

Regional Flash Update #26

Syria situation crisis

9 May 2025



Amin Mohamed Jandali, a Syrian refugee, speaking to a UNHCR staff upon returning to Syria via Nassib border crossing thanks to UNHCR facilitated transport programme, after spending over a decade in Jordan. It is estimated that a 17 per cent of the Syrian population is living with a disability. ©UNHCR Syria/Vivian Toumeh

Key Highlights

- As of 8 May 2025, UNHCR estimates that **some 481,730 Syrians** have crossed back to Syria via neighboring countries since 8 December 2024. This brings up the total of **over 842,570 Syrian individuals** that have returned to Syria since the beginning of 2024.
- As of 8 May, **1,186,147 internally displaced persons (IDPs)** have returned to their homes in **Syria**, including **337,868 returning from IDP sites** since early December 2024, according to the latest data of the IDP Task Force.
- The substantive number of refugee and IDP returns we have witnessed since 8 December indicates that many of the uprooted believe that there has been an **overall improvement** in the security situation in Syria. At the same time, recent events in the Coastal areas, in and around Damascus and in the south show that the **security situation is still an issue in certain areas of the country**.
- In Syria's coastal areas, UNHCR **provided assistance to 1,683 families in Tartous, 2,610 in Latakia, and 97 in rural Hama** in response to recent violence.
- Since the start of the transportation pilot project on 20 January 2025, **UNHCR has supported more than 2,000 refugees to return to Syria from Jordan**.

Country updates

Syria

As of 8 May 2025, UNHCR estimates that **481,730 Syrians** have crossed back into Syria from neighboring countries since 8 December 2024. This brings up the total of **over 842,570 Syrian individuals** that have returned to Syria since the beginning of 2024. This figure is calculated based on a triangulation of data from Syria, Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and beyond.

In terms of internal displacement, as of 8 May, **1,186,147 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their homes**, including **337,868 returning from IDP sites** since early December 2024, according to the latest data of the IDP Task Force.

The substantive number of refugee and IDP returns we have witnessed since 8 December are a clear indication that many of the uprooted believe that there has been an overall improvement in the security situation in Syria. Even if not all, some of the major protection related obstacles to return, such as prolonged forced military conscription are no longer there and have contributed to a greater sense of safety. At the same time, recent events in the Coastal areas, in and around Damascus and in the south show that the **security situation is still an issue in certain areas of the country**.

Between 27 April and 4 May, the security situation in Latakia and Tartous governorates was marked by **Israeli airstrikes and a series of armed incidents by unidentified armed groups**. The dire situation—particularly in areas such as Qardaha, Banyas, and Qastal Ma'f—has pushed many to seek UNHCR's assistance. Community centres served as the first point of contact for affected populations, reaching and **assisting over 10,280 individuals through 11 centres run by five local partners**. To bolster the response, UNHCR deployed both international and national protection staff from the Branch Office to Tartous, facilitating needs assessments and reinforcing operational capacity. **Protection monitoring** has so far reached 983 households, predominantly in Latakia (729) and Tartous (250), and has included 55 key informant interviews. UNHCR and partners have also scaled up their GBV response, distributing over 790 dignity kits in Tartous and Latakia. Overall, **UNHCR provided assistance to 1,683 families in Tartous, 2,610 in Latakia, and 97 in rural Hama** in response to recent violence. Over 8,700 kits remain available in Tartous for future needs. In response to the mental health needs, psychological first aid (PFA) was also provided to individuals affected from the recent hostilities in Jableh (Latakia).

A particularly concerning development was reported by partners in north-eastern rural Hama, where **land seizures have reportedly affected 12 villages**. Lands previously used for pistachio and olive cultivation have been confiscated by local authorities or committees, despite the presumed ownership of these lands by local families. As a result, an estimated 2,000 families (mostly from the Alawite minority) have been displaced to Hama, rural Homs, and Homs City. In response to these challenges, protection cluster members plan to prioritize community-based initiatives aimed at **enhancing social cohesion and reintegration**. They will also engage with legal partners and relevant authorities to assess land rights violations and advocate for the protection of displaced families affected by the land seizures. Additionally, UNHCR initiated coordination with neighborhood leaders (mukhtars) to collect data on families arriving from coastal areas to provide them with legal services.

