

Regional Flash Update #68

Syria situation

13 March 2026



Families escaping the recent hostilities in Lebanon arrive at the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point, many carrying almost no belongings after fleeing overnight. UNHCR and its partners are providing immediate assistance to support their need ©UNHCR/Vivian Toumeh

Key Highlights

- As of 12 March, UNHCR estimates that 1,524,736 individuals have returned to Syria from other countries since the political transition in Syria on 8 December 2024. The main governorate of return remains Damascus followed by Idleb, Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Homs.
- Around 118,590 individuals entered Syria from Lebanon between 2–13 March through official border crossing points. Intensified airstrikes in Lebanon led to surges at border points, especially Joussieh, prompting the deployment of additional border personnel.
- UNHCR and its partners along with WFP and UNICEF, scaled up emergency assistance at the borders with Lebanon.
- In areas of return, over 5,871 arrivals from Lebanon were identified in Ar-Raqqa, with additional arrivals recorded in Homs, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Dar'a, and Quneitra.
- While returns from Jordan remain relatively low during Ramadan, a 35% increase from the previous week was observed.
- UNHCR Egypt has signed a General Cooperation Agreement with AXON Plus, expanding access to affordable healthcare via a digital platform connecting refugees to private providers nationwide.

Country Updates

Syria

Since 2 March, Syria has witnessed a rise in arrivals from Lebanon amid ongoing hostilities there. Over a ten-day period, approximately **118,590 individuals**, predominantly Syrians (106,732), though also including Lebanese nationals, entered the country through the three operational border points: Jdaidet Yabous in Rural Damascus, Joussieh in Homs, and Arida in Tartous. The Arida crossing resumed operations on 8 March, allowing only pedestrian movement and exclusively from Lebanon into Syria due to damage to the bridge connecting both sides of the border.

UNHCR, through its partners, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), Child Care Society (CCS), and St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC) and in coordination with the Syria Civil Defence, distributed water, food baskets, blankets and emergency items to the arrivals as well as informational materials on available services, community centres' locations, and legal assistance. WFP provided date bars and iftar meals. Through its mobile clinic, UNICEF reached children with nutrition screening, vaccinations, and health awareness sessions.

At **border crossings**, UNHCR teams engage with newly arriving families to assess their intentions and immediate needs. Families with relatives in their areas of origin reported plans to stay with them. Several Syrian households indicated that husbands or adult sons had remained in Lebanon to maintain income sources. Many families expressed uncertainty about whether they would eventually return to Lebanon, noting that such decisions would depend on access to livelihoods, healthcare, and education in Syria. Several individuals exhibited signs of psychological distress, often linked to family members who remained behind. Some cited the loss of livelihoods as the primary driver of their departure and noted that they might attempt to return to Lebanon if conditions improve, emphasizing that their current return was not intended to be permanent.

Priority needs identified upon arrival included shelter, core relief, civil documentation, and livelihood support, while immediate needs focused on drinking water and snacks.

To support basic needs at Jdaidet Yabous border crossing, UNHCR installed a prefabricated latrine unit, which is now operational. UNHCR is also monitoring preparations for the installation of lighting to enhance safety and accessibility.

In **areas of return**, UNHCR conducted a mission to Ar-Raqqa Governorate, where two focus group discussions were held at the community centre in Sabkha. To date, 5,871 returnees from Lebanon have been identified in the governorate. Most are residing with relatives. Some reported crossing irregularly due to concerns that they may be denied re-entry to Lebanon once the situation stabilizes. Many lack legal documentation, underscoring the need for tailored legal support.

In Homs Governorate, authorities reported that 150 families have arrived to date, and arrival tracking will be initiated through municipalities. In Dar'a and Quneitra, UNHCR supported community centres run by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA) and Bara'em conducted needs assessments and registered 71 families (246 individuals) arriving from Lebanon. The centres also provided Psychological First Aid to newly arrived individuals.

In Damascus and Rural Damascus, UNHCR's partners reported assisting 127 newly arrived families (314 individuals). Of these, 32 families (155 individuals) approached UNHCR community centres, where they were registered and referred to available services.

Response in Akburhan camp, Aleppo Governorate

UNHCR and its partners continued to scale up presence and response in Akburhan camp, Aleppo Governorate which received families relocated from Al-Hol camp, in north-east Syria. They conducted daily protection monitoring, identified urgent needs, and facilitated referrals to specialized services.

