

# Global Zero Waste Forum: UNHCR Affirms its Continued Efforts to Integrate Waste Management into Protection and Resilience Planning.

For UNHCR, waste management is not only an environmental or municipal responsibility, but also a protection, public health, and livelihoods intervention that directly affects refugees and host communities. It promotes integrated solutions that reduce environmental and health risks.



UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi at the Global Zero Waste Forum held in Istanbul from 17 to 19 October.

## Highlights

- According to the latest figures shared by the Minister of Interior on [social media](#), by the end of October, **550,000** Syrians have voluntarily returned from Türkiye to Syria since the fall of the Assad regime on 8 December 2024. During the same period, UNHCR monitored and interviewed 72 per cent of all recorded returns in 22 provinces, at six border crossings and three airports.
- UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi participated in the [Global Zero Waste Forum](#) held in Istanbul from 17 to 19 October. The forum was organized under the auspices of Turkish First Lady Emine Erdoğan, in partnership with the Zero Waste Foundation and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change. On 18 October, Ms. Li Rosi joined a UN panel on “Zero Waste Initiatives and Inclusive and Sustainable Growth,” which explored how zero-waste principles contribute to Türkiye’s circular economy and inclusive development. In her intervention, Ms. Li Rosi highlighted UNHCR’s local and global initiatives supporting municipal waste management, green livelihoods, and recycling in Temporary Accommodation Centres.
- On 24 October 2025, the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) and UNHCR [signed a Protocol on Personal Data Transfer](#). The protocol, the first of its kind in Türkiye, aims to ensure secured and effective implementation of activities related to resettlement, cash assistance, and other related interventions within the scope of the EU-funded “Project on Strengthening of National Voluntary Return Mechanisms for Voluntary, Safe, Dignified and Orderly Returns to Syria”.

# Recent Developments

## National

As part of a decongestion exercise, the closure process of temporary accommodation centres (TACs) and container sites for Syrian refugees across the south-east of Türkiye continued. Among the 11 TACs in the south-east, six have either been closed or are currently in the process of closure, while the Sarıçam TAC in Adana, Nizip TAC in Gaziantep, Islahiye-2 TAC in Gaziantep, Elbeyli TAC in Kilis and Harran TAC in Şanlıurfa are to remain operational. Persons with specific needs, including those with disabilities or severe medical conditions, as well as their family members, may be referred to the Sarıçam (Adana) TAC, which **continues to host refugees with specific needs** and currently accommodates approximately 2,900 individuals, with almost 60 per cent of the 1,224 UNHCR-provided containers occupied. All other individuals may either relocate to any province of their choice, including Istanbul (excluding neighborhoods closed for registration) and the remaining 80 provinces without neighborhood restrictions, or stay in the same province by registering an address, including in neighborhoods closed for registration. Individuals wishing to return to Syria voluntarily may also be processed accordingly. Out of the 19 container sites<sup>1</sup> in the south-east of Türkiye, 15 are planned for closure, of which 10 have already been closed. Since the closure of the TACs began in June, UNHCR has actively engaged with relevant authorities and advocated for the protection and support of refugees impacted by the process.

## Regional

Since 8 December 2024, 1,208,802 Syrian individuals have returned to Syria from neighbouring countries. Most returnees are going from Türkiye, followed by Lebanon and Jordan, with smaller numbers from Iraq, Egypt and beyond the region. At the same time, over 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have returned to their places of origin or intended return inside Syria, including more than one million departing from IDP sites in the north of the country. As winter sets in, UNHCR has scaled up its winterization response across Syria, reaching displaced and returnee families with essential non-food items and winter kits, including blankets, heaters, mattresses, and clothing, to help them withstand the harsh weather conditions. These efforts are part of UNHCR's broader strategy to ensure vulnerable populations remain safe, warm, and protected during the winter months, despite ongoing displacement, limited shelter conditions, and rising living costs.

## Global

According to UNHCR's [Mid-Year Trends 2025](#) report, at the end of June 2025, the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide was estimated at 117.3 million, 5 per cent fewer than at the end of 2024. **Global displacement has declined for the first time in years**, a sign that solutions are possible. Türkiye continues to be among the top five countries that generously host the most significant number of refugees.

Having the opportunity to work and earn a living is one of the most effective ways displaced people can rebuild their lives with dignity. Refugees face many constraints that limit their ability to sell their products to external markets. Legal restrictions, isolation, limited design knowledge, and limited access to basic business support services are significant obstacles. As a result, refugees are often left out of the global artisan economy. To address these challenges globally, UNHCR established [MADE51](#) to create that opportunity through the handmade sector. Through MADE51's unique ecosystem model, UNHCR is making market connections and creating sustainable livelihoods for the forcibly displaced. UNHCR is also engaging with local social enterprises in Türkiye to become part of the MADE51 initiative. As the holiday season approaches, UNHCR encourages all partners to explore the [MADE51 products](#) available and learn the stories behind them.



MADE51, UNHCR's initiative that creates livelihood opportunities for displaced people.

<sup>1</sup> The container sites not only host Syrian refugees but also Turkish citizens. The closures affect both communities equally.



