

## Operational update

October 2025



At Lebanon's border, Syrian families continue to return home after years in exile. Facilitated under UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme, these movements demonstrate the determination of refugees to rebuild their lives. In coordination with the Government of Lebanon and partners, UNHCR ensures that all returns are safe, voluntary, and dignified. ©UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

## Operational context

- Lebanon continued to witness repeated ceasefire violations and cross-border strikes, mainly in the South and parts of the Bekaa. The [UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) has verified at least 127 civilian deaths in Israeli strikes on Lebanon since the ceasefire, alongside damage to homes, schools, health centres and other essential infrastructure. The [UN Secretary-General](#) and [UNIFIL](#) warned of rising risks of escalation and urged all parties to respect the ceasefire and exercise maximum restraint.
- The Government of Lebanon continued efforts to advance fiscal, administrative and structural reforms, while international partners reiterated that demonstrable progress on governance, transparency and accountability remains essential for renewed financial support.
- Lebanon continues to host the highest number of refugees per capita globally, with an estimated 1.2 million Syrians known to UNHCR, including 612,005 refugees registered before the Government's suspension in 2015. Since 8 December 2024, an additional [106,491 Syrians have arrived in three waves](#), settling primarily in Akkar, Baalbek-Hermel, Bekaa, and North governorates. As of end-October, Lebanon also hosts 11,003 refugees and asylum seekers of other nationalities.
- The [Q3 Protection Monitoring](#) and preliminary data from the 2025 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrians Refugees (VASyR) show that Syrian refugees continue to face acute vulnerabilities, with only 18% of individuals aged 15 and above holding legal residency and 60% of households living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB). Recently arrived Syrians face heightened risks linked to irregular entry, lack of documentation, limited access to dignified accommodation and targeted humanitarian assistance, and elevated psychosocial distress, leaving them particularly exposed to protection concerns.
- Since July, UNHCR continues to facilitate the voluntary return of Syrian refugees through the Self-Organized Voluntary Return Programme, in line with the Government's return policy. [By end of October, 32,093 Syrians had been supported to return home, while more are in the process.](#) As of end-October, UNHCR has inactivated 335,749 Syrians from its records, due to confirmed or presumed returns.
- The sharp funding reductions at the beginning of 2025 has forced UNHCR to reduce the scope or phase out critical programmes, such as secondary healthcare, shelter support and elements of basic assistance, significantly limiting support to vulnerable households. By the end of October, UNHCR is [only 26% of requirements funded](#).

## Key Population figures

**1.2M Syrians known to UNHCR**

the most vulnerable of whom need protection and assistance

**335,749 Syrians** inactivated by UNHCR Lebanon due to known or presumed returns in 2025

**106,491 Syrians** estimated arrivals since December 2024

**112,889 Syrians**

having expressed interest in the return programme

**32,093 individuals (6,547 families)** supported to voluntarily return

\* Registration as of end of October 2025.

\*\* UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been suspended since May 2015 through a decision by the Government of Lebanon.

\*\*\*The Lebanon Response Plan refers to 1.3 million Syrians in Lebanon including those registered with UNHCR.

## HIGHLIGHTS

UNHCR Lebanon welcomed its new Representative, Ms. [Karolina Lindholm Billing](#), who presented her credentials to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 17 October.

Ms. [Lindholm Billing](#) brings over 25 years of experience with UNHCR, most recently serving as Representative in Ukraine since 2021, and previously as Deputy Representative in Lebanon between 2017 and 2021.

Since her arrival in mid-October, Ms. Lindholm Billing has held introductory meetings with a range of Government and Embassy partners as well as with the heads of UNHCR's national and international NGO partners to discuss key areas of mutual collaboration.

During her first week in the role, Ms. Lindholm Billing undertook a [field mission to the Arida border crossing](#), where she witnessed Syrian families voluntarily returning home after years in exile under UNHCR's Self-Organized Voluntary Return Programme. The Representative also met with groups of [Syrian refugees returning through the Masnaa border crossing](#) with the Minister of Social Affairs and IOM's Head of Office.

On 31 October, the Swiss Ambassador to Lebanon and Chargé d' Affaires to Syria and the Head of Cooperation, together with the UNHCR Representative, [met with newly arrive and with long-staying refugees](#) in the Bekaa to hear about their return intentions and conditions of stay, as well as challenges related to legal status, residency and freedom of movement.

In October, UNHCR continued counselling and supporting refugees who have decided to return to Syria. After completing the hiring and onboarding process, compared with September, [UNHCR's processing capacity increased by 85%](#).

By month's end, [32,093 individuals \(6,547 families\) had been supported to repatriate and received the return cash assistance, while another 112,889 individuals \(21,000 cases\) have contacted UNHCR to express interest in return](#). Those who have been assisted to return so far have mainly been staying in the Bekaa, Baalbek and Hermel (36%), the North and Akkar (34%), and Beirut and Mount Lebanon (23%), while Homs remains the most common destination. Most (95%) of the UNHCR-supported refugees opt to self-organize their returns through Arida, Qaa, and Masnaa border points, while some 5% opted for the organized program, with transportation arranged by and IOM.

