

Returns to Syria

Regional Update - (April - May 2026)

REGIONAL TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

As of 31 May 2026, an estimated **1.67 million Syrians** had returned from neighbouring countries, alongside **approximately 1.92 million internally displaced returnees**, demonstrating continued interest in return despite significant reintegration challenges across Syria.

Return dynamics remained uneven across the region in May and April, reflecting differing protection environments and operational contexts. While returns from **Lebanon** and **Türkiye** continued at scale, movements from **Egypt** slowed due to operational and funding constraints affecting return support and school-year considerations. Returns from **Iraq** increased following the introduction of facilitated return procedures in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, while movements from **Jordan** remained relatively steady but below 2025 levels.

Return decisions continued to be driven by a combination of family reunification and perceived improvements in conditions in Syria, alongside hostilities and economic pressures in host countries.

Sustainable reintegration remains the principal challenge. Across Syria, returnees continue to face damaged housing, limited access to services and livelihoods, documentation obstacles, and broader recovery constraints, raising concerns about the sustainability of returns. UNHCR continues to support the Government's "no tent and no-camp" vision to advance return, reintegration and recovery efforts.

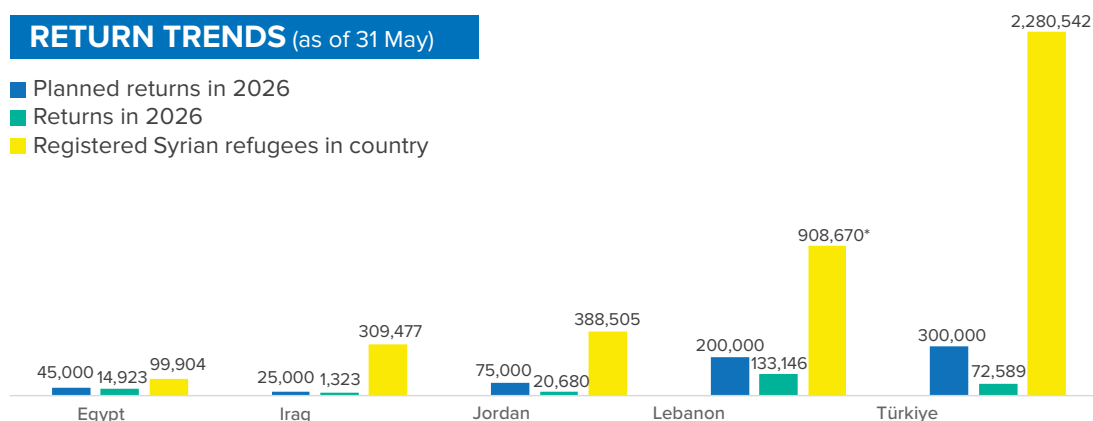
Findings from the **Enhanced Regional Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria (ERPIS)**, available [here](#), confirm that while intentions to return have increased since the political transition, many refugees continue to monitor conditions closely and adopt a gradual, wait-and-see approach before making longer-term decisions.

Total number of returnees since 8 December 2024



RETURN TRENDS (as of 31 May)

- Planned returns in 2026
- Returns in 2026
- Registered Syrian refugees in country



* The registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been suspended by the Government since May 2015. The data refers to all Syrians who have active record with UNHCR as of May 2026, including those who contacted UNHCR, were counselled on suspension and whose data was collected for humanitarian assistance.

Returns from neighbouring countries are primarily from **Türkiye**, **Lebanon**, and **Jordan**, while movements from **Iraq** and **Egypt** continue, but at comparatively lower levels. The majority of returnees are towards Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Homs and Damascus governorates.

In **Lebanon**, returns continued amid renewed hostilities, repeated displacement and worsening socio-economic conditions. Since 2 March 2026, and until 31 May 2026, the Syrian General Authority for Border and Customs (GABC) estimates that 444,389 Syrians crossed from Lebanon into Syria. Return motivations also evolved significantly between March and May, with security concerns declining from 55% of interviewed returnees in March to 7% in May, while family-related reasons became the primary driver of return.

In **Türkiye**, voluntary returns continued through six land border crossings. Government figures indicate that more than 1.4 million Syrians have returned voluntarily since 2016, including over 667,000 returns between December 2024 and April 2026. Recent assessments indicate that return intentions remain cautious, with most Syrian refugees continuing to identify security, access to services and livelihood opportunities in Syria as the primary factors influencing future return decisions. As of late May, approximately 2.26 million Syrians continue to benefit from temporary protection in Türkiye.