In the Southern governorates, tensions remained high during the reporting period. Following violent clashes on 4 May, dozens of families were displaced from Dara village to areas in eastern Dar'a governorate. Displacement figures reported between 1 and 6 May totaled 406 IDP families in Sweida (2,055 individuals), 20 families in Dar'a (100 individuals), and 3,721 families in Quneitra (13,605 individuals), with the majority being women and children. **UNHCR has 7,000 kits prepositioned** in Rural Damascus to support Daraa, Sweida, Quneitra, and nearby areas. Displacement from Jaramana and Sehnaya (Rural Damascus) and within Sweida is being monitored for further

response. Outreach volunteers are conducting initial assessments of the displaced populations' urgent needs—particularly related to safety, shelter, food, water, medical care, and core relief items.

During the week, **protection monitoring** continued, with 14,089 households surveyed in order to identify the needs and guide UNHCR's response. In a multi-sectoral response to the evolving needs of returnees and host communities across Syria, UNHCR and partners continued to address basic needs through the distribution of **non-food and core relief items**, including 761 water tanks to 642 returnee families (3,579 individuals) in Deir ez-Zor and CRI kits to 341 families (1,705 individuals) in Damascus, along with support to over 200 host community families in Al-Muhajreen. In the **shelter sector**, 382 families in Aleppo were registered for assistance, while in Dar'a, 58 partially damaged apartments were assessed and 16 homes qualified for rehabilitation. To support **mental health and psychosocial well-being**, over 100 individuals affected by the recent hostilities in Jableh (Tartous) received psychological first aid, and MHPSS sessions in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa reached over 200 people, including children with disabilities and elderly individuals under the Inclusive Care Programme. **Child protection** efforts included the launch of a Homework Café in Tartous for 50 students, remedial education for more than 110 children in Deir ez-Zor, and Mine Risk Education sessions reaching over 100 children in Dar'a, Al-Hasakeh, and Deir ez-Zor. Additionally, in response to the **legal needs**, 56 legal awareness sessions and over 130 individual consultations were conducted across eight governorates, benefiting more than 672 individuals, with a focus on **civil documentation, family law, and housing, land, and property (HLP) rights**.

Furthermore, the recently launched **SyrialsHome platform** – aimed at supporting returnees by offering timely, accurate, and relevant information to help them make safe, voluntary, and informed decisions about returning to Syria – **recorded 1,200 visits** during the week. The highest number of visitors came from Lebanon, followed by Egypt, Türkiye, Syria, and Jordan.

Türkiye

The **processing of voluntary returns** continued in provinces and at five border crossings: Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Kessab, Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salama, Karkamış/Jarablus and Akçakale/Tel Abyad. As of 7 May, Çobanbey/Al Rai, Zeytindalı/Jinderes and Yayladağı/Kessab are open for processing go-and-see visits.

Currently, **UNHCR monitors returns** in 16 provinces and at Cilvegözü/Bab al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Kessab, Öncüpınar/Bab al-Salama, Karkamış/Jarablus border crossings in the southeast, as well as at Istanbul Airport. UNHCR is also ready for monitoring at Sabiha Gökçen Airport in Istanbul and Ankara Esenboğa Airport as soon as the announced flights start.

Returnees represent a broad spectrum of profiles, including single individuals and a considerable number of women returning without family members. Adults of working age comprise the largest share, with men slightly outnumbering women, while children and older individuals are also represented.

Motivations for return remain consistent with past trends. Many cite changes in the political and security environment in Syria, as well as the wish to reunite with family or attend family-related events. Some also point to emotional reasons, such as homesickness, while others refer to practical factors, including the deportation of a spouse, property-related issues, or the search for work.

The majority of returnees aim to resettle in their province of origin. The presence of family members in the area, damage or inaccessibility of property elsewhere, improved safety, and opportunities for assistance or work are among the most common reasons influencing destination choices. However, a number of returnees are unable to return to their original homes due to destroyed or confiscated property, displacement of family, poor infrastructure, or ongoing insecurity.

Property ownership remains a relevant factor, with some returnees reporting ownership or close family ties to properties. While many claim to have valid documentation, a portion still lack official

papers, particularly those related to civil status such as marriage, birth, or military service. Registration of life events during displacement has been uneven, with lower rates of documented marriages and divorces compared to births and deaths.