UNHCR also followed up on urgent individual cases, strengthened referral pathways, and liaised closely with partners to improve service organization.

Core relief and winter items' distributions continued, prioritizing families who had not yet received their assistance packages. Hygiene kit distribution also remained ongoing, with around 2,000 kits provided to date through SARC. SARC is also finalizing registration and needs verification for all families in the camp with each family receiving their issued ID card which serves as the primary reference for all humanitarian partners to avoid duplication and ensure harmonized response.

In parallel, UNHCR partner, Stabilization Support Unit (SSU) sustained the delivery of essential daily services, including hot meals, bread, water trucking, and regular waste removal, and distributed one round of ready-to-eat meals suitable for Ramadan.

Following joint assessments, UNHCR and the Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour (DoSAL) reached an initial agreement to pursue the tent-based cooking arrangement, and technical teams have begun developing a detailed study to support implementation.

UNHCR held regular coordination meetings with DoSAL reviewing the ongoing humanitarian response and agreeing on a joint field visit to identify suitable locations for establishing a dedicated services area for UN agencies, camp management, and partners. Discussions focused on addressing critical electricity gaps. Options for viable and longer-term electricity solutions remain under review.

Meanwhile, UNHCR continues to support returnees across Syria. The rehabilitation of the Dabbousieh Bridge (Homs–Lebanon), now in its second phase, is progressing. Once completed, the project is expected to ease congestion at the Joussieh border crossing and to contribute to safer and more dignified refugee returns from northern Lebanon.

UNHCR also continued providing return and reintegration cash assistance, with each household receiving \$600 to help meet essential needs upon arrival. Since the beginning of the year, 11,341 households (41,265 individuals) have received this support.

Since the launch of [Syria is Home](#), the platform recorded 120,000 visitors who were provided with comprehensive information on conditions in Syria and key return-related procedures. This helps Syrians make informed decisions about returning home and access available services, including those provided by UNHCR. The highest number of visitors were from Syria followed by Lebanon, Türkiye, Germany and the United States.

Türkiye

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

Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR has monitored the voluntary repatriation of over 475,000 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 as well as İstanbul Arnavutköy Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC).

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

The main reasons for return have remained unchanged over time, with political developments, improved security, and family reunification or taking care of family members continuing to be the most frequently cited factors. Other reasons include economic difficulties, nostalgia or homesickness, housing challenges, property-related issues, and employment needs.

The majority of returnees continued to head to Aleppo, Idleb, Hama and Damascus among the most common destinations. Regarding accommodation, some returnees reported having no accommodation available in Syria, while others planned to stay with close family members or relatives. While many indicated that their houses were intact, others reported partial damage or destruction. A significant portion confirmed they held valid documentation proving property ownership.

Civil documentation continues to pose challenges for a minority of returnees, with some lacking any Syrian-issued papers. Among those who held documentation, national identity cards and family booklets were the most common. Documentation of family events in Türkiye varied, with births and deaths more consistently recorded than marriages and divorces.

The demographic profile reflects a balanced gender distribution, with children representing a significant share of the population.

Prior to departure from Türkiye, many returnees were unemployed, while others were engaged in skilled trades or craftsmanship. Upon return to Syria, a considerable number anticipated having no immediate income and reported plans to seek employment.

Jordan

From 1 to 7 March, approximately 475 refugees registered with UNHCR returned from Jordan to Syria, representing a 35% increase compared to the previous reporting week when 350 refugees returned. These figures remain quite low relative to the pre-Ramadan weekly average of 1,100 returns, due in large part to many refugees not wanting to depart during Ramadan.

UNHCR is closely monitoring the recent escalations in the region and taking all necessary measures to ensure that refugees receive sufficient information to make informed decisions about return.

Overall, since 8 December 2024, nearly 186,000 refugees have returned from Jordan to Syria. 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 over 5,000 refugees who received cash assistance for a voluntary return pilot launched in September 2025 and more than 10,500 refugees who used UNHCR-provided buses to return to Syria since January 2025. Due to low number of returns during Ramadan, UNHCR did not facilitate any departures through transportation assistance this week and observed fewer applications for return cash assistance.

The return process is closely coordinated with the UNHCR Operation in Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination.

