

# UNHCR Syria Flash Update #4

## Response to Displacement from Lebanon to Syria

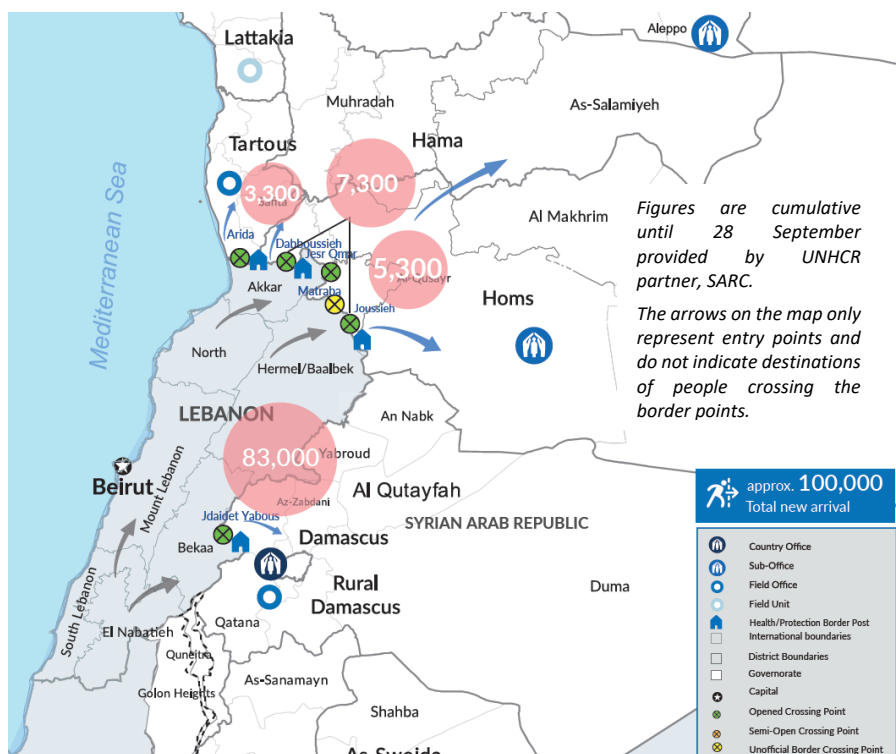
Reporting period: 24-29 September 2024



UNHCR and SARC set up a Rub-hall overnight on 28 September to provide additional resting space for new arrivals ©UNHCR Syria/Hameed Maarouf

A total of approximately **100,000<sup>1</sup>** people (both Lebanese and Syrians) are estimated to have crossed from Lebanon to Syria since the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon.

It is estimated that around **60 per cent** are **Syrians** and **40 per cent** are **Lebanese nationals**.



<sup>1</sup> The numbers of new arrivals in this document are from “Middle East Crisis- SARC Emergency Response: Syrian Returnees and Lebanese Refugees Influx” (28 September 2024). The numbers also include people entering through the Matraha crossing point (an unofficial border) where UNHCR is not present.

## Overview of Developments

- The mass inflow of Syrians returnees and Lebanese refugees that took place throughout 28 September following the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon continued into 29 September, most visibly at the Jdeidet Yabous border crossing.
- On 29 September, the Government of Syria announced a one-week waiver of the exchange of USD 100.00 normally required of each Syrian when entering Syria (Council of Minister's decision No. 12147/1). The feeling of relief was palpable amongst the Syrian crowds, many of whom were exhausted after hours of waiting, some for days, for a resolution to this blockage to their entry. This has had a significant positive impact.
- There was a striking number of young children amongst the new arrivals. Some 60 per cent of those crossing the border points were reportedly under the age of 18.
- Many medical emergencies occurred, most of which was the consequence of exhaustion and dehydration from the long journey. One additional immigration centre was operationalized to address this concern.
- To provide additional resting space for new arrivals at the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point, UNHCR and SARC erected a Rub-hall on 28 September and another on 29 September.
- UNHCR and its partners continue to scale up assistance for the new arrivals, distributing relief items, food, and water, among others, to those arriving at the border crossings. Furthermore, UNHCR arranges transportation for extremely vulnerable families (Syrians and Lebanese) from the border to their destinations in Syria. On 29 September, approximately 2,500 vulnerable individuals received transportation support. UNHCR is scaling up the transportation capacity.
- In Homs, Hama, Tartous, Aleppo, Damascus, and Rural Damascus Governorates, new arrivals are primarily being hosted by relatives and communities. Some Syrian local communities are also offering shelter and other support to Lebanese refugees.
- Collective shelters are being established by the Government at the destinations to allow a small number of destitute Lebanese to stay.
- At the destinations of new arrivals, UNHCR and its partners are now accelerating provision of support to both the new arrivals and host communities to pre-empt the resulting additional strain. On 29 September, UNHCR handed over relief items to the Governor of Rural Damascus to ease the burdens on the local Syrian communities who are hosting the new arrivals.

