

Strengthening Regional Policy Dialogue and Partnerships on Solutions

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Mercy Corps' Crisis Analysis/MENAE team provides regular context updates to inform development and humanitarian programming across the region and conducts in-depth research on socio-economic dynamics, leveraging its unique field access and longstanding traditional in both humanitarian and development sectors.

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Introduction





Introduction



This bulletin is a product of the ‘Strengthening Regional Policy Dialogue and Partnerships on Solutions’ project, which seeks to strengthen evidence-based policy dialogue, advocacy, and partnerships on adaptive solutions. This project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with Mercy Corps and funded by the Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP). As a multi-donor platform managed by the Kingdom of Denmark, RDPP was first initiated in 2014 as a multi-donor response to address the humanitarian and development needs of refugees and displacement affected communities in the countries neighboring Syria. The project leverages Mercy Corps’ Crisis Analysis to support ongoing and emerging policy and advocacy efforts underpinned by a bespoke body of evidence and grounded in contextual realities

This bulletin provides an overview of developments that directly and indirectly impact forcibly displaced and host communities across Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. It examines recent developments and conditions in both areas of return and host communities, factors that affect decision-making about returns. The bulletin aims to support evidence-based planning and coordination among actors working on return-related issues, including regional response stakeholders, state actors, