

# Regional Flash Update #69

## Syria situation

20 March 2026



Families cross from Lebanon to Syria through the Joussieh border point in Homs in search of safety. ©UNHCR/Ayham Al Kady

## Key Highlights

- As of 19 March 2026, UNHCR estimates that 1,546,317 individuals have returned to Syria from other countries since the political transition in December 2024.
- Around 147,804 individuals entered Syria from Lebanon between 2–18 March through three official border crossing points. UNHCR and its partners in Syria maintained presence at official crossings with Lebanon, delivering assistance for new arrivals including transportation, core relief items, legal counselling, and information services.
- In Lebanon, internal displacement surpassed 1 million people. UNHCR and its partners are delivering protection, shelter, and cash assistance under the Government-led framework.
- UNHCR Lebanon requires \$61 million to meet urgent needs of 600,000 displaced people.
- A slight increase in returns from Iraq is observed, reportedly linked to broader regional instability affecting Iraq.

## Country Updates

### Syria

UNHCR scaled up its emergency response in Syria following the escalation in Lebanon, maintaining active presence at the border crossing points of Jdaidet Yabous (Rural Damascus), Joussieh (Homs) and the recently reopened Arida (Tartous). Between 2 and 18 March, more than 147,804 people crossed into Syria, the vast majority being Syrian nationals (132,186), alongside 15,618 Lebanese nationals. UNHCR and partners are providing immediate support to new arrivals across all three crossings.

At the **Joussieh** border crossing point, the situation remains stable with a manageable flow of arrivals. UNHCR maintained transportation support for returnees and together with its partner Child Care Society (CCS) also facilitated the transportation of family belongings for over 100 trucks during the week. The distribution of UNHCR's core relief items continued. CCS distributed drinking water on site and disseminated information materials on services, legal assistance, and community centres.

UNHCR's partner the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) provided legal counseling, while UNICEF delivered health education, vaccinations, and nutrition screening through its mobile clinic. WFP maintained its support with date bar distributions.

At the **Jdaidet Yabous** border crossing point, arrivals remain steady and processing times short despite rainy weather. Many interviewed families reported they fled southern Lebanon following evacuation orders or left Beirut due to intensified airstrikes. Most families arriving as full households intended to remain in Syria, while some young men planned to return to Lebanon after Eid. A smaller number of women and children described their return as temporary due to husbands remaining in Lebanon for work. Most returnees highlighted priority needs such as shelter, essential household items, cash assistance, livelihoods, and psychosocial support.

Medical services are fully operational at the border, with the Independent Doctors Association (IDA) running a mobile clinic and Civil Defence providing additional support. Humanitarian actors are ensuring timely distributions, including water and date bars by SARC and WFP, food baskets by Basma and Zaitouna, and mini meals and winter clothing by the Civil Defence. UNICEF and UNHCR provided dignity kits and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education materials for children. Partners of the Food Security, Agriculture and Livelihoods sector distributed ready-to-eat kits and drinking water. UNFPA remained ready to deliver services related to gender-based violence prevention and response and reproductive health, continued awareness and referral efforts, and supported mobile team deployment. Syrian authorities assigned two new staff to the voluntary repatriation window, enabling UNHCR to begin on-site coaching.

At the **Arida** crossing, movement continues despite infrastructure constraints and adverse weather. The crossing officially closes at 8 p.m. but continues to accept exceptional cases until midnight. The damaged bridge limits access to pedestrians only, prompting UNHCR to begin providing transportation support to families traveling onward.

Many families interviewed at Arida explained that worsening conditions in Lebanon forced them to return earlier than planned, with some heading to stay with relatives. Education support and livelihood opportunities remain their most pressing needs.

UNHCR's partner Al-Batoul operates daily, including during weekends, providing information, including on protection from sexual and exploitation, transportation to bus stations, and psychological first aid. Civil Defence also continues to address emergency needs.

UNHCR has engaged with authorities regarding the need for legal assistance at the site and is coordinating with SARC to secure necessary approvals for the deployment of their legal team to the border.