## Overview of New Arrivals

- The increase of arrivals at border crossings continued on 29 September, with a comparatively higher proportion of new arrivals being Lebanese. The majority are seeking to enter Syria through the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing point (Rural Damascus).
- The number of new arrivals at the Jousieh border crossing point (Homs) reportedly doubled on 29 September.



*New arrivals at the Jousieh border crossing point  
©UNHCR Syria/Eugenie Umutesi*

## Response by UNHCR and Partners

- UNHCR and its partner SARC continue to be present at four official border crossings that Syria shares with Lebanon, offering support to new arrivals through the Border Health-Protection Support Points that UNHCR, together with WHO and SARC, established at each of these crossings over the past year.
- Humanitarian partners continue to provide essential assistance and services at the border crossing points, including blankets, mattresses, water, food, hygiene kits and others, scaling up in response to the increase in new arrivals:
  - From the beginning of the influx until 29 September, **UNHCR** has distributed food items, water and relief-items to approximately 40,000 individuals.
  - **UNICEF** and the **ICRC** is coordinating with UNHCR and SARC to deliver the emergency items, including mobile latrines and hygiene materials, to address critical water, sanitation and hygiene needs at the border crossing points.
  - **WFP** is processing the further delivery of food bars for 40,000 persons and ready-to-eat meals for 20,000 persons for distribution through SARC.
  - **WHO** donated life-saving and life-sustaining medicines, including atropine, heparin sodium, isoflurane, lidocaine hydrochloride, and sevoflurane, to the Ministry of Health for the response at the sub-national level, as well as oxygen concentrators and first aid kits to various health points.
- UNHCR also shared with new arrivals – both Syrians and Lebanese – information on available services at 114 UNHCR-supported community centres in all 14 governorates.
- UNHCR and its partners SARC and Syria Trust continue to provide legal assistance to facilitate the provision of civil documentation to Syrians returning to Syria.
- At the destinations of new arrivals, UNHCR is providing relief items for both Syrian and Lebanese families.
  - On 29 September, UNHCR delivered to the Governor of Rural Damascus relief items, including 4,000 mattresses, 4,000 blankets, 4,000 kitchen kits, and over 10,000 adult diapers. These items will be distributed for new arrivals at Dwier Collective Shelter in Rural Damascus, which is currently under preparation.
  - As of 29 September, in Tartous Governorate, 1 collective shelter (Al-Karnak collective shelter) and 2 temporary centres are operational, mainly to house Lebanese refugees. At the Pioneer Reception Centre (temporary centre), 105 Lebanese families (525 persons) are currently staying.
  - In Lattakia Governorate, 2 collective shelters (Sports City Collective Shelter and Al-Nakheel Beach Shelter) are being set up to host new arrivals. In Lattakia, 1,250 Lebanese refugees are reportedly being hosted in different places in the governorate.



Handover of UNHCR's relief items to the Governor of Rural Damascus ©UNHCR Syria/Ola Kabalan

- In Homs, 2 collective shelters have been opened by the authorities, accommodating 58 Lebanese families (293 persons). These Lebanese refugees received relief items, ready-to-eat meals and hygiene kits from UNHCR and ICRC, while the host community offered them cooked meals.



Lebanese refugee families hosted in collective shelters in rural Homs, near the Jousieh border, talking to UNHCR ©UNHCR Syria/Eugenie Umutesi



NFI distribution to Lebanese families in Ramzon neighborhood in Al Qseer city in Homs ©UNHCR Syria/Eugenie Umutesi

## The voices of people affected on the ground

*Rahaf\* a mother of three fled the south of Lebanon while her husband stayed behind. She spent two days travelling to the border in an overcrowded bus. “My daughter is so exhausted”, she said while holding her baby girl.*

*When asked how she will meet her basic needs, she said, “I can barely afford bread, but I would rather stay hungry than fear for something happening to my children”.*

*Despite it all, Rahaf still hopes for a better future for her children, “I wish I could provide them with the best life I could, the best clothes, the best food. We deprived them of so much and I just wish I could give them what they deserve”.*

*\*Names changed for privacy reasons.*



Rahaf\* and her children at the Syrian-Lebanese border crossing ©UNHCR Syria/Farah Harwida

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**CONTACT:** UNHCR Syria External Relations Unit, Email: [SYRDAREPORTING@unhcr.org](mailto:SYRDAREPORTING@unhcr.org)

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