

UNHCR Syria Emergency Response Brief

28 November 2024



Impact of the airstrikes at the Al Arida crossing point which resulted in casualties and injuries of several SARC personnel | © Al-Batoul & SARC



Lebanese refugee crossing back home | © UNHCR Syria

Population Movement*



562,000
Estimated Individuals
Who arrived in Syria from
Lebanon since 24 Sep 2024



63% of arrivals are **Syrians**
and
37% are **Lebanese** nationals

On 27 November, immediately following the ceasefire in Lebanon, almost 3,000 Lebanese refugees crossed by from Syria into Lebanon

In the midnight hours of 27 November, three border crossings with Lebanon – Dabbousieh, Jesr Al Qamar in Homs, and Al Arida in Tartous – were hit by airstrikes, resulting in some casualties, including the tragic loss of a SARC volunteer and injuries sustained by several others, as well as the destruction of connecting bridges and significant damage to surrounding structures, including UNHCR's Border Health and Protection Support Points, which have provided essential humanitarian assistance and legal support services to tens of thousands of new arrivals fleeing from the hostilities in Lebanon.

Statements deploring the attack and the loss and injury of humanitarian workers were made by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator Adam Abdelmoula and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis Ramanathan Balakrishnan, as well as by the UNHCR Representative in Syria, Gonzalo Vargas Llosa.

*Figures are undergoing verification and are subject to change.

Rural Damascus Governorate

On 27 November, following the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah, the Lebanese Ministry of Public Works and Transport began restoration work on the craters in the Masnaa road leading to Jdaidet Yabbous. By the evening, queues of vehicles – mainly bearing Lebanese license plates with the exceptions of a few Syrian private taxis – could be seen gathering at the border crossing point. Some 700 individuals – 400 Lebanese and 300 Syrians – crossed the Jdaidet Yabbous-Masnaa border into Lebanon the same evening.

On 28 November, the border crossing continued to be congested with cars bearing Lebanese license plates. It was also observed that the Syrian Immigration was allowing the departure of Lebanese nationals even if their residency in Syria had expired.

Homs Governorate

Prior to the airstrikes, the rate of new arrivals from Lebanon in the Homs border crossing points, Daboussieh and Jesr Qmar, remained relatively stable with some 400 individuals, both Syrian and Lebanese, crossing into Syria daily. However, the airstrikes have put both out of operation for the time being, as well as the UNHCR Border Health and Protection Support Point (Border Post) located in Daboussieh.

Shortly after the ceasefire announced on 27 November, work quickly began in filling up the craters left from the recent airstrikes on the Joussieh-Qaa border and was operational by mid-afternoon. According to immigration authorities, some 2,000 Lebanese had crossed back into Lebanon that day, and by mid-morning 28 November, a long queue of cars had already collected at the border crossing point waiting to cross into Lebanon. The immigration department was similarly overcrowded, with families having to spend over 2 hours to complete the immigration process. This was largely due to the limited power supply available after the solar panel systems had been damaged by the recent airstrikes.

Tartous Governorate

Al Arida border crossing was closed for the time-being following the airstrike that collapsed the bridge connecting Syria to Lebanon. Surrounding structures, including UNHCR's Border Post, suffered severe damage from the attack.

Deir Ezzor Governorate

On 26 and 27 November, some 380 Lebanese nationals respectively entered Syria from Iraq with the intention of returning to Lebanon. It was noted that the fees for vehicle re-entry from Iraq had posed difficulties for some Lebanese in this regard.

Operational Highlights

UNHCR and SARC teams continued to be present at the Joussieh and Jdaidet Yabbous border crossings, providing support to the Lebanese going back from Syria to Lebanon, including offering wheelchairs to the elderly and persons with disabilities. While most travelled using private cars, there were those who rented vehicles and trucks to transport their belongings, with costs ranging between USD 30-50 from within Homs to Joussieh, to more than USD 250 from other Governorates. At Jdaidet Yabbous, UNHCR observed that some Lebanese with limited means were being assisted by local NGOs to travel from Hurjelleh hosting centre and Seida Zeinab in Rural Damascus to the border crossing.

Many of the Lebanese expressed to UNHCR their joy at being able to return home and extended their heartfelt thanks to the Syrian people for their hospitality. Many cited work-related reasons for their return, having left their jobs when they fled following the escalation of hostilities on 23 September 2024 in Lebanon.



Protection

Within hours of the announcement of the ceasefire, UNHCR observed that a significant number of Lebanese families were preparing to return to Lebanon if not already departed. Since the ceasefire:

- 127 Lebanese families had left Hurjellah hosting centre in Rural Damascus;
- 48 Lebanese families have left hosting centres in Homs and Hama;
- 350 Lebanese families have left hosting centres in the Coastal Regions.

Meanwhile, in locations in Syria to which Syrians have crossed back since 24 September, including Ar-Raqqa, Latakia, Homs, Hama and Damascus Governorates, protection support continues to be provided through UNHCR's network of existing facilities (community centres, women and girls' safe spaces, child-friendly spaces, and mobile teams). Mass information and community outreach remain critical priorities. Inter-sectoral needs assessments are ongoing, with initial findings highlighting the overwhelming need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) amongst the recently arrived population.



UNHCR supports a Lebanese going back home with a wheelchair at Jousieh border point ©UNHCR Syria

UNHCR continues to provide protection activities at their host communities as part of the community-based approach. On 26 November, UNHCR's partners SARC and Al-Batoul reached some 100 Lebanese children residing at the Ras Al-Basit and Pioneer camp hosting centres in Latakia and Tartous, respectively. Since the beginning of the influx, over 1,000 children and guardians have participated in child protection activities, including recreational activities and awareness sessions.



114
Community Centres



92,190
Individuals Reached



Inter-Agency Coordination

Emergency Appeal Funding

To date, US\$55 million - both received and projected contributions - was provided, out of the total US\$324 million funding required for the Inter-agency Emergency Appeal for the Influx from Lebanon to Syria. With only 17 per cent secured, UN agencies urgently need funds to continue supporting new arrivals, particularly during the extremely harsh winter season in Syria.

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