

Update on Displacement from Lebanon to Iraq

04 December 2024

Data referenced is based on information UNHCR has collated from Government sources and partners between 27 September and 03 November.¹

Situation Overview

- Following the ceasefire in Lebanon, [4,035 refugees have reportedly returned home from Iraq](#) through the Al-Qaim border crossing. This includes 355 on 26 and 27 November, 1,210 on 28 November, 1,490 on 29 November and 912 on 30 November. The number of Lebanese refugee departures from Baghdad and Najaf airports are not yet confirmed. Despite this, returns to Lebanon through the land border crossing drastically reduced from 01 December given the developing situation in Syria and [the partial closure of the Al-Qaim border crossing](#), with 19 and 49 Lebanese refugees departing on 01 and 02 December respectively.
- Since 01 December, the Al-Qaim border crossing is only allowing entry for Iraqis or Lebanese/Syrian nationalities who are married to Iraqis and already have the prerequisite entry documents. In addition, there are restrictions on departure from Iraq to Syria through the border crossing with only Lebanese/Syrian nationals allowed to exit Iraq. Additionally, Iraqi bus drivers are reportedly no longer permitted to drive beyond the border into Syria, further restricting road travel options for Lebanese refugees seeking to return by land.
- In light of the above situation, the Iraqi Government has indicated discussions are underway with the Ministry of Transport [to support Lebanese wishing to return to depart by air](#). On 02 December, the Prime Minister of Iraq directed the concerned authorities to operate free flights for those wishing to return. According to media reports, over [4,000 Lebanese in Karbala and Najaf have already registered to return home](#). UNHCR is also aware that Lebanese who can afford their own flights, continue to return home via air, with Middle East Airlines (MEA) flights from Baghdad to Beirut currently fully booked until 9 December and from Najaf to Beirut until 6 December.
- Despite the ceasefire, small numbers of Lebanese continue arriving in Iraq with 110 arrivals through the Al-Qaim border crossing [since 27 November](#). An additional 1,066 Lebanese are also reported to have arrived in Iraq through airports in Baghdad and Najaf although their purpose of travel is unknown. UNHCR continues to actively monitor and gather data on the arrivals and departure from Lebanon to Iraq.
- On 01 December, UNHCR met with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD) alongside IOM and UN Habitat to discuss the short- and long-term planning scenarios for Lebanese refugees in Iraq. The Prime Ministers Office (PMO) has directed MOMD to continue to coordinate with the UN and prepare plans for the continued hosting of Lebanese.
- On 28 November, UNHCR accompanied the UN Resident Coordinator on a one-day mission to Kerbala for meetings with the Governor and provincial authorities as well as Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbalai on the situation and plans related to support Lebanese in the Governorate, with a focus on return.

¹ The latest update on the situation in Syria can be viewed here <https://reporting.unhcr.org/syrian-arab-republic-emergency-response-brief-6> and from Lebanon here <https://reporting.unhcr.org/lebanon-emergency-flash-update-17>

UNHCR and Partner Presence

Some points may reiterate details from previous Flash Updates for ease and relevance.

- UNHCR and its partner the International Rescue Committee (IRC) remain present in Anbar. UNHCR continues to seek access to refugees at the border at Al-Qaim through its partner and monitor arrivals and departures of refugees from Lebanon.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with existing partners in Federal Iraq, continues to provide child protection support, responding to gender-based violence (GBV), and mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS) to individuals seeking assistance at community centres including those who have fled Lebanon.
- To date, 97 refugee families fleeing Lebanon have approached UNHCR seeking these protection services. UNHCR also continues to provide information to refugees from Lebanon on how they can access national services such as education and healthcare.

For non-Lebanese refugees, UNHCR is facilitating registration in accordance with existing procedures. To date, 129 Syrian and 5 Palestinian households have reached out to UNHCR online, identifying themselves as Syrians who arrived in Iraq from Lebanon following the onset of hostilities there and requesting registration.

Government of Iraq Response

- The Government of Iraq continues to support Lebanese in Iraq and provide the necessary supplies and humanitarian assistance. Most are located in Karbala, Najaf, and other Governorates across central and south Iraq.
- A directive issued by the [Iraqi Prime Minister's office on 7 October](#), instructed that Lebanese citizens who are arriving in Iraq should be called "guests of Iraq" instead of "displaced". On 1 October, the Council of Minister [designated the Ministry of Migration and Displacement as the Ministry in charge of the provision of humanitarian and relief assistance to the Lebanese refugees](#).
- The Government of Iraq has committed to include Lebanese in national systems and approved the allocation of three billion dinars (approximately USD 2.27 million) to assist Lebanese arriving in country.
- Iraq's Minister of Education (MOE) has issued instructions advising schools in Iraq to host students and pupils coming from Lebanon to avoid depriving them of studying this year. As of 11 November, some 2,500 Lebanese children are reported by the MOE to be enrolled in public schools across the country. In addition, Lebanese refugees have access to national public health services.