

FC Barcelona Foundation, UNHCR, and Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports Collaborate to Promote Social Cohesion

UNHCR and the Turkish Ministry of Youth and Sports have formed a unique partnership with the FC Barcelona Foundation since 2023 to support refugee and host community youth through sports initiatives in Türkiye.



A training for coaches in Denizli was organized in partnership with the FC Barcelona Foundation from 16 to 18 July.

Highlights

- On 2 July, Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz [announced](#) that since 8 December 2024, 316,000 Syrians have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria. Mr. Yılmaz informed that the return process has accelerated with the end of the school year on 20 June. He also asserted that the number of voluntary returns since 2017 has surpassed one million. According to the [registration figures](#) of the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) as of 17 July, 2,605,508 Syrians live in Türkiye under Temporary Protection.
- From 16 to 18 July, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports (PDoYS), conducted a two-and-a-half-day training in Denizli within the scope of the FC Barcelona Sports Project. The training covered child protection components and [SportNet](#), a methodology developed by the FC Barcelona Foundation, which uses sport as a tool for social integration to improve the lives of children and young people living in vulnerable contexts. A total of twenty-one coaches participated in the training, including nine who will be actively engaged in the project. SportNet training was jointly delivered by UNHCR and accredited Ministry of Youth and Sports staff who completed the Training of Trainers program in Barcelona last year. UNHCR facilitated the child protection session. Coaches demonstrated active engagement throughout the sessions. UNHCR also paid a courtesy visit to the Head of PDoYS, who affirmed their commitment to the project. Another round of this training was held in İzmir from 21 to 23 July.

Recent Developments

National

On 30 June, PMM [announced](#) streamlined procedures for Syrian nationals crossing Türkiye's land borders, effective 1 July 2025. These procedures include eased provisions for dual nationals, Syrian spouses of Turkish citizens, and vehicle crossings, with specific documentation and processing requirements in place. The provision for go-and-see visits has not been extended beyond 1 July. However, those who left for go-and-see visits can re-enter Türkiye until 1 August.

On 9 July, a new voluntary return processing centre became operational at the Cilvegözü (Bab Al-Hawa) border crossing in Hatay. This newly established centre is expected to simplify reception procedures for Syrian refugees approaching for voluntary repatriation, while ensuring greater confidentiality for individuals undergoing interviews. UNHCR is present at the centre to monitor and confirm the voluntary nature of the returns.

In July, following a request from the Gaziantep Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) for urgent improvements to water infrastructure at the Karkamış border crossing voluntary return processing centre, UNHCR conducted a technical assessment of the site. In collaboration with the local NGO Yesdibasak, a new water tank was installed, and the existing water network was extended to ensure water supply for sanitation and hygiene. As part of UNHCR's continued support in Türkiye, this intervention is intended to help improve conditions at the processing centre at the border where voluntary return procedures are conducted in a safe, dignified, and humane manner.



The newly installed water supply system at Karkamış border crossing voluntary return processing centre.

Regional

At the [51st Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation \(OIC\)](#) held in Istanbul from 21 to 22 June, Türkiye's pivotal role in facilitating humanitarian aid to Syria and support to Syrian refugees, together with other Syrian refugee-hosting countries, was commended. The Members also called for sustained cooperation with UNHCR and renewed efforts toward Syria's stability and the return of refugees.

On 10 July, Turkey's Deputy Minister of National Education visited Syria and [signed](#) an "Education Cooperation Protocol" to enhance collaboration on vocational training, teacher education, school rehabilitation, and educational access for Syrian youth.

Global

On 18 July, UNHCR published the report [On the Brink: The Devastating Toll of Aid Cuts on People Forced to Flee](#). According to this report, following major cuts to humanitarian budgets, up to 11.6 million refugees and others forced to flee risk losing access to direct humanitarian assistance from UNHCR this year. The figure represents about one-third of those reached by the organization last year. Behind these numbers are real lives, hanging in the balance. Families are seeing the support they relied on vanish, forced to choose between feeding their children, buying medicines, or paying rent, while hope for a better future slips out of sight.



Protection-Assistance & Advocacy

Protection and Access to Services

In June, UNHCR continued to provide in-kind assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees. A total of **173 individuals** were referred to **medical support**, primarily those with inactive health insurance who were facing severe health conditions. In such cases, medical referrals were made to the UNHCR-contracted clinic to ensure dedicated and timely medical care. A total of **1,018 individuals** were referred for **transportation assistance** to attend resettlement interviews.

In May, as per the data received from the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS), primarily with the help of 157 staff and other assistance provided by UNHCR to Social Service Centres across 28 provinces, 1,006 new refugees accessed services for the first time. A total of 235 individuals received counselling, while 2,113 people received other services, including referrals to internal and external institutions, informational and social activities, awareness-raising sessions, and socio-economic support.