Upon return to Syria, many expect to be without a steady income and plan to seek employment, mostly in informal sectors or with support from family and community networks.

Access to basic services in areas of return is inconsistent. While some report services being available, others experience partial or no access, and some are unaware of what is available. This variability highlights the ongoing need for investment in return areas to support safe, dignified, and sustainable voluntary returns.

Lebanon

As of 2 May, the Baalbek Disaster Risk Management (DRM) in the Bekaa is reporting **approximately 79,902 arrivals from Syria since 8 December** (a decrease from 25 April), including approximately 22,921 arrivals in Baalbek Governorate, North Bekaa, residing in 171 informal collective shelters (CS), and approximately 56,981 residing in the community.

The hostilities in the Tartous, Latakia, Homs, and Hama Governorates of Syria in early March continue to displace people into the North and Akkar Governorates, **reaching 36,787 people** with further arrivals expected. Newly arrived refugees are now staying across 30 villages in Akkar. Local authority official figures from Disaster Risk Management (DRM) cite 25,278 individuals (5,282 families, including 175 Lebanese families) as of 2 May in Akkar. The highest concentrations are in Massaaoudiye (11,457 individuals), Hissa (1,878 individuals), Abboudieh (1,706 individuals), and Tall Bireh (1,608 individuals). Most new arrivals are still being generously hosted by local communities, however the situation in the villages with the largest population remains precarious due to lack of space to accommodate people.

Jordan

On 6 May, Royal Jordanian Airlines [resumed](#) direct flights between Amman and Aleppo. Flights will operate every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

As of 3 May, **nearly 62,500 refugees registered with UNHCR have returned from Jordan to Syria since 8 December 2024**, with a total of over 10,500 returning in April. The average daily number of refugee returnees remained similar to the previous week with an average of 380 refugees returning each day.

Demographics of returnees remained largely unchanged from previous weeks, with women and girls representing around 46 per cent of the total refugee returnees. Children accounted for around 41 per cent, and men of military age (18-40 years old) made up around 23 per cent of overall returns. The vast majority of refugees continue to return from host communities, primarily from Amman and Irbid. More details about the numbers and profile of returnees are available on [UNHCR Jordan's returns dashboard](#).

On 6-8 May, **UNHCR facilitated transportation for 186 refugees from Amman and Azraq camp**. Overall, since the start of the transportation pilot project on 20 January 2025, UNHCR has supported more than 2,000 refugees to return to Syria. Before departure, in-person interviews are conducted to ensure that returns are voluntary and well-informed, with counselling and information provided on available services inside Syria. The return process is closely coordinated with the UNHCR operation in Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination. During the reporting period, many

families who originally expressed an interest to return during the week stated that they would postpone their departure due to the ongoing insecurity in the south of Damascus.

UNHCR finalised an **analysis of interviews conducted with 900 refugee returnees from camps and communities**, who accessed UNHCR's facilitated transportation pilot project during its first three months of operation, from 20 January to 20 April. Across both camps and communities, an increasing share of refugees utilizing UNHCR's transportation opted to return to Homs - rising from 54 per cent in the first month to 63 per cent by the end of the reporting period. Refugees commonly cited the governorate's distance from the border as a primary reason for seeking UNHCR-facilitated transportation. In contrast, those returning to closer destinations like Dara'a were less likely to rely on the pilot project, as travel could be arranged more easily without direct support. In communities, most of those who used UNHCR transportation were from Amman, while in the camps, nearly all facilitated returns originated from Azraq. A smaller number of refugees used facilitated transportation from Zaatari, possibly due to its closer proximity to the Syrian border. In both camps and communities, most returnees planned to travel as family units. Notably, a significant difference emerged in the number of people planning to return alone: just 3 per cent in urban areas, compared to 31 per cent in camps.

When asked about motivation to return, nearly 68 per cent of refugees in communities stated that the improvement in the security situation in Syria was a key driver for their return. However, nearly half of respondents stated that their decision to return was influenced by the problems they were facing in Jordan. In camps, the main reason cited for return was to reunite with relatives (37 per cent), an improved security situation in Syria (29 per cent) and the fact that the returnees no longer wished to live as a refugee in Jordan.