In **Jordan**, returns remained steady at comparatively moderate levels. More than 196,000 UNHCR-registered Syrian refugees have returned to Syria since 8 December 2024, including over 20,600 returns during 2026 and approximately 5,140 returns in May alone. This represents approximately 32% of the Syrian refugee population registered in Jordan prior to the onset of return movements in December 2024. Current return rates average 1,000–1,300 individuals per week, significantly lower than the approximately 3,000 individuals returning per week in 2025. Refugees continue to cite security concerns, shelter shortages and limited livelihood opportunities in Syria as key considerations influencing return decisions.

In **Egypt**, return-related file closures slowed significantly in May, reflecting operational limitations, funding constraints affecting return support, and end-of-school-year considerations among refugee families. Nevertheless, return-related activity during the first five months of 2026 remained above 2025 levels.

In **Iraq**, returns increased compared to previous months, with 326 registered Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers returning during May, including 227 individuals from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and 99 through facilitated procedures in Baghdad, bringing the total number of returns from Iraq in 2026 to 1,323. The increase followed the introduction of facilitated return procedures and continued efforts to address administrative barriers affecting voluntary return.

KEY RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS

Millions of civilians inside **Syria** continue to face protection risks and obstacles to sustainable reintegration. Housing destruction, inadequate access to services, livelihood shortages, documentation challenges and explosive ordnance contamination continue to affect return areas. Approximately one in six returnee households interviewed by UNHCR reported having at least one family member with a disability. Many women and children remain exposed to heightened protection risks, including gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation, school dropout and negative coping mechanisms linked to economic hardship.

Daily movements through the two main functioning **Syrian-Lebanese** border crossings averaged around 3,600 Syrian and Lebanese arrivals amid intensified airstrikes and cross-border hostilities in April. Return movements were often rapid and difficult to predict, with women and children comprising a significant share of those returning, with heightened psychosocial distress and increased protection risks. A further increase in movements was observed ahead of Eid al-Adha (26–30 May), when arrivals rose to approximately 7,500 individuals per day before returning to previous levels.

Similarly, socio-economic conditions continue to shape return decision in **Jordan**. Recent analysis by the World Bank and UNHCR indicates that refugees who remain in Jordan are generally more likely to face financial constraints than those who have already returned. High levels of indebtedness and socio-economic vulnerability continue to act as barriers to return, suggesting that some refugee households may be unable to finance return movements despite expressing an intention to return. These findings are consistent with data from the [Socio-Economic Survey on Refugees in Jordan \(VAF\)](#), which continues to show high levels of vulnerability among Syrian refugee households.

At the same time, vulnerabilities remain pronounced among Syrian refugees in **Egypt**. The [Egypt Vulnerability Assessment for Refugees \(EVAR\)](#) highlights deepening vulnerability, with over 65% classified as highly vulnerable and nearly 60% facing food insecurity, with particularly acute impact on female-headed households. These challenges are compounded by increased detention risks, reduced access to services, documentation barriers, high rates of out-of-school children, and gaps in access to healthcare.

In **Iraq**, operational and administrative factors continue to influence return dynamics. Return movements have been partly constrained by earlier airspace closures and evolving regional developments. Some Syrian Kurdish refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) continue to watch developments in north-east Syria, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)–Syrian Army agreement and discussions on nationality restoration which may influence decisions around return. Recent exit-permit requirements introduced by authorities in KR-I may create additional obstacles for Syrians seeking to depart through Peshkhabour, particularly those residing in central and southern Iraq. Cross-border movements between Iraq and Syria also remain affected by the continued closure of the bridge linking Peshkhabour and Semalka, due to damage because of heavy rainfall in mid-March, which has required rerouting of movements, increasing travel time.

Funding constraints continue to affect all countries in the region, limiting available assistance for return and reintegration and affecting the scale and sustainability of support both in host countries and inside Syria.

UNHCR'S RESPONSE

In response, UNHCR continues to support informed, voluntary, and dignified returns, while addressing protection risks and reintegration challenges.

UNHCR has scaled up its response in **Lebanon** to address returns under force majeure conditions. By the end of May, 12,096 individuals had returned under this mechanism, receiving counselling, information and a \$100 cash grant per individual to cover transportation and immediate needs during the journey. Since 1 April, over 19,000 individuals (4,300 families) have received counselling on return under these adverse circumstances, with more than 12,000 individuals proceeding with return. Movements are coordinated with the General Security Office (GSO) and UNHCR Syria to facilitate cross-border movements and ensure follow-up support. Profiling of assessed families indicates that 64% were successfully assessed for return, while others were either unreachable, had already returned, or opted not to proceed. Poor living conditions in Lebanon (61%) and escalating hostilities (28%) are cited as the primary factors influencing return decisions. Since July 2025, UNHCR has supported approximately 72,889 individuals to return from Lebanon, including 12,096 since the escalation of hostilities in March.

UNHCR in **Türkiye** continues to support national frameworks enabling voluntary and dignified returns, while maintain longer-term resilience interventions. Activities to strengthen voluntary return modalities are ongoing nationwide, including the expansion of cash assistance coverage across provinces. UNHCR also continues to facilitate scholarship opportunities and resilience support for Syrian refugees, while complementary investments in education and skills development contribute to longer-term recovery and reconstruction prospects in Syria.

Similarly, in **Jordan**, UNHCR continued to support voluntary returns through counselling, legal assistance, information provision, transportation support and cash assistance. During the first quarter of 2026, around 31,000 refugees received return-related information or legal assistance. Cash assistance for voluntary return continued, since the pilot was launched in September 2025, in Azraq and Za'atari refugee camps, reaching 7,277 refugees by the end of May. This includes a JOD 210 (\$300) family grant, in addition to JOD 70 (\$100) per individual for vulnerable households. Application rates remained steady, while post-distribution monitoring indicated high satisfaction levels (89%) and showed that assistance was primarily used to meet basic needs, including food, transportation and debt repayment. Importantly, refugees consistently raised the need for higher level of assistance, while also noting that this financial assistance serves as an enabler rather than a primary factor in their decision making. UNHCR also partnered with Bayt.com to expand access to employment opportunities in Syria through enhanced job-matching services linking prospective returnees with employers. To support sustainable return and camp transition efforts, UNHCR's caravan sale initiative enabled 270 refugee families to generate approximately \$300,000 in additional income through the sale of 530 caravans in Za'atari refugee camp prior to departure.



©UNHCR/Shawkat Al Harfoush

After 14 years in Zaatari refugee camp, 46-year-old Syrian refugee Rana Al-Hirakia, decided to return to Syria and applied for UNHCR cash assistance in April.

"I have decided to return to Syria with my sons because the situation there is improving. Although we do not have a house to return to, we will stay at my relative's house until the conditions become more stable. I went to UNHCR to apply for cash assistance for voluntary return, which will help me cover my debts in the camp, pay transportation fees, buy my child's asthma medication, and start a new life in Syria."

In **Egypt**, UNHCR continues to deliver targeted protection counselling and assistance to support Syrians considering return. Cash assistance for returns remained available but limited to highly vulnerable cases and individuals with specific needs due to funding constraints. Demand for information continues to increase, including through the [UNHCR Help platform](#), which recorded more than 106,000 visits in May. Protection monitoring is maintained through community engagement, tracking risks and barriers to return, while legal assistance focuses on advocacy for detained refugees and safeguarding protection space.

In **Iraq**, UNHCR continues to facilitate voluntary returns while addressing access and logistical constraints. Border monitoring remains in place at key crossing points, although damage to the bridge connecting the Peshkhabour and Semalka border crossings continues to require the rerouting of movements and longer travel times. Return support services are provided through the Derabon Return Centre, including counselling, processing, and referrals for protection and legal assistance, particularly for vulnerable groups. Building on these efforts, UNHCR launched facilitated voluntary return procedures from the KR-I on 31 May, enabling refugees to initiate return through registration centres and the Derabon Return Centre. Counselling, legal information and return assistance continue to be provided. During May, 59 cases also received return cash assistance.

Inside **Syria**, UNHCR continues to facilitate safe and dignified reintegration despite increasing funding constraints. Community-based protection services are delivered through UNHCR's 55 community centres and 71 mobile units across all 14 governorates, supported by 967 outreach volunteers. Funding shortfalls are already affecting operational capacity, including the closure of five community centres in April and an additional centre in May.

