

Regional Flash Update #61

Syria situation

23 January 2026



UNHCR handed over the Female Arts School (vocational school) in Murak, Hama, to the Directorate of Education following its rehabilitation after damage during the conflict in Syria. The school, expected to serve 150 female secondary-level students per academic year, offers courses in tailoring, embroidery and fashion design, among others. ©UNHCR/SIF

Key Highlights

- As of 23 January, UNHCR estimates that **1,365,540 individuals** have returned to Syria since 8 December 2024.
- UNHCR provided transportation assistance and logistical support to 43 families (237 individuals) returning to Syria through the Joussieh/Lebanon border to various destinations. Since the beginning of 2025, UNHCR has provided assistance to over **31,500 returnees** at the key border crossing points with Türkiye and Lebanon.
- UNHCR and its partners in Syria have completed the rehabilitation of the Second Commerce School in Aleppo and that of the Female Arts School in Murak, Hama, which are expected to equip youth with employable skills and fill industry gaps.

- Since 8 December 2024, **over 180,000 refugees** registered with UNHCR have returned from Jordan to Syria, including approximately 1,000 refugees this week. In 2025, UNHCR reached over 55,000 refugees with assistance for voluntary return.¹
- In Egypt, since the political transition in Syria, Syrians have approached UNHCR in greater numbers to request the closure of their asylum cases – between 8 December 2024 and 12 January 2026, a total of 13,156 closure requests involving around 29,410 individuals have been submitted.
- In Syria, to support displaced populations in northeast Syria, UNHCR deployed 300 Core Relief Item (CRI) kits and tents to Newroz camp and 1,000 CRI kits to Qamishli, in addition to distributing CRI kits and winter items to families accommodated in collective shelters in Ar-Raqqa and Tabqa following displacement from Aleppo.

Country Updates

Syria

A total of 43 families (237 individuals) returning to Syria from Lebanon were provided with transportation and logistical support from Joussieh to various destinations including Rural Damascus, Tartous, Idlib, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama. Since 2025, UNHCR has provided assistance to over 31,500 returnees at the key border crossing points with Lebanon and Türkiye.

Following the decree by the Syrian President on 16 January 2026 affirming that Syrian citizens of Kurdish origin constitute an essential and integral part of the Syrian people, UNHCR met with its legal partners the Syrian Development Organisation (SDO) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) to discuss the implementation of the decree, its monitoring and the support that can be provided. Together with UNHCR, both partners will develop a strategy to reach all affected individuals and ensure that legal support is provided to the most vulnerable. UNHCR will closely follow the decree's implementation and prioritize legal assistance for birth registration and access to civil documentation for affected Kurdish populations throughout 2026.

UNHCR continues providing communities with legal assistance for the acquisition of civil and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) documentation. In Aleppo, the partner SDO delivered individual legal counseling to 80 persons and conducted legal awareness sessions on civil documentation and HLP rights, reaching 437 individuals. In Tartous and Latakia, SARC and SDO legal teams conducted eight legal awareness sessions for 71 individuals from returnee, IDP, and host communities, focusing on cybercrime, property ownership documentation, and establishing parentage under Syrian law. In addition, the teams provided 115 legal consultations across both governorates. In As-Sweida, the needs of displaced people living in hosting centres in the Salkhad area, which include the lack of basic identification documents and the need for replacement of identity cards and family registers for lost or damaged documents, were incorporated into the upcoming legal intervention plan. In As-Sweida, Dar'a and Quneitra, the SARC legal team conducted awareness sessions across several locations covering topics ranging from real estate ownership, wills and cybercrime to marriage registration.

¹ As part of the voluntary return support, a refugee may legitimately receive multiple types of assistance such as counselling, legal aid, and transportation to support their safe return.

In Homs, a series of preventive awareness-raising sessions on child protection were conducted across several community centres. In addition, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support activities including case management and psychological counselling were implemented by partners to address psychosocial needs among returnee and host communities.

UNHCR has installed a 50-kW solar power system at Jarablus Border Crossing Point in Aleppo, an intervention that will provide uninterrupted electricity to the new prefabricated structures installed with UNHCR support to accommodate immigration offices and waiting halls. The reliable power source is expected to enhance the border crossing point's operational efficiency, facilitating returnees' smooth movement and improving the processing of immigration documentation.

The rehabilitation of the Second Commerce School in Aleppo, undertaken by UNHCR and its partner Al-Taa'louf, has been completed. The school, which suffered damage during the past conflict, is expected to be operational by the end of January, providing students with market-relevant skills. It will teach a commerce curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, including accounting, commercial law, business administration, marketing, commercial correspondence in addition to computer sciences. The rehabilitation involved the construction of two computer laboratories. The school will accommodate 300 female students, allowing more girls to access education.

Similarly, in Hama, following rehabilitation of the Female Arts School (vocational school) in Murak by UNHCR and its partner, UNHCR has officially handed the school over to the Directorate of Education which has initiated the process of incorporating it into the 2026 education plan. The school, expected to serve 150 female secondary-level students each academic year, offers courses in tailoring, embroidery, and fashion design, among others. Both schools were rehabilitated with funding from the Government of Japan.

UNHCR and SARC have launched a Capacity Building/Training Programme for Community Based Organisations (CBOs), which aims at strengthening CBOs' organizational, administrative, and technical skills through targeted training modules covering governance, project design, financial management, reporting standards, and community engagement. The programme is designed to enhance the CBOs' ability to independently manage small-scale projects, improve accountability, and contribute more effectively to community-based protection interventions.

[Syria is Home](#): During the reporting period, the platform, which provides information to support individuals make informed decisions about returning to Syria, received 1,700 visitors (56.8% male and 43.2% female), the majority of whom were from Syria followed by Lebanon, Türkiye, Iraq, and Germany.

Situation update and UNHCR response in north and northeast Syria

Armed hostilities between the Syrian Government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that escalated on 5 January in Aleppo caused a spillover of displacement and eventually hostilities into northeast Syria. The IDP Affairs Office and CCCM Sector report that 147 collective centres host newly arrived IDPs across Al-Hassakeh Governorate, with a total of 3,872 IDP families currently identified in the shelters – in Qamishli, 2,569 families across 96 collective shelters; in Malikia, 819 families across 29 collective shelters; in Al-Hasakeh City the exact numbers remain unverified due to access constraints but reports indicate four of the new emergency collective shelters are open, hosting 87 new families. In Amuda, 127 families are hosted across 9 collective shelters and in Maabada, 270 families across 9 collective shelters. Around 301 families have arrived in Newroz Camp, in addition to some in Washokani camp arriving from Tabqa and Tal Tamer. A significant number of families have also arrived within the host communities across the mentioned locations. IOM's DTM reports that the total IDP population since 5 January reached 134,803 individuals in Al-Hassakeh, including 41,186 in collective shelters.

UNHCR's assistance and response have focused on sustaining protection and life-saving support. UNHCR deployed 1,000 Core Relief Item CRI kits to Qamishli and 300 CRI kits and tents to Newroz camp. UNHCR further distributed CRI kits and winter items to families accommodated in collective shelters in Ar-Raqqa and Tabqa following displacement from Aleppo. Volunteers are on standby to support distributions as needed, and UNHCR is coordinating with partners to ensure that urgent gaps in other collective shelters are covered.

UNHCR has also supported the authorities in Hassakeh and Qamishli with CRIs, large tents for reception areas, and coordination of collective centres. UNHCR continues to conduct field missions to Newroz camp and other affected locations to assess needs.

Two UNHCR community centres in Sabkha and Al-Karama, Raqqa Governorate, are fully operational and continue to deliver essential protection services, including psychological first aid for families injured during the clashes, mental health and anxiety management sessions, and awareness-raising on the risks of explosive remnants of war.

On 23 January, an inter-agency mission led by UNHCR, with participation from UNICEF and WFP, reached Al Hol camp. UNHCR facilitated the delivery of three bread trucks for distribution to the camp residents, with the support of Syrian Government officials. The camp administration expressed the continued daily delivery of bread and the distribution of kerosene as major priorities.

In Deir-ez-Zor, UNHCR prepared and began moving 1,500 CRI kits, 1,500 winter clothing kits, and 3,000 winter jackets to warehouses as part of contingency planning, while coordinating with partners on protection needs and sector preparedness. All UNHCR-supported community centers in Deir-ez-Zor re-opened on 19 January.

In Aleppo, following the recent security developments, UNHCR has enhanced the operational readiness of the Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour (DoSAL) in Aleppo and Idlib governorates through the provision of essential ICT equipment. The support reinforces the DoSAL's ability to contribute to the emergency response, manage protection related data, and maintain accurate administrative records, particularly for vulnerable individuals and families requiring social assistance and specialized protection services.

A UNHCR, OCHA and UNFPA inter-agency mission visited Afrin city, to which families from Ashrafieh and Ash-Sheikh Maqsoud in Aleppo had been displaced following the recent hostilities, to assess emerging needs and identify opportunities to strengthen the humanitarian response. The team identified needs to which assistance was provided, including CRIs, as well as referrals to service providers.

Türkiye

The processing of voluntary returns continues in provinces and at seven border crossings: Cilvegözü / Bab al Hawa, Yayladağı / Keseb, Öncüpınar / Bab al Salama, Karkamış / Jarablus and Akçakale / Tel Abyad as well as Zeytindalı / Jinderes and Çobanbey / Al Rai, which have been reopened for VolRep.

Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR has monitored the voluntary repatriation of nearly 450,000 Syrians. Currently, UNHCR monitors returns at 25 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) offices, in 22 provinces and at six border crossings in the south-east. UNHCR is also present at İstanbul and Sabiha Gökçen Airports in İstanbul and at Esenboğa Airport in Ankara. Ad hoc monitoring of voluntary returns from Adana Sarıçam and İstanbul Arnavutköy Temporary Accommodation Centres (TAC) continues.

Most interviews were conducted in certain border and metropolitan provinces, which were also among the key places of residence for returnees prior to departure. A small number of individuals were interviewed in TACs and at the airports.

The main reasons for return have remained unchanged over time, with political developments, improved security, and family reunification or the need to attend family events being the most frequently mentioned. Other reasons include nostalgia or homesickness, wish to reclaim property and the need to work. A smaller portion also cited economic difficulties and challenges in accessing housing in country of asylum.

The majority of returnees were heading to provinces in northern Syria, with Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, and Hama among the most common destinations. Regarding accommodation, some returnees owned their homes or had property belonging to close relatives. While many reported that their houses were in good condition, others indicated partial damage or destruction. A significant portion confirmed they had valid documentation proving ownership.

A small portion of returnees lacked any Syrian-issued papers. Among those who did have documents, national identity cards, family booklets, and passports were the most common. Births and deaths in Türkiye were generally well-documented, but documentation rates for marriages and divorces were lower.

The demographic profile reflects a balanced gender distribution, with a significant share of children. Before leaving Türkiye, many returnees were unemployed, while others worked in skilled trades, construction, agriculture, or trade. In Syria, a considerable number were expected to be without income initially and planned to look for work.

Jordan

Since 8 December 2024, over 180,000 refugees registered with UNHCR have returned from Jordan to Syria, including approximately 1,000 refugees this week. More information about the number and profile of refugees returning from Jordan to Syria is available on the [UNHCR return dashboard](#).

UNHCR Jordan assists refugees with returns through counselling, information sharing, transportation and cash assistance. This includes nearly 4,000 refugees who received the cash assistance for voluntary return pilot launched in September 2025 and over 10,400 refugees who used UNHCR-provided buses to return to Syria since January 2025, including 30 passengers this week. In addition, UNHCR also continued to support movements organized by IOM, by conducting in-depth voluntary repatriation interviews and counselling from the camps and referring eligible cases to IOM for arranging transportation. This week, IOM supported three movements for around 120 refugees from Azraq camp, whom UNHCR had interviewed and counselled in preparation for these movements. IOM covers the costs of the transportation for these movements and coordinates the departure.

In 2025, UNHCR reached over 55,000 refugees with assistance for voluntary return.² Through various digital channels, over half a million received information relating to return. The return process is closely coordinated with the UNHCR Operation in Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination.

² As part of the voluntary return support, a refugee may legitimately receive multiple types of assistance such as counselling, legal aid, and transportation to support their safe return.

Egypt

As of 19 January 2026, over 116,667 Syrian refugees were registered in Egypt. Syrian refugees now account for approximately 11% of the total refugee population in the country.

Since the political transition in Syria, Syrians started approaching UNHCR in greater numbers to request the closure of their asylum cases which is a prerequisite before leaving Egypt to return to Syria. Between 8 December 2024 and 12 January 2026, 13,156 closure requests involving around 29,410 individuals were submitted, including on-the-spot closures. Among applicants who closed their files, 62% were male. In terms of origin, 40% came from Damascus, 27% from Rural Damascus, 13% from Homs, 8% from Aleppo, and 12% from other Syrian governorates.

Useful Links

- [Regional Flash Update #60, Syria Situation](#)
- [UNHCR Operational Framework for Voluntary Return of Syrian Refugees and IDPs](#)
- [Enhanced Refugee Perceptions and Intentions Survey \(eRPIS\)](#)
- [UNHCR Position on Returns to the Syrian Arab Republic \(16 December\)](#)
- [Syria Situation Data Portal](#)
- [Syria is Home Platform](#)
- [UNHCR Help Site](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Lebanon – Voluntary Return page](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Türkiye – Voluntary Repatriation page](#)

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