# Protection-Assistance & Advocacy

## Protection and Access to Services

In October, in partnership with the [FC Barcelona Foundation](#), UNHCR delivered sports materials to Provincial Directorates of Youth and Sports in Denizli, İzmir, and Manisa. In addition, UNHCR conducted focus group discussions with 32 children benefiting from sports courses. İzmir showed substantial progress in promoting social cohesion, with mixed groups of Turkish and Syrian children playing together. Manisa also presented a diverse profile, including refugee children from Syria, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan. Across all provinces, children expressed the desire to continue attending the courses. Furthermore, UNHCR conducted three information sessions with the parents of the beneficiary children in İzmir, Manisa and Denizli.



*Children participating in the sports courses.*

From January to September 2025, UNHCR counselled and intervened in **6,327 cases** involving administrative detention and negative government decisions on asylum applications of people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Of these, 1,910 were related to queries and counselling regarding administrative detention and access to the national asylum procedures in Türkiye. The remaining 4,417 were cases that received negative government decisions (3,020 rejection of asylum applications, 1,084 implicit withdrawals of asylum applications/termination of assessments due to noncompliance with the regulations, such as failure to appear before the authorities for an interview on three consecutive scheduled dates, and 313 deportation orders).

In September 2025, UNHCR and partners delivered **785** core relief items, including baby food, water, hygiene products, and clothing for nearly **650** individuals through the border authorities and Gendarmerie (law enforcement force under the Ministry of Interior) in İzmir, Balıkesir, and Muğla to address the basic needs of individuals who were rescued. However, due to funding constraints, this assistance will be phased out once the current stock is exhausted.

## Access to Territory and Asylum Procedures

Within the scope of the Norway-funded “Refugees’ Access to Asylum and Protection: Enhancing the Capacity of the National Asylum Institution” project, UNHCR organized a workshop from 23 to 25 September 2025, in Antalya on International Protection Procedures with the participation of 10 PMM and 52 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) staff from 48 provinces. The workshop covered European Union (EU) and Turkish practices, recent legal amendments, registration and health insurance procedures, along with other topics. It also provided a platform for caseworkers to share experiences and exchange practical insights, strengthening peer learning across provinces.

## Legal Aid and Legal Assistance

From 30 to 31 October, within the scope of the EU-funded project on voluntary return, UNHCR organized a “Legal Aid Workshop for Persons Voluntarily Returning to Syria” in Ankara, bringing together 40 participants from PMM, PDMMs, and Bar Associations to exchange experiences on legal aid delivery, field challenges, and potential solutions.

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). From January to September 2025, these six LCs provided legal assistance to **5,985** refugees and asylum-seekers (including **1,112** individuals in RCs and TACs) for **9,283** cases. In addition, from January to September 2025, the legal clinics reached out to **1,361** people, including refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, through awareness-raising sessions.





# Support for Solutions

## Voluntary Returns

The cash assistance for voluntary return under “Strengthening national mechanisms for voluntary, safe, dignified and orderly returns to Syria” programme was launched nationwide on 27 October. The programme, funded by the EU and implemented in partnership with PMM, is extending assistance in all 81 provinces and targeting beneficiaries of the Social Safety Net (SSN), Complementary SSN, and people with specific needs who expressed an intention to return.

## Social Cohesion

On 22 October, UNHCR took part in the Youth Wiki Information Day and Workshop organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Ahead of the event, UNHCR provided written feedback stressing the importance of including refugee youth in the policy framework. During the discussions, UNHCR emphasized the need to mention young people under international and temporary protection explicitly, improve access to employment opportunities, enhance support schemes benefiting both refugee and host community youth, and reflect ongoing partnerships with the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, the Olympic Refugee Foundation, the Barcelona Project, and ICT initiatives in earthquake-affected youth centres.

## Education, Livelihoods, and Economic Inclusion

On 6 October, UNHCR met with academics from Istanbul University, Bahçeşehir University, and Harran University and advocated to facilitate access to higher education for international students, including those under international and temporary protection. During the meeting, the participating academics expressed their willingness to explore practical modalities and liaise with their respective university managements to assess the feasibility of implementing such a policy at the beginning of the next academic semester. UNHCR will maintain close communication with the academics to support follow-up discussions.

## Inter-Agency Coordination

In October, UNHCR shared the latest Regional Refugee and Resilience (3RP) 2026 planning materials with all 3RP coordinators, including the Thematic Guidance for Planning Consultations, the updated planning timeline, and the deadlines table outlining key milestones. According to the schedule, the final appeal and planning figures for 2026 would be submitted by the end of November 2025, and the 3RP 2026 Türkiye Chapter would be launched in February 2026.

## External Relations

On 20 October, a signing ceremony was held at UNHCR Türkiye premises to formalize the Republic of Korea's contribution of USD 3 million under the 2025 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). This contribution, the largest from Korea to UNHCR Türkiye to date, will help sustain several activities, including strengthening protection procedures, improving referrals to national services, and advancing socio-economic inclusion efforts for refugees.



Korean Ambassador H.E. Yeondoo Jeong and UNHCR Representative Ms. Angela Li Rosi at the signing ceremony.

### Funding Information

UNHCR is grateful for generous contributions from its donors, who have provided both earmarked and flexible funding to support its operations in Türkiye (as of 31 August 2025).

### US\$ 280 million

UNHCR requested for the operation in Türkiye for 2025.

