

UNHCR Syria Flash Update #7

Response to Displacement from Lebanon to Syria

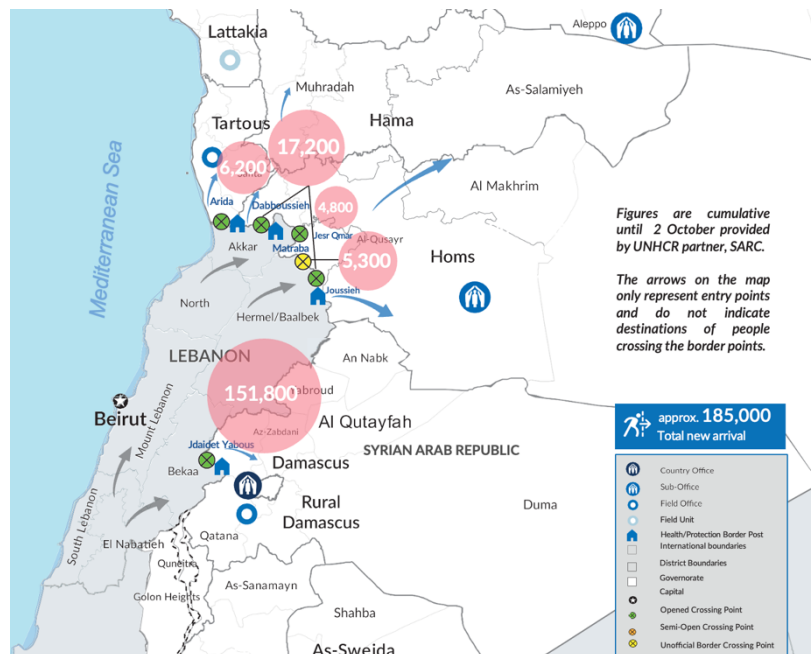
Reporting period: 24 September- 4 October 2024



UNHCR supporting new arrivals at the Jesr Al Qmar crossing point ©UNHCR Syria

A total of approximately **185,000¹** 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 3 October 2024). The numbers also include people entering through the Matraba crossing point (an unofficial border) where UNHCR is not present.

In the early morning of 4 October, air strikes hit no man's land at the border between Lebanon and Syria (Masnaa/Jdaidet Yabous), which has been the main route for Syrians and Lebanese fleeing into Syria. As at 09:30 (Damascus time), that border crossing remains closed.

This development is of extreme concern to UNHCR.

The other official border crossing points (Al Arida, Joussieh, Daboussieh and Jesr Al Qmar) between Lebanon and Syria, where UNHCR and SARC are present, continue to be open.

Overview of Developments

- The arrivals from Lebanon to Syria continue. On 2 October, at the Jdaidet Yabous border point, some 14,000 Syrians and 3,000 Lebanese nationals reportedly crossed.
- Arrivals from Lebanon to Syria through the official border crossings remained steady but light, consistent with the day before. Jdaidet Yabous remains the primary border crossing for new arrivals. **As noted above, this border crossing point suffered an attack, causing the flow of arrivals to stop. Further details will be shared in the next edition of this flash update.*
- At the Al Arida crossing point (Tartous), a total of 460 people including Lebanese (170) arrived on 3 October. UNHCR and SARC distributed more than 810 relief items including hygiene kits, adult diapers, water and food packages. The installation of a Rub-hall is also underway to offer families who arrive exhausted at the border a resting space.
- The Jesr Al Qmar crossing point (Homs) is increasingly seeing more new arrivals crossing into rural Homs, primarily by Syrian nationals. UNHCR is now regularly conducting visits to ensure that the situation on the ground is properly captured. SARC continues to provide water and food items to new arrivals.
- On 3 October, UNHCR observed an increase of new arrivals moving from Jdaidet Yabous towards northeast Syria, particularly to Ar-Raqqa Governorate.
- UNHCR and SARC continue to provide transportation to extremely vulnerable families from the Syrian borders to their destinations inside Syria. On 3 October new bus routes were expanded to facilitate travel from border crossings to Ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Latakia, and Tartous. Increased numbers of new arrivals were observed in Hama Governorate seeking travel towards Ar-Raqqa with similar movements observed in other governorates. UNHCR and SARC intervened with free buses to complement existing transportation options in the governorate.
- Other nationals have continued to be recorded amongst the new arrivals. According to the Syrian Immigration Office, 17 Sudanese nationals have crossed into Syria since the escalation of hostilities in Lebanon. Entry visas for Sudanese nationals continue to be waived.
- On 30 September, the Iraqi Embassy in Damascus announced a waiver of visa requirements for Lebanese nationals seeking to enter Iraq through its airport or border crossing with Syria. The Embassy also stated that it will facilitate entry for Lebanese vehicles at its land borders. Visas upon arrival will also be granted to Syrian women married to Lebanese, if a valid marriage registration is presented.
- The Iraqi Embassy also announced that Syrian immigration authorities will permit Iraqis fleeing from Lebanon to enter Syria with minimal identification requirements, for example accepting expired passports. Those who need to renew their passports can approach the Embassy to facilitate the onward journey to Iraq.

