

UNHCR Syria Flash Update #8

Response to Displacement from Lebanon to Syria

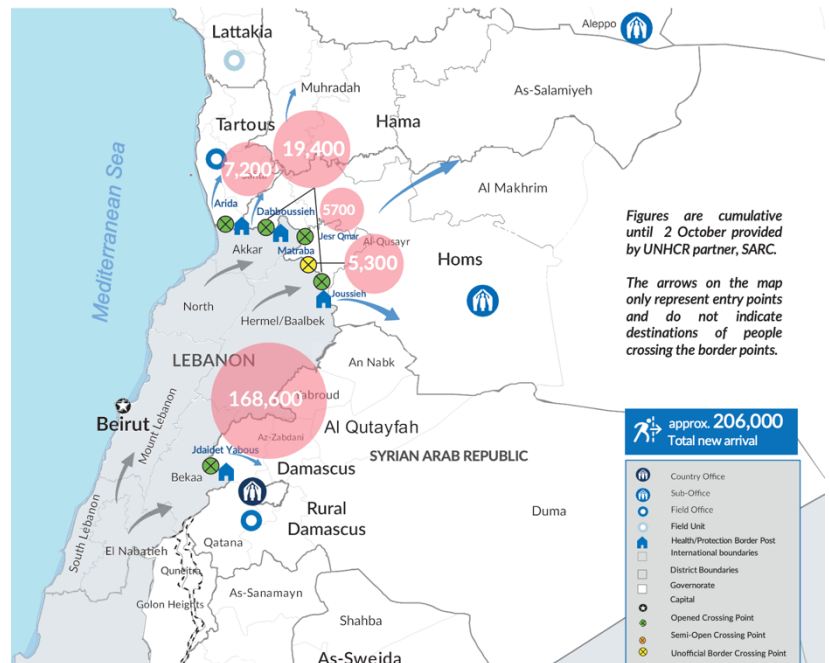
Reporting period: 24 September - 4 October 2024



The Masnaa border crossing in Lebanon following the airstrikes | © UNHCR Syria

A total of approximately **206,000¹** 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 **70 per cent** are **Syrians** and **30 per cent** are **Lebanese nationals**.



¹ The numbers of new arrivals in this document are from "Middle East Crisis- SARC Emergency Response: Syrian Returnees and Lebanese Refugees Influx" (issued 4 October 2024). The numbers also include people entering through the Matraha crossing point (an unofficial border) where UNHCR is not present.

Overview of Developments

- Since 23 September, more than **200,000** Syrian and Lebanese nationals have crossed the border into Syria, fleeing the rapidly escalating hostilities in Lebanon. This high volume of people in just 12 days underscores the severe impact of the conflict on civilians and the urgent need for action as the crisis deepens.
- Following the airstrikes close to the Masnaa border point (Lebanon), some new arrivals continued their 4km journey through no man's land, walking through the crater towards the Jdaidet Yabous border point (Syria).
- Many were seen transported by commercial means or relatives from the crater area to Jdaidet Yabous. However, some extremely vulnerable families had no such transportation arrangements. Following an immediate on-site assessment by the UNHCR Representative, 9 buses were quickly organised through SARC to transport 600 vulnerable persons from the crater directly to the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing.
- While the traffic through Jdaidet Yabous due to the aforementioned attack decreased, arrivals from Lebanon to Syria steadily continued throughout the day at all other official border crossings. Many arrivals indicated that they had diverted their travel routes away from Jdaidet Yabous to other border crossings following the airstrikes.
- Hosting centres established by local authorities continued to provide shelter options for vulnerable Lebanese families who recently arrived in Syria and do not have alternative accommodation. At present, there are more than 25 hosting centres located throughout Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Idlib, Tartous and Latakia governorates, with a collective estimated capacity to accommodate some 10,000 people. As of 5 October, over 1,800 vulnerable families are being accommodated in hosting centres. UNHCR and its partners are closely engaged in mitigating protection risks, especially to women and girls, and are distributing core relief items to support these families in need.

Overview of New Arrivals

- Since 30 September, UNHCR observed that the rate of arrivals during the night at the Homs border points has been higher than during the day. This could be attributed to concerns over airstrikes that have predominantly occurred during the daytime, the intention to avoid congestion and long travel times required to reach the borders.

Response by UNHCR and Partners

Life-saving assistance continues to be provided at the Syrian borders by UN agencies and humanitarian partners, including **ICRC, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), SARC, and Syria Trust.**

- **WFP** distributed some 2,000 fresh food boxes at the Jdaidet Yabous border point to support families, primarily women and children. Two food distribution points are also being set up near the Rub-halls to facilitate organized distribution.



UNHCR supporting newly arrived families at the border points | © UNHCR Syria

- Legal assistance at the border points is ongoing by UNHCR's legal partners, **SARC** and **Syria Trust**. Since 23 September, over 6,000 families (around 30,000 persons) received legal counselling and support including on civil documentation.
- **UNHCR**, in cooperation with **SARC**, is supporting extremely vulnerable families with transportation from the borders to their destinations inside Syria. To address the increasing needs for transportation support, UNHCR is expanding the transportation capacity. As of 4 October, a total of 19 buses, with a capacity of 950 passengers, are stationed at the Jdaidet Yabous (Damascus), Joussieh and Daboussieh (in Homs), and Al Arida (Tartous).



Distribution of core relief items | © SARC

Hosting Centres for Lebanese Families

- In **Rural Damascus**, 50 Lebanese families (some 150 individuals) are staying at the Hujelleh hosting centre. UNHCR and SARC continue providing core relief items to respond to their needs.

On 3 October, the Syrian Family Planning Association provided health services through its mobile clinic. ICRC also distributed food packages to the families hosted, while UNHCR and PUI are undertaking maintenance and rehabilitation work to enhance the living conditions at the centre. Additionally, UNHCR, SARC, and NRC will provide mental health, psychosocial support, and recreational activities for children.



UNHCR at the Joussieh border point | © UNHCR Syria

- In **Tartous**, the Pioneer Camp reception centre, as well as the Al Karnak and Blue Bay hosting centres are accommodating over 100 Lebanese families (583 individuals). UNHCR and SARC are distributing relief items including hygiene kits, blankets and mattresses to support new arrivals at the centres.
- In **Latakia**, 214 Lebanese families (706 individuals) are being accommodated at a reception centre in Sport City and five hosting centres in Palm Beach, Ras Al Basit-Labour Union, Ras Al Basit-Chalets, Al Sheer, and Blue Beach. On 4 October, SARC distributed 150 core relief kits to some of these hosting centres.
- In **Homs**, the Mar Elias and Al Saida Al Athraa Churches are serving as hosting centres for 58 Lebanese families (293 individuals), while 25 Lebanese families (115 individuals) are staying at the "Deaf and Mute" hosting centre in **Hama**, which is managed by Syrian Department of Social Affairs and Labour.

Community Outreach Efforts

- In **Homs and Hama**, SARC also identified over 5,000 families (24,000 individuals) – primarily Lebanese – who were being hosted by relatives and other members of the local community.
- UNHCR, through its respective partners, distributed core relief and winter items to these new arrivals, including mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets, plastic sheets, sleeping mats, solar lamps, jerrycans, and winter clothing.

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