Since July to end of October, [UNHCR and IOM have facilitated seven organized return movements of 1,476 people](#), with another seven scheduled until the end of the year.

Since January 2025, [UNHCR has inactivated 335,749 Syrian refugees from its records due to confirmed or presumed returns](#), including 303,656 spontaneous returnees, reflecting the continued scale of movements back to Syria.

## UNHCR PRESENCE IN LEBANON



## COORDINATION & WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Since 2024, Lebanon has been operating under the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP), a two-year humanitarian–stabilization framework co-led by the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations. Building on the LCRP and 3RP, the LRP provides a unified platform to respond to the most critical protection and assistance needs of displaced Syrians, including new arrivals, alongside vulnerable Lebanese. A dedicated Returns Chapter, co-led by UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Affairs, guides support for voluntary repatriation in line with protection principles. UNHCR leads the Protection, Shelter, and Basic Assistance sectors, co-leads the GBV sub-sector and Cash Working Group, and chairs the Durable Solutions Working Group on return.

UNHCR has been present in Lebanon since 1962, and maintains a country office in Beirut and field offices in Beirut, Tripoli and Zahle. In 2025, it is working with 21 partners to implement protection and humanitarian assistance activities. UNHCR also works closely with national institutions to strengthen response capacity and ensure complementarity with government efforts. However, with resources increasingly constrained, its ability to sustain these programmes will depend on urgent donor support. Without renewed commitment, the impact on vulnerable refugees and host communities amid Lebanon's fragile context will be immense.



## PROTECTION

- Since 8 December 2024, some [106,491 Syrians are known to have arrived to Lebanon in, largely, three different waves \(December 2024, March 2025 and mid-2025\)](#). The majority are concentrated in the Bekaa and Baalbek-El Hermel (66,015) and in Akkar and the North (29,700), while some 10,776 have reported staying in other areas, including Beirut and the South. Syrians who have arrived since unrest in the coastal areas in March 2025 are staying across the country. UNHCR and partners continue to provide in-kind assistance, such as blankets, as well as access to emergency health. A critical need among the recent arrivals is access to information on support available and to documentation to enable freedom of movement, as well as to dignified accommodation and targeted assistance. [To be able to reach people, Mobile Information Desks jointly operated by UNHCR partners and the Ministry of Social Affairs](#) provide counselling to newly arrived Syrian refugees across seven locations in the North and Akkar, reaching over 2,400 individuals in October. These activities offered information on available services and facilitated referrals to protection and assistance programmes.
- The [Q3 Protection Monitoring](#) and preliminary data from the 2025 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrians Refugees (VASyR) indicate that [lack of legal residency and gaps in civil documentation remain major obstacles for refugees in Lebanon](#), often preventing access to services, restricting movement, and increasing exposure to protection risks. With the overwhelming majority of households living below minimum expenditure levels (60%) and many unable to cover administrative costs, access to documentation remains out of reach for most, contributing to the very low rate of valid residency among individuals aged 15 and above (18%). To help address these barriers, UNHCR and partners have provided legal counselling, assistance and representation to 48,272 individuals between January and October 2025, supporting refugees to obtain essential documents and navigate procedures related to legal stay and civil registration.
- [Communication tools to support refugees are at the heart of the refugee response in Lebanon](#). UNHCR's National Call Centre remains a primary channel of communication and accountability, receiving 1,251,391 calls between January and October. The majority of queries relate to legal procedures, cash assistance, and registration, demonstrating the continued need for accessible and reliable information services nationwide.
- Refugees in Lebanon continue to face difficult living conditions, [with 60% of households living below the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket and unable to meet basic needs](#). Certain groups—such as women at risk, children, older persons and persons with disabilities—require focused protection support. Between January and October, approximately 3,400 people benefited from individual protection case management, and 26,000 individuals from 5,900 families were assisted with protection cash to help reduce risks such as eviction, exploitation and violence. Case management included direct follow-up and support for those facing serious protection concerns, including 3,100 children and 2,537 survivors of gender-based violence. These activities helped address immediate risks and improved the overall well-being of people with heightened vulnerabilities.
- Between July and October 2025, UNHCR and partners conducted nationwide protection monitoring for quarter three to assess evolving risks and needs among Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The [Q3 Protection Monitoring findings](#) indicate [that refugees continue to face increasing pressures linked to financial insecurity, reduced humanitarian assistance, and barriers to healthcare and education](#). Limited legal residency, exacerbated by a rise in administrative measures and raids, continues to restrict movement and access to services. Many households struggle to cover basic needs, rely heavily on debt, and live in inadequate or overcrowded shelter, with newly displaced families often facing the most precarious conditions. Reports also indicate to growing psychosocial distress driven by economic hardship, uncertainty, and heightened protection risks, particularly for women and persons with disabilities. While only a small proportion intend to return immediately, more families are considering going back to Syria once conditions improve, underscoring the need for protection-sensitive planning and sustained humanitarian assistance.