Overview of New Arrivals

- On 3 October, Syrian new arrivals at the Jdaidet Yabous border point (Damascus) reported that Lebanese immigration authorities had resumed the exit stamping protocol at its border crossing for Syrians. This practice had been paused to facilitate easier exits for Syrians fleeing to Syria. The resumption resulted in congestion at immigration offices on the Lebanese side. In Masnaa/Jdaidet Yabous, it was reported that some Syrians opted to cross irregularly by foot towards the Syrian border in order to bypass the Lebanese immigration point.



Families arriving at the Syrian border points exhausted
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Response by UNHCR and Partners

UN agencies and humanitarian partners including **ICRC**, **UNFPA**, **UNICEF**, **WFP**, **WHO**, **Première Urgence Internationale (PUI)**, **SARC** and **Syria Trust** continue to support new arrivals at the Syrian borders by providing core relief items, health services and legal assistance, among others.

- UNICEF** is working closely with the Syrian Department of Health to provide vaccines, outpatient consultations, nutrition screening and distribution of micronutrients to new arrivals. A clinic deployed by the Ministry of Health is also stationed at the border points providing health services and medicines, with an ambulance for emergency response at all times.
- WFP** is providing fresh food to families at a food distribution point being set up near the Rub-halls in the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing.
- On 2 October, **SARC** provided more than 200 blankets at the Jdaidet Yabous border point for families staying in Rub-halls. **PUI** installed lights and electrical outlets to improve visibility and safety, while enabling people to charge their electronic devices, such as mobile phones, to enhance their communication channels.
- On 3 October, **UNHCR** dispatched more than 4,600 core relief items (including blankets, mattresses, solar lamps, adult diapers, and hygiene kits) and 40,000 food packages to help new arrivals at the Jdaidet Yabous, Al Arida, Joussieh and Daboussieh border points meet their critical needs.
- UNHCR** legal partners **SARC** and **Syria Trust** continued to be present to provide legal assistance to new arrivals. Copies of the recent circular from the Ministry of the Interior waiving fines for late civil registration were distributed to Syrian new arrivals to ensure their awareness.



Belongings of families at the Jesr Al Qmar border point
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Hosting Centres for Lebanese Families

- In **Rural Damascus**, the Hujelleh hosting centre is accommodating some 40 Lebanese families (136 individuals including 49 children). SARC continues to provide relief items, including food. UNHCR is currently exploring ways to integrate child-friendly activities at the centre. Health services, including primary health care and support to persons with chronic illnesses, are being provided by the Ministry of Health, the Syrian Family Planned Association and SARC.
- In **Tartous**, some 90 Lebanese families (447 individuals) are staying at three locations in Tartous: Pioneer Camp reception centre, and Al Karnak and Blue Bay hosting centres. UNHCR and SARC continue to distribute core relief kits² to support new arrivals at these centres.



UNHCR & SARC providing assistance at the border points @UNHCR Syria

UNHCR's partner, Al Batoul also identified 9 Lebanese families (49 individuals) and 3 Syrian families (9 individuals) in Tartous. They were supported with psychosocial support, hygiene kits, baby and adult diapers. Since 27 September, UNHCR and its partners have distributed more than 200 core relief kits to newly arrived families in Tartous.

- In **Latakia**, more than 200 Lebanese families (706 individuals) are being hosted at the Sport City reception centre along with five other hosting centres (Palm Beach, Ras Al Basit-Labour Union, Ras Al Basit-Chalets, Al Sheer, and Blue Beach). UNHCR and its partners have so far distributed over 300 core relief kits to support the families staying at the hosting centres.
- In **Homs**, a total of 58 Lebanese families (293 individuals) are being hosted at the Mar Elias and Al Saida Al Athraa Churches. Main identified needs include clothing, female hygiene kits, and baby formula. There is also a pressing need for latrines that are accessible to the elderly and people with physical disabilities. These facilities are essential to ensure dignity and safety for individuals who may struggle with mobility.
- In **Hama**, some 25 Lebanese families (115 families) are staying at the "Deaf and Mute" hosting centre that is managed by the Syrian Department of Social Affairs and Labour. On 2 October, UNHCR through SARC provided relief items including winter clothing to the hosted families.

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²Core relief *kits* are packages containing a combination of essentials such as hygiene items, kitchen sets, blankets, amongst other items.