Most refugees also reported having relatives living in Syria who would support their reintegration. Nearly all of those with relatives also indicated that they would rely on their relatives for initial housing and assistance after their arrival. The pilot phase of the transportation initiative has now ended, and UNHCR will move into a longer-term arrangement for bus services.

Since 8 December 2024 and until the end of March 2025, **UNHCR conducted 36 information sessions and focus group discussions, reaching over 1,000 refugees**. Due to the sessions being held during working hours, approximately 71 per cent of the participants were women. At nearly all sessions participants cited safety and security inside Syria as the primary factor influencing their decisions to return. Concerns over the security situation in Syria notably increased in February and March, as compared to December in January, especially among respondents originating from the south of Syria.

Iraq

Between 8 December 2024 and 1 May 2025, **over 15,500 Syrians returned from Iraq to Syria, including some 1,400 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR**. This includes approximately 6,800 Syrians who have returned through Peshkhabour border crossing point and another 8,600 through Al-Qaim border crossing.

Over the past week, 90 registered Syrian refugees returned from Iraq through Peshkhabour border crossing point. No registered refugees and asylum-seekers returned through Al-Qaim border crossing point during the reporting period. Most of the registered Syrians returned to Al-Hasakeh, followed by Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa. The improved security situation in Syria, reuniting with family, avoiding overstay fines in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and lack of livelihood opportunities are the most common reasons Syrians report for their return.

Meanwhile, **UNHCR continued to observe arrivals from Syria to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq**, mainly from Al-Hasakeh and Aleppo. Between 27 April and 1 May, 530 individuals arrived through Peshkhabour border crossing point. Family visits, returning from visits to Syria, family reunification, or transiting through the Kurdistan Region to other destinations were indicated as the main reasons for arrivals, with most expressing their intentions to return to Syria following their visit. Only three of the 28 households interviewed by UNHCR's partner, Harikar, on arrival to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq through Peshkhabour border crossing, expressed their intention to register with UNHCR in Iraq.

Egypt

As of 5 May 2025, **approximately 135,920 Syrian refugees are registered in Egypt, around 810 fewer than the previous week**. Syrian refugees now account for approximately 14.1% of the total refugee population in the country.

Since the regime change in Syria, there has been a significant increase in Syrians approaching UNHCR in Cairo and Alexandria to request the closure of their asylum cases. As of 5 May 2025, **some 9,345 closure requests involving over 19,718 individuals** were submitted since 8 December 2024, averaging 94 requests per day – compared to just seven per day in November 2024. In addition, 12,520 individuals have been closed as spontaneous departures, reflecting a growing perception among many Syrians that return may now be viable.

On 3 May, the UNHCR Representative to Egypt and to the League of Arab States (LAS) participated in the [Strategic Dialogue](#) between UN Regional Directors based in Egypt and the Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty. The Foreign Minister reaffirmed Egypt's strong commitment to multilateralism, emphasizing that current global tensions call for renewed collective efforts to strengthen multilateral cooperation. Minister Abdelatty also expressed concern over funding shortfalls and their impact on the UN's operational capacity, while reiterating Egypt's willingness to serve as a regional hub for the UN.

Since the 17 April, when UNHCR hosted a [live Facebook session](#) to explain the various changes to the residency permit process for refugees and asylum-seekers, the **video garnered 175,000 views** and has been shared 341 times across various Facebook groups and pages, **helping refugees access critical information**. It is now the most viewed live session since UNHCR began hosting live videos in 2021. The high level of engagement contributed to a significant boost in reach – UNHCR's Arabic Facebook page recorded 1.6 million views in April, marking a 341% increase compared to March. Additionally, UNHCR's Help website received 210,000 visits in April, ranking it as the third most-visited Help site globally.

Useful links

- [Regional Flash Update #25, Syria Situation Crisis](#)
- [UNHCR Operational Framework for Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs](#)
- [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](#)

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its operations in the Middle East in 2025, including:

Australia | Austria | Belgium | Canada | Central Emergency Response Fund | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Luxembourg | Malta | Netherlands | Norway | Other private donors | Poland | Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | Syrian Humanitarian Fund | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

CONTACTS

UNHCR Syria

SYRIAreporting@unhcr.org

For more information, please visit:

[UNHCR Global Focus – Syria Situation](#)