Less than a week after arriving in Lebanon, UNHCR's new Representative, Karolina Lindholm Billing, joined Syrian families at the Aida border crossing as they prepared to return home after years in exile. Among them was Ali, a father of four, who spent 13 years in Minyeh and shared his gratitude to the Lebanese families who hosted them. UNHCR continues to support refugees choosing to return – ensuring every journey home is voluntary, safe, and dignified, while standing by those who remain in Lebanon and the communities that host them. ©UNHCR



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

- With refugees living in communities across Lebanon, providing trusted safe spaces where refugees can go for advice, support and services close to their homes is a key priority. In 2025, 26 Community Development Centres (CDCs) across Lebanon operated under a holistic one-stop-shop model, providing integrated information and services in protection, learning, and empowerment, to strengthen coping mechanisms, and build social networks that foster coexistence and self-reliance. Between January and October, more than 289,402 participations (79,668 unique individuals – 87% Syrians and 12% Lebanese) participated in awareness sessions, psychosocial and life-skills activities, and job-skills trainings, enhancing their well-being, inclusion, and resilience.
- CDCs across Lebanon are supporting with return case processing activities and issuing voluntary repatriation forms. UNHCR's registration verification and validation exercises continued also across the South in community spaces and CDCs as well, facilitating access to documentation and essential services and ensuring that communities remain informed and connected.
- In the North, Bekaa and Beirut-Mount Lebanon, [voluntary repatriation awareness sessions were conducted across CDCs and mobile spaces](#), reaching over 7,000 individuals to date. Across the country, all CDCs continued to provide tailored assistance to recent arrivals and host community members alike.
- Outreach Volunteers (OVs) from refugee communities continue to play an irreplaceable role in better understanding the needs of refugees in the country. The network of 440 OVs (64% women) identified and referred 12,811 individuals at heightened risk to specialized services and reached 187,992 people with protection and health information. Moreover, 120 trained OVs delivered structured psychosocial support to more than 3,600 adults and adolescents, further strengthening community engagement, early risk detection, and accountability to affected populations.
- World Mental Health Day** was commemorated nationwide through various awareness and community events promoting resilience, inclusion, and emotional well-being. In the Bekaa, CDCs and OVs organized awareness and recreational sessions, while in Beirut and the South, six CDC events and three community hikes in Tyre, Bint Jbeil, and Hasbaya brought together 56 participants from both refugee and host communities, symbolizing unity, mutual support, and community solidarity.



## HEALTH

- UNHCR and partners continued to facilitate access to life-saving secondary healthcare for the most vulnerable refugees across Lebanon in October, [before being forced to phase out of health assistance by year end due to lack of funds](#). In October, 2,109 individuals were assisted through the secondary healthcare programme, including 1,502 women who received delivery care. Support focused on critical and obstetric emergencies, ensuring that refugee patients could access hospitals and specialized care despite rising costs and the gradual phase-out of some health subsidies.



## SHELTER & CORE-RELIEF ITEMS

- UNHCR continued to prioritize life-saving shelter support to improve safety, dignity, and living conditions for displaced families across Lebanon. In Beirut and Mount Lebanon, field assessments were completed for shelter units identified for rehabilitation, with repair activities underway to improve housing conditions for vulnerable families. Weatherproofing distributions also continued in informal tented settlements (ITSs) to reinforce shelters ahead of the winter season and mitigate exposure to harsh weather.
- In the Bekaa, approximately [5,000 shelter kits were distributed in October benefiting more than 30,000 individuals in Central Bekaa and Baalbek-EI Hermel](#). Preparations for additional weatherproofing and site improvements are ongoing as part of the national winter response to ensure that families can remain in adequate and safe shelter conditions.
- In the North and Akkar, rehabilitation and maintenance continued for refugee households identified through protection referrals. Efforts focused on supporting recently arrived families and improving existing shelters to ensure safety, privacy, and protection from the elements as winter approaches.
- Across Lebanon, UNHCR distributed core relief items (CRIs) to 1,631 vulnerable families in October, including blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets, and solar lamps, while [658 recent arrivals received emergency relief kits](#) to address their immediate needs and strengthen preparedness for the coming winter months.



## BASIC NEEDS

- Cash assistance remains an essential lifeline for the most vulnerable refugee households, enabling them to meet urgent needs while preserving their dignity and choice. [UNHCR delivered monthly multi-purpose cash assistance \(MPCA\) to 480,465 refugees \(105,372 households\)](#). The cash programme prioritizes refugees who face severe economic hardship alongside heightened protection concerns, considering both socio-economic vulnerability and protection risk profiles

# Thank You!

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