Lebanon

To respond to the current internal displacement situation, UNHCR in Lebanon plays a coordination and response role within sectors it is co-leading with the Government and NGOs, while maintaining overall responsibility for the refugee response according to its mandate. Since day one of the escalation, UNHCR together with 13 partner organizations are delivering life-saving protection activities, shelter, core relief items and cash assistance.

A week on, hostilities intensified across multiple areas of Lebanon, further aggravating humanitarian needs and exposing populations, including refugees, to sustained insecurity.

Displacement continues to rise at a high pace following large-scale Israeli evacuation orders and airstrikes. As of 11 March, over 815,000 individuals had registered as displaced within Lebanon on the online government platform, of whom more than 125,000 are sheltering in 590 collective sites nationwide, quickly reaching full capacity. Refugees are among those directly impacted by attacks, evacuation orders and displacement.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Social Affairs and within the existing Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) framework, UNHCR immediately launched its contribution to the emergency response. Between 2 - 11 March, over 66,300 affected displaced people were assisted across 307 collective shelters, through the distribution of close to 180,000 essential items. Protection partners have supported over 4,000 individuals facing critical protection needs. Refugee Outreach Volunteers have referred 1,863 refugees at heightened risk to adapted services, and 166 internally displaced refugee families have been supported with Emergency Protection Cash Assistance.

To support the dissemination of emergency contacts, hotlines and services, UNHCR's [dedicated Emergency page](#) on its HELP website in Arabic and English is constantly being updated as new information or resources become available.

Displacement of people has also increased across the Syrian border. According to official figures of the Syrian Government, between 2 and 13 March, there have been 118,590 arrivals into Syria, including 106,732 Syrians and 11,858 Lebanese. Currently, there are three official border crossings open: Al-Qaa, Masnaa, and Arida. The General Security's (GSO) circular waiving overstay fees and fines, and re-entry bans are still in effect until the end of March 2026.

Iraq

So far in 2026, 328 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR have returned to Syria (adding to the 6,975 Syrian refugees who returned in 2025). Among them 257 returned through Peshkhabour border crossing point and were processed by UNHCR and local authorities at the Derabon return centre in Zakho Administration. Another 71 registered refugees and asylum-seekers returned to Syria via Erbil airport, with border authorities sharing a copy of their registration certificate with UNHCR. Due to the closure of Erbil airport, no departures via air have happened since 29 February.

In the first week of March, 57 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR returned through Peshkhabour border crossing point, compared to 24 individuals the week before. The registered refugees returned to Al-Hasakeh and Aleppo. The situation in the Middle East, and its impact on instability on Iraq, is thought to be behind the slight increase of returns over the last week.

Egypt

As of 9 March, over 105,896 Syrian refugees are registered in Egypt. Syrian refugees now account for approximately 10% of the total registered refugee population in the country.

Since the fall of the former Government of Syria, Syrians have approached UNHCR to request the closure of their asylum cases, a prerequisite before leaving Egypt to return to Syria. Between 8 December 2024 and 9 March 2026, 15,572 closure requests involving around 36,858 individuals have been submitted, including on-the-spot closures. Among applicants who closed their files, the majority (60%) were men and boys. In terms of origin, 41% came from Damascus, 27% from Rural Damascus, 12% from Homs, 8% from Aleppo, and 12% from other Syrian governorates.

On 4 March, UNHCR [signed](#) a General Cooperation Agreement with AXON Plus to expand access to affordable health care for refugees registered in Egypt. The partnership will enable refugees to obtain cost-effective medical services through the AXON Plus digital health platform, linking them to a wide network of private providers nationwide and helping reduce financial barriers to essential care. UNHCR noted that the initiative comes at a time of increasing health needs and constrained humanitarian funding, particularly for refugees with chronic illnesses or specialized medical conditions. AXON affirmed its commitment to inclusive and sustainable health delivery. This collaboration reflects UNHCR's broader efforts to strengthen resilience and promote inclusion by engaging responsible private-sector partners to complement humanitarian assistance and support the well-being of forcibly displaced communities.

Useful Links

- [Regional Flash Update #67, 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 Egypt](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Jordan – Voluntary Return page](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Lebanon – Voluntary Return page](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Türkiye – Voluntary Repatriation page](#)

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

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