



SYRIA CRISIS SITUATION REPORT-3 JANUARY 2025



ibc.org.tr



Background:

As of December 2024, Syria is undergoing major transformations following the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad by the military operations. These transformations have created opportunities and challenges across sectors.

Although the end of al-Assad's regime has ushered in a new chapter for Syria, the nation faces substantial hurdles in achieving stability, economic recovery, and social cohesion. The international community's response and the new government's policies will be pivotal in shaping Syria's future trajectory.



SYRIA

UNHCR estimates that 115,000 Syrians have returned back to Syria since 8 December. This is based on public statements by host countries, contacts with immigration services from inside Syria and UNHCR and partner border monitoring.

In terms of official statements, on 30 December, the Turkish Minister of Interior reported that 35,114 Syrians have voluntarily returned since 8 December. The Government of Jordan also reported more than 22,000 Syrians have entered Syria through Jordan, 3,100 of whom are registered refugees.

As of 27 December, the IDP Taskforce reports that approximately 664,000 individuals remain newly displaced across Syria, primarily in Idleb and Aleppo governorates, since the beginning of December. Women and children account for more than three-quarters of those who remain displaced. Meanwhile, nearly 486,000 IDPs have returned to their areas of origin, mainly in Hama and Aleppo governorates.

Prevailing insecurity – including armed clashes, increased criminal activity, and unexploded ordnance - continues to present challenges for civilians and will likely influence the potential decision to return home faced by Syrians living outside the country.

UNHCR continues to engage with caretaker authorities, including a 29 December meeting with the Dar'a Governor's Office to discuss humanitarian needs in the governorate. Likewise, UNHCR continues to visit active border crossings, monitor processes and listen to Syrians crossing back into the country about their priorities and needs.



LEBANON

Departure traffic through official border crossings remains low but steady, predominantly through Masnaa crossing, including those who may be crossing for short periods to assess the situation in Syria.

In the Hermel area of Baalbek Governorate, official figures from the Government's Disaster Risk Management Unit remain steady at approximately 90,000 new arrivals from Syria (both Lebanese and Syrian). The number of people living in collective sites has fluctuated due to the fluid situation but stands at approximately 36,000 people (mostly Syrians) with the remainder of recent arrivals living in communities.

TÜRKİYE

According to official figures shared by the Minister of Interior on 30 December, a total of 35,114 Syrian individuals have returned voluntarily since 8 December. The Minister of Interior also noted that, to ensure a seamless and efficient process, six active border gates now operate around the clock with a combined daily processing capacity of 19,000 individuals, a substantial increase from the previous capacity of 3,020. The government also confirmed that go-and-see visits will be organized through two border crossings (Zeytindalı / Jinderes in Hatay and Çobanbey / Al Rai in Kilis) from 1 January – 1 July 2025.



EGYPT

Following recent developments in Syria, UNHCR in Egypt continues to see a higher-than-average number of case closure requests from Syrian refugees. Between 8 and 29 December, a total of 1,448 closure requests involving 2,695 individuals have been submitted to UNHCR, averaging 97 requests per working day compared to the November average of 7 closure requests.

UNHCR continues to provide counseling support to Syrians seeking information about the situation in Syria. The main questions revolve around whether UNHCR Egypt can assist with repatriation support, whether fines for overstays and delayed residence permits can be waived upon exit, if returning to Syria is safe and which routes should be avoided.



IRAQ

At the Peshkabour border crossing, since 8 December, 948 Syrians have permanently returned to Syria through official returns processes, including 105 (11%) Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR. Over the past week, UNHCR has noted a slight decrease in the number of registered Syrian refugees returning through Peshkabour, though the overall numbers remain low, with an average of 11 registered refugees returning daily. The number of individuals returning to Aleppo governorate is the highest, with returnees citing the improved security situation and the abolition of compulsory military service as the main reasons for their return. Between 22 and 28 December, 613 Syrians reportedly departed Iraq via the Al-Qaim border crossing, averaging approximately 87 individuals per day, although the status and type of return are not recorded at this crossing point. This marks a slight increase compared to the daily average of 70–80 Syrians prior to 8 December. The Al-Qaim border crossing remains closed for entry into Iraq.

JORDAN

During a media interview on 28 December, Bassam Al-Dahamsheh, Director of Nationality and Foreigners' Affairs Directorate at the Ministry of Interior announced that approximately 22,000 Syrians have entered Syria via Jordan since 6 December, including 3,100 Syrian refugees. This total figure includes Syrians who used Jordan as a transit country on their way to Syria. The Director also reaffirmed that Jordan will not forcibly return Syrian refugees, leaving the choice for repatriation to them. He also noted that Syrian refugees could leave Jordan without a passport, using international travel documents issued by the Syrian embassy. Relatedly, on 30 December, the government of Jordan confirmed that UNHCR's asylum seeker certificates (ASCs) will be accepted as valid travel documents to Syria, following a request made by the Syrian embassy to the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. UNHCR teams have noticed a shift in demographics of returnees to Syria this week, with more women and children returning rather than men traveling alone. When interviewed, some families reported that the head of household would stay in Jordan for several more months to earn money that will support the family's reintegration inside Syria before joining them.



CHALLENGES OF RETURN:

Syrians considering returning to their homeland face significant concerns, especially those without homes to return to. The primary fears include:

Lack of Shelter:

Years of conflict have led to widespread destruction of housing. Many returnees find their homes either destroyed or occupied, leaving them without adequate shelter. This situation is particularly dire during winter months, as returning without guaranteed shelter exposes families to harsh conditions.

Economic Hardship:

Syria's economy and infrastructure have been devastated by years of conflict, resulting in high unemployment and limited access to basic services. Returnees often struggle to find employment and secure necessities like food and water, making reintegration challenging.



However, despite these challenges and many other obstacles, some Syrian families, exhausted by years of displacement and living in tents, have returned to their destroyed homes and tried to make them as livable as possible.

This comes from the belief that the walls of their home in their homeland are warmer and safer than the tents they were living in, which offered no protection from the rain and freezing winter cold, nor from the extreme heat of summer. The people's joy at the fall of Bashar Al-Assad's regime, with all its tyranny and brutality, drove them to return to Syria without fully considering the magnitude of the challenges they would face, and as a result, their inability to confront or address these challenges.

