returnees originate from Dar'a, 25% from Homs, and 13% from Rural Damascus.
- 42% are children and 23% are men of military age.

From 21 to 27 February, UNHCR facilitated the transportation of nearly 160 refugees who had expressed their intent to return to Syria. Before departure, in-person interviews were conducted to ensure that returns were **voluntary and well-informed**, with counselling and information provided on available services inside Syria. The return process was closely coordinated with UNHCR Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination.

Additionally, between 20 January and 27 February, UNHCR arranged transportation for **nearly 1,100 refugees** from camps and host communities, including a convoy from Azraq camp organized in partnership with the International Organization for Migration.

Calls to the UNHCR hotline regarding returns declined to an average of 18 per day, down from 29 in the previous reporting period. Many inquiries focused on UNHCR's pilot transportation project and required travel documentation.

Canadian Special Envoy to Syria, Omar Al-Ghabra, visited Jordan on 24 and 25 February as part of a regional tour. During his visit, he participated in a focus group discussion with Syrian refugees at a Community Centre in Amman. The discussions highlighted key concerns about returns, with refugees citing safety and security issues, limited livelihood opportunities, and inadequate basic services as major barriers to returning to Syria. On the other hand, German Ambassador to Jordan [met](#) with refugees in Tafilah who talked about their hopes for the future.

Overall, during recent information sessions and focus group discussions, refugees voiced concerns about maintaining access to education, healthcare, and other essential services in Jordan. The majority remained **hesitant to return** to Syria in the short term due to security risks, lack of housing and basic services, and financial hardships.

Iraq

Since 8 December, **almost 8,000 Syrians** have returned from Iraq to Syria, including over 500 registered refugees. This includes Syrians who have returned through the Peshkhabour and the Al-Qaim BCPs. The number of registered Syrians returning this week (54 individuals) was slightly lower compared to the previous week (73 individuals). The main reason for Syrians returning is to avoid overstaying fines in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq as many have entered on a 30-day visit visa. In addition, the improved security situation in Syria and reuniting with family are frequently mentioned as reasons for their return.

During the reporting period, UNHCR continued to observe **arrivals from Syria to the Kurdistan Region** of Iraq, mainly from the Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Hassakeh areas. Over the past week, some 260 Syrians arrived through the Peshkhabour BCP. Family visits, medical purposes, marriage, or transiting through the Kurdistan Region to other destinations are the main reasons for arrivals, with most expressing their intentions to return to Syria following their visit. Only a few Syrians arriving expressed their intention to apply for asylum and register with UNHCR in Iraq.

Egypt

As of 25 February 2025, **142,300 Syrian refugees** are registered in Egypt, 500 less than a week ago. Syrians represent over 15% of the total refugee population in Egypt.

Since 8 December 2024, there has been a significant increase in Syrians approaching UNHCR in Cairo and Alexandria to request the **closure of their asylum cases**. As of 25 February, over 6,120 closure requests involving over 12,516 individuals were submitted, averaging 111 requests per day – compared to just seven per day in November 2024. Two thirds of applicants are male. Regarding their return plans, 61% intend to go to Damascus, 11% to Homs, 8% to Rural Damascus, 4% to Al

Bab, and 16% to other locations, with the vast majority identifying these as their original home areas. 75% plan to travel directly to Syria, while 25% intend to transit through other countries.

Meanwhile, the number of new **asylum applications** submitted by Syrians to UNHCR in Egypt has dropped to one-third of previous levels. Between 8 December 2024 and 24 February, 864 new registration requests have been made, averaging 16 per day as compared to 45 per day before the new regime came into power in Syria.

During recent focus group discussions organized by UNHCR in Cairo, Syrian refugees who are planning to return to their country cited economic difficulties, housing shortages, and challenges in securing education for their children in Egypt as primary **reasons for their decision to return**. Noting that there're no direct flights yet open between Cairo and Damascus and in the absence of a shared land border, participants discussed various return routes, including travel through Lebanon, Jordan, and Türkiye. Several male participants stated that they intended to send their wives and children back to Syria while they remain in Egypt to earn a living and send financial support. Others expressed willingness to return only if stable employment and essential infrastructure, such as reliable electricity, were available in Syria.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #15, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [UNHCR Operational Framework for Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs \(February 2025\)](#)
- [January 2025 Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey \(RPIS\)](#)
- [UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic \(16 December\)](#)
- [Syria Situation Data Portal](#)
- [UNHCR Help Site](#)

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