

# Syrian Arab Republic

December 2023

The Syria crisis entered its thirteenth year in March 2023. The UN estimates that **16.7 million** people need humanitarian assistance across the country – a 9 per cent increase from 2023.

The security situation in parts of the country is once again increasingly unpredictable, and the economic situation is increasingly dire. Economic deterioration is a major driver of needs.

UNHCR continues to provide protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, stateless people, and host communities based on identified needs and vulnerabilities.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### 9,500

displaced and returnee families have benefited from the installation of a new bread production line in a bakery in Aleppo rehabilitated by UNHCR and WFP

### 1,612

earthquake-affected families evacuated from collective shelters received cash-for-rent assistance in December

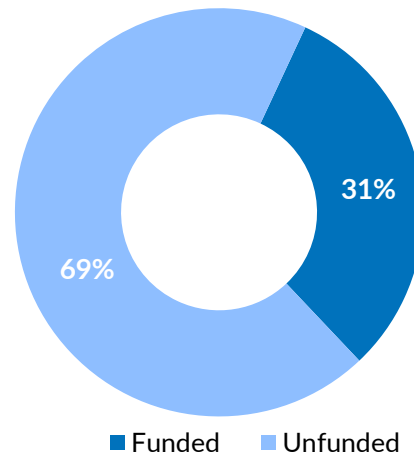
### 2,270

damaged houses have been repaired since the beginning of 2023

## FUNDING (AS OF 15 DECEMBER 2023)

### USD 504.3 million

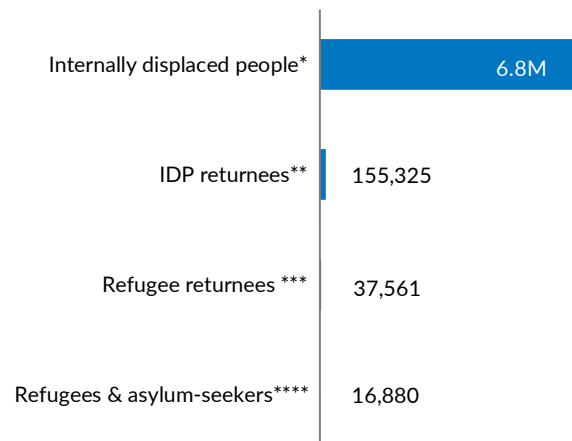
requested for the Syria Operation in 2023



## PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISPLACEMENT IN THE WHOLE OF SYRIA



Trained displaced persons and returnees manufacturing desks for a rehabilitated school in Aleppo Governorate. ©UNHCR/ M.Ghelli/Aleppo



\* Source: 2023 HNO

\*\* Source: OCHA, January-July 2023

\*\*\*Source: UNHCR verified returns in 2023 as of 31 December

\*\*\*\* Source: UNHCR, December 2023

More information on UNHCR's operations in the Syrian Arab Republic, including north-west Syria, is available on [Global Focus](#).

## Operational Context

The [2024 Summary Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview \(HNO\)](#) estimates that over 16.7 million people need humanitarian assistance in Syria. This is the highest number of people in need since the beginning of the crisis. Syria also has one of the largest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world (6.8 million). The 2024 summary HNO states that humanitarian and economic indicators in the country continue to deteriorate, and many basic services have collapsed. The February 2023 earthquakes have further compounded existing needs in a country that has experienced around 13 years of crisis.

UNHCR supports refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, host community members, and returnees (refugees and IDPs who have returned to their home areas) by providing assistance to those most in need using [community-based](#) and [area-based](#) approaches. UNHCR's [community-based approach](#) focuses on community mobilization and building self-reliance. It aims to reduce vulnerabilities and protection risks by providing services through community-based structures and networks. UNHCR's [area-based approach](#) entails working with partners to enhance support in geographic areas where the needs are greatest.

In 2023, UNHCR worked with 29 partners including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and national NGOs in all fourteen governorates.

## Operational Updates



### Protection

- In line with its community-based protection approach, as of end December UNHCR was supporting 117 [community/satellite centres](#) and 115 mobile units across the country. UNHCR is also engaging over 2,550 community outreach volunteers in all 14 governorates.
- UNHCR trained 33 partner staff on how to evaluate the impact of UNHCR-supported community centres. The training focused on measuring outreach, safety, accessibility, effectiveness of provided services, accountability, and complaint and feedback mechanisms.
- UNHCR also organized a two-day capacity building workshop for 40 outreach volunteers, focusing on community-based protection and community mobilization, the concept of outreach, and the roles and responsibilities of volunteers.
- In collaboration with UNICEF, UNHCR conducted a six-day "Parenting Care" workshop for 19 facilitators working in UNHCR-supported community centres in As-Sweida, Dar'a, and Quneitra Governorates.
- UNHCR organized a three-day training course from 3 to 5 December for a second group of over 50 lawyers and legal outreach volunteers working with UNHCR partners. The first group was trained in November. The training included an introduction to international protection, UNHCR's mandate, the legal aid programme; housing, land and property rights, as well as basic protection concepts.



### Core relief items

- In December, UNHCR provided winter items to around 15,470 vulnerable internally displaced and returnee families (around 86,900 individuals) in Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Hama, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous Dar'a, As-Sweida, and Deir-ez-Zor Governorates. In total this year, around 81,600 families (almost 431,100 individuals) received core relief items and seasonal items, compared to around 232,960 families (1,053,000 individuals) who benefited in 2022. The reduction in number of people who benefited in 2023 was due to reduced funding.
- An additional 53,547 families in 2023 received core relief and winter items as part of the emergency response including families in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate and those affected by the February earthquakes.



### Shelter

- By end of December, UNHCR in collaboration with partners successfully completed all planned shelter projects for the year. Over 114,500 individuals received emergency shelter support which included repairing nine collective shelters, providing around 8,380 tents, and ensuring the regular operation and maintenance of nine camps in north-east Syria.
- Clearing of around 52,630 cubic meters of debris in 2023 allowed around 280,000 returnee families to safely access their houses.
- Since January, UNHCR and partners restored about 5,740 linear meters of the sewage system, along with three boreholes that are now supporting over 80,000 individuals.
- In addition, UNHCR provided capacity building sessions to 1,260 partner and government counterpart technical staff in shelter project management and data management.
- In December, 918 families (4,081 individuals) in Aleppo, Latakia, and Tartous Governorates received cash for minor repairs for their houses damaged by the earthquakes. Since the beginning of the year, around 2,243 families benefited from this intervention. UNHCR also started the distribution of cash for rent in December supporting 300 earthquake-affected

families (1,612 individuals) who have departed from the collective shelters in Aleppo.

- Since January 2023, UNHCR repaired 2,270 damaged houses, installed around 4,660 [shelter material packages](#) and repaired over 180 communal areas within the damaged apartment buildings. Returnee families also benefited from the installation of over 4,340 solar streetlights and two transformers in their areas.



A house of an internally displaced family in rural Latakia Governorate after being repaired by UNHCR ©UNHCR/ Dahia /Latakia



### Livelihoods

- UNHCR collaborated with UNDP to train skilled individuals on manufacturing and fixing school desks as part of a repair project of seven schools affected by the February earthquakes in Aleppo and Latakia Governorates. This intervention has increased cost effectiveness and quality of the work, and community engagement. It has also provided income generating opportunities for over 100 IDPs and returnees in these two governorates.
- As part of a joint project with WFP, UNHCR completed the installation and testing of the bread production line and the generator set in Hanano Bakery in Aleppo city. This will increase the bread production capacity supporting over 9,500 households in the area, mainly displaced people and returnees. This also contributed to assisting 130 individuals with temporary jobs through cash-for-work.



### Cash Assistance

- UNHCR continues to provide multi-purpose cash assistance to people affected by the earthquakes in Aleppo, Latakia, Tartous, and Hama Governorates. In December, 3,631 households (18,449 individuals) and 1,492 households (6,009 individuals) in Latakia received cash assistance. As of end December, over 13,718 families benefited from the multi-purpose cash assistance.
- In addition, UNHCR continued its pilot project of cash assistance replacing the distribution of its general and

medical in-kind assistance and core relief items. In December, 440 families (1,368 individuals) in Aleppo and Tartous Governorates benefited from this assistance. 2023 was the first year that UNHCR engaged in cash assistance for people other than refugees and asylum-seekers.



### Refugee Response

- **Registration:** As of end December, following a recent verification exercise, some 16,900 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered with UNHCR. The majority of the registered refugees are from Iraq and reside primarily in urban areas in Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Aleppo, Homs, Tartous, and Latakia Governorates. In December, UNHCR renewed identification cards for around 1,220 refugees. The identification cards protect them against *refoulement*, ensure access to basic rights and services, and facilitate freedom of movement.
- **Refugee Status Determination (RSD):** Since January this year, 113 families (220 individuals) were recognized as refugees, helping to ensure their protection from *refoulement* and detention due to irregular stay, and their access to basic services.
- **Resettlement:** In December, UNHCR submitted one case of five individuals for resettlement, while one family (four individuals) were accepted for resettlement to the UK. UNHCR, in close coordination with IOM Lebanon, also facilitated the departure of an individual to Norway. In total, UNHCR submitted the cases of 55 individuals for resettlement in 2023 (22 individuals in 2022). A total of 19 individuals were accepted for resettlement in 2023 (compared to five individuals in 2022).
- **Cash Assistance:** UNHCR provided regular [multi-purpose cash assistance](#) to refugees and asylum-seekers for the months of November and December, supporting 5,288 families (15,304 individuals). A total of 5,951 families (16,687 individuals) also benefited from the winterization grant which will help them meet the increased needs during the winter months.



### Return

- In December, UNHCR verified or monitored the return to Syria of 2,847 refugees from Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.\*\*\*\*\* This brought the total number of refugee returnees verified or monitored by UNHCR in 2023 to 37,561 individuals, compared to 50,792 individuals in 2022. In total, between 2016 and December 2023, UNHCR has verified or monitored the return to Syria of some 391,497 individual refugees.\*\*\*\*\*.

\*\*\*\*\*Provisional figures pending further verification

**RECENTLY PUBLISHED:**

- [UNHCR Syria: Shelter factsheet \(November 2023\)](#)
- [Post Distribution Monitoring Exercise- Non-Food Items Distribution \(November 2023\)](#)
- [Post Distribution Monitoring Exercise- Adult Diapers Distribution \(November 2023\)](#)
- [Post Intervention Monitoring - Damaged House Repair \(November 2023\)](#)
- [Post Intervention Monitoring - Livestock Distribution Programme \(October 2023\)](#)
- [UNHCR Syria: Core relief items factsheet \(October 2023\)](#)
- [UNHCR Syria: Winterization factsheet \(September 2023\)](#)
- [UNHCR SYRIA: Cash-Based Interventions \(August 2023\)](#)
- [Legal Aid factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)
- [Mental health and psychosocial support factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)
- [Education factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)
- [Child Protection factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)
- [Gender-based violence factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)
- [Refugees and Asylum-seekers factsheet \(Q2 2023\)](#)

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