### **Response in Akburhan camp, Aleppo Governorate**

UNHCR and partners continue to support families recently relocated from Al-Hol. Basic services become operational, helping stabilize conditions for the newly arrived population.

UNHCR is coordinating closely with UNICEF to address urgent medical needs through the mobile medical unit currently operating in the camp, and sustain regular water trucking to meet daily needs. UNHCR's partner the Stabilization Support Unit (SSU) continues to distribute bread and hot meals and conduct waste collection throughout the camp.

To facilitate access to services, UNHCR has begun distributing identification cards through its partner Ehsan, following a request from the Directorate of Social Affairs and Labour (DoSAL). In parallel, registration activities are ongoing to complete the broader documentation process previously launched by UNHCR, ensuring accurate records and improving access to assistance.

On 17 March, UNHCR carried out a large-scale distribution reaching approximately 1,000 households with integrated assistance packages, including winter clothing, hygiene kits, and toys for children in anticipation of the upcoming Eid celebration.

UNHCR continues to work closely with camp authorities and all operational partners to harmonize service delivery and respond to emerging needs.

### **Regular response**

Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR has provided return and reintegration cash assistance to 14,571 returnee families (55,686 individuals), helping them meet essential needs and supporting their safe and dignified reintegration.

In relation to [Decree No. \(13\) of 2026](#) which provides for granting nationality to Kurds residing in Syria, UNHCR reached an agreement with the Syrian Government to allow partner lawyers to be present at designated centres receiving nationality applications beginning 1 April. UNHCR will accompany the process with awareness raising and guidance. To support implementation, UNHCR delivered ten laptops to the Civil Affairs Directorate for use in AlHasakeh Governorate.

UNHCR also announced that legal counselling for refugees and asylum seekers will be provided by partner lawyers at the Syrian Development Organization (SDO) legal office as well as at UNHCR community centres, with full contact details shared through official communication channels.

On 12 March, the rehabilitated Deir-ez-Zor Civil Registry Office was formally handed over to the Syrian Government. The upgraded facility is expected to significantly improve access to civil documentation and contribute to wider reintegration efforts in the area.

To enhance safety and living conditions in Newroz camp (AlHasakeh Governorate), UNHCR is implementing a largescale lighting improvement project. To date, 191 of 338 solar powered lighting units have been installed, and 90 of 115 concrete bases have been completed for the remaining units.

The [Syria is Home](#) platform, launched in April 2025 to help Syrian refugees make informed decisions about return, has so far recorded approximately 113,000 visits, with the majority of new users accessing the site from Syria, Lebanon, Türkiye, Germany, and the United States.

## Türkiye

The processing of voluntary returns continues at six border crossings: Cilvegözü/ Bab Al-Hawa, Yayladağı/Keseb, Öncüpınar /Al-Salama, Karkamış /Jarablus and Akçakale /Tel Abyad and Çobanbey /Al-Rai, as Zeytindalı border crossing will close on 18 March, ceasing all civilian movements, including returns, trade, and travel. On 16 March, the [Turkish Embassy in Damascus](#), citing an announcement by Syria's General Authority for Ports and Customs, informed that all Türkiye-Syria border crossings will be temporarily closed for civilian passenger and commercial traffic in connection with the Eid holiday. Crossings are expected to resume on 23 March.

Since 8 December 2024, UNHCR has monitored the voluntary repatriation of approximately 478,000 Syrians. Currently, UNHCR monitors returns at 25 Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM) offices, in 22 provinces and at five border crossings in the south-east (with the closure of Zeytindalı border crossing). 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, 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. 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 8 to 14 March, more than 600 refugees registered with UNHCR returned from Jordan to Syria, representing a 30% increase from the previous week when 475 refugees returned. These figures remain quite low compared to the pre-Ramadan weekly average of 1,100 returns, due in large part to many refugees not wanting to depart during Ramadan.

Overall, since 8 December 2024, more than 186,000 refugees have returned from Jordan to Syria. More information about the number and profile of refugee returnees is available on the [UNHCR return dashboard](#).

UNHCR Jordan assists refugees wishing to return 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 nearly 10,600 refugees who used UNHCR-provided buses to return to Syria since January 2025, including 36 passengers this week. The return process is closely coordinated with UNHCR Syria to support refugees upon arrival at their final destination.

## Lebanon

Internal displacement continues to rise, surpassing **one million people** amid ongoing hostilities and evacuation orders. UNHCR 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. 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 since day one of the escalation. UNHCR together with 13 partners are delivering life-saving protection activities, shelter, core relief items and cash assistance.

The United Nations Secretary-General [concluded a three-day solidarity visit](#) to Lebanon (13-15 March) where he launched the [Lebanon Flash Appeal](#) alongside Prime Minister Salam. The Appeal calls for \$308.3 million to provide lifesaving assistance and protection to one million affected people for three months. Under this appeal, [UNHCR requires \\$61 million](#) to reach 600,000 displaced people with protection, shelter, core-relief items and cash assistance.

As of 18 March, the Government reported 133,492 displaced persons (33,977 families) are being accommodated across 633 collective sites nationwide, 90% are at full capacity, as well as 2,432 injuries and 968 fatalities. Refugees are among those directly impacted by attacks, evacuation orders and displacement.

UNHCR's refugee protection activities are ongoing and have been adapted to include appropriate support to displaced refugees. UNHCR's partners, community structures, outreach volunteers, and the National Call Centre are fully mobilized and are fielding calls and queries from refugees and displaced Lebanese, providing referrals where appropriate and psychosocial support as well as helping families navigate questions about safe spaces and available services. UNHCR is reinforcing the capacity of outreach volunteers and community development centres (CDCs) in light of the changed environment. Referrals to services respond to most immediate needs, such as food, protection services including mental health and psychosocial support and shelter support.

Since 2 March, outreach volunteers have referred 765 displaced refugees at heightened risk to appropriate services available, and 428 internally displaced refugee families have been supported by Emergency Protection Cash Assistance. Of the 21 CDCs, six are closed due to the insecurity in their areas. The open CDCs continue to receive and reach out to displaced refugees and Lebanese.

As of 18 March, UNHCR assisted 71,242 affected individuals (16,313 households) across 412 collective shelters (54 in Beirut, 169 in Mount Lebanon, 57 in Bekaa, 19 in Baalbek-Hermel, 53 in the North, 23 in Akkar, 33 in the South and 4 in Nabatiyeh) distributing 191,363 core relief items, including 62,630 blankets, 63,992 mattresses, 45,158 sleeping mats, 8,083 solar lamps, 7,922 jerry cans, and 3,578 sleeping bags.

Three official border crossings are currently open: Arida (pedestrians only), Al-Qaa and Masnaa. Reports of increasing movements through unofficial border crossing points have been noted. This raises protection concerns of exploitation by smugglers. The Lebanese General Security (GSO) extended its [circular waiving overstay fees and fines, and re-entry bans](#) for Syrians exiting Lebanon until the end of June 2026.

## Iraq

In 2026, 402 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR have returned to Syria (adding to the 6,975 Syrian refugees who returned in 2025). Among them 298 returned through Peshkhabour border crossing point and were processed by UNHCR and local authorities at the Derabon return centre in Zakho Administration. Another 102 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 taken place since 28 February.

In the second week of March, 41 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR returned through Peshkhabour border crossing point, this compared to 57 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 16 March, over 105,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Egypt, accounting for approximately 9.5% of the total registered refugee population in the country. Since December 2024, approximately 37,672 individuals have requested closure of their asylum cases in preparation for return to Syria.

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 11 March, UNHCR and Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) [signed](#) a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen child protection services, improve referral pathways, and expand access to national systems for refugee children at risk.

## Useful Links

- [Regional Flash Update #68, 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](#)

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**CONTACTS**

**UNHCR Syria**

[SYRIAreporting@unhcr.org](mailto:SYRIAreporting@unhcr.org)

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