Between January and May, 18,746 returnee families (73,208 individuals) benefited from the one-off reintegration grant (\$600 per family), and livelihood support interventions. Approximately 36,639 families (176,838 individuals) received core relief items since the beginning of the year, while shelter support included the rehabilitation of 250 damaged houses, with a further 800 under repair, in addition to cash-for-shelter assistance reaching 35 returnee households (217 individuals). In May, UNHCR also supported organised voluntary returns from camps and collective shelters to areas of origin in Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Homs, Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa, assisting 493 families (2,291 individuals) with transportation, protection support and relief items.

Despite these efforts, reintegration conditions remain uneven, with persistent gaps in housing, services, livelihoods, and security. These challenges are compounded by funding constraints, which continue to limit the scale, reach and sustainability of assistance, with direct implications for the sustainability of returns.

COORDINATION

Across the region, UNHCR continues to work closely with authorities and partners to ensure that returns remain voluntary, are guided by protection principles, and are coordinated across actors.

At the regional level, UNHCR convenes the Regional Durable Solutions Working Group (RDSWG), which brings together UN agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors to strengthen analysis, advocacy and coordination on protection and durable solutions for Syrian refugees. During April and May, the RDSWG facilitated discussions on regional return trends, protection considerations and preparedness, supported the development of common advocacy messages on protection and return, and promoted greater

coherence in analysis and information-sharing across operations. The platform also advanced discussions on priority thematic areas related to durable solutions, including return decision-making, housing, land and property issues, livelihoods, access to services and return preparedness, while supporting stronger cross-border exchange and regional coordination.

Inside **Syria**, UNHCR continues to lead multi-sector coordination with national authorities and partners at border points, working through 26 implementing partners and area-based approaches to support assistance in high-return areas. UNHCR also leads the Protection and Community Services sector and co-leads the Shelter and non-food items sector, ensuring a coordinated and protection-centred response.

In **Lebanon**, the Durable Solutions Working Group reviewed refugee perceptions, return trends and considerations related to future voluntary repatriation and organised return movements.

At the regional level, in **Türkiye**, the [2026 Türkiye chapter of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(3RP\)](#) was finalized and published, providing the overarching coordination framework for protection, resilience and solutions programming.

In **Jordan**, UNHCR continued close engagement with the Government of Jordan's Task Force on Return to support voluntary, safe and dignified return processes. UNHCR also convened the Operational Durable Solutions Working Group, bringing together 17 partner organizations to strengthen information-sharing, operational alignment and coordination around voluntary return and durable solutions programming. Higher-level information sharing, coordination and alignment are ensured through the Durable Solutions Working Group and the Jordan Strategic Humanitarian Committee (JoSH) (the main refugee response coordination forum).

Similarly in **Egypt**, Durable Solutions platforms convened partners to review return trends, strengthen joint analysis, and align programming responses, while advancing operational modalities, including cash support for returns. UNHCR's engagement with the National Council for Human Rights focused on refugee protection, detention concerns, public narratives and future cooperation on refugee rights.

Meanwhile in **Iraq**, coordination efforts with government counterparts helped address administrative bottlenecks affecting return procedures and confirmed the waiver of overstay fines for registered Syrian refugees returning voluntarily.

FUNDING

UNHCR's [Syria situation response](#) requires around **\$1.3 billion**. As of end-May, it was funded at **30% (\$375.6 million received)**. Funding shortfalls are already affecting service delivery, including community-based protection activities and return support in several operations.

USEFUL LINKS

- [UNHCR Middle East Situation/ Emergency Update - 18 as of 19 May 2026](#)
- [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 Jordan return dashboard](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Jordan – Voluntary Return page](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Lebanon – Voluntary Return page](#)
- [UNHCR HELP Türkiye – Voluntary Repatriation page](#)

UNHCR is grateful for the support of donors who contributed to its Syria situation response in 2026, including:

Australia | Austria | Belgium | Canada | Central Emergency Response Fund | Czechia | Denmark | European Union | Finland | France | Germany | Iceland | Italy | Ireland | Japan | Luxembourg | Malta | Netherlands (Kingdom of) | Norway | Other private donors | Poland | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | Syrian Humanitarian Fund | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America |

For more details, please contact UNHCR MENA Regional Bureau in Amman, Jordan at: MENAreporting@unhcr.org