Furthermore, women's guesthouses and Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres (ŞÖNİM) across 21 provinces have been strengthened with the support of 36 staff members funded by UNHCR. UNHCR supported six day-care and rehabilitation centres in five provinces through various means, including the deployment of six dedicated staff. Moreover, UNHCR funded 85 staff in childcare institutions across 27 provinces, assisting 508 refugee children. Due to ongoing funding constraints, the UNHCR-funded human resource-related support to the MoFSS will phase out by July 2025, although thousands of vulnerable people will still require assistance.

Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

From 16 to 18 June, UNHCR organised a workshop on Temporary Protection Procedures in Balıkesir for a total of 92 participants from PMM and its provincial directorates. The workshop focused on assessing the implementation of temporary protection in Türkiye, voluntary return procedures, go-and-see visits, and PMM's ongoing legislative process regarding temporary protection. UNHCR contributed to the discussions by sharing its observations and analyses on the implementation of the Temporary Protection Regulation, with a focus on access to registration, issuance of documentation, including newborn registration, as well as data updates and address registry processes, and voluntary return.

From 24 to 25 June, UNHCR conducted a workshop in Ankara for 56 Protection Desk personnel from various provinces and PMM staff. During the workshop, UNHCR presented the core principles of child protection and prevention and response mechanisms. The participants also discussed the steps for identifying persons with specific needs, ensuring their access to protection, and good practices based on the case samples presented at the workshop.

Legal Aid and Legal Assistance

UNHCR, in partnership with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (UTBA), continued its support to six legal clinics (LCs) to provide legal assistance and legal counselling services to refugees and asylum-seekers in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Van, Hatay, Kilis and Malatya, including in Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs) and Removal Centres (RCs). So far in 2025, these six LCs have provided legal assistance to **3,834** refugees and asylum-seekers (including **735** individuals in removal centres and temporary accommodation centres) for **5,711** cases. Most of the cases were related to civil law matters, exit and re-entry procedures, detention, access to rights, family reunification, re-issuing identity cards, queries related to resettlement and civil law, and consumer and rent laws. In addition, the legal clinics reached out to nearly a thousand people, including refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, through awareness-raising sessions.



Support for Solutions

Voluntary Returns

Voluntary returns of Syrians from Türkiye continue to be processed in provinces, airports, and land-border crossings. UNHCR actively monitors the procedures through its presence in 21 provinces and six border crossings in the southeast, as well as at airports in İstanbul and Ankara. UNHCR also conducts monitoring at the Adana Sarıçam Temporary Accommodation Centre on an *ad hoc* basis, when informed and invited by PDMM.

In response to the increasing number of Syrians opting to return to Syria during evening hours, UNHCR has initiated efforts to expand the coverage of voluntary return interviews to night-time departures. Preliminary observations indicate that many returnees prefer evening departures to avoid daytime crowds and elevated temperatures during the summer period.

On 2 July, UNHCR conducted the first round of a series of information sessions on voluntary return-related topics for operational and implementing partners, including NGOs. Approximately 180 participants attended the first online session, which aimed to provide updates on recent developments, clarify existing procedures, and gather partner observations on trends in voluntary return. UNHCR delivered a presentation on the voluntary return framework, current procedural steps, and highlights from the latest regional update. During the session, partners shared insights from the field regarding voluntary return dynamics, and during the Q&A session, raised questions on return-related practices and challenges. The second round was organized on 16 July and was attended by over one hundred participants.

Resettlement

In 2025, UNHCR has submitted 2,567 cases for resettlement to 14 countries, including Canada, Australia, France and Norway. During the same period, 1,839 refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq have departed Türkiye for resettlement, including to Australia, Canada, and France.

Livelihoods

On 26 June, UNHCR met with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to explore potential collaboration on refugee economic inclusion in Türkiye. Discussions focused on unlocking private sector financing for refugee-owned or refugee-hiring businesses, particularly in light of the declining presence of Syrian labour due to voluntary returns and limited access to banking services. EBRD highlighted the need for strong banking incentive structures, such as risk-sharing tools and subsidies, to encourage Partner Financial Institutions to engage in advocacy.

Inter-Agency Coordination

In June, UNHCR shared the analysis of the UNHCR-led Inter-Agency Community Pulse survey with partners. The survey was conducted by seven 3RP partners and reached 404 individuals across 26 provinces using a stratified phone-based approach. The survey explored a range of themes, including access to rights and services in Türkiye, protection risks, socio-economic conditions, and perspectives on return to Syria. Around **10 per cent** of the respondents intend to return within the next 12 months. An additional **eight per cent** wish to return within the next five years. **Twelve per cent** are considering returning one day, and **58 per cent** of respondents stated they do not intend to return to Syria.

Financial information (as of 30 June 2025)

Financial requirements

\$ 280 M

Funding gap 77%
\$ 215.78 M



Funded 23%
\$ 64.22 M

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UNHCR is also grateful for the generous contributions from the private sector and individuals.

For more details: [UNHCR Türkiye Funding Update – 30 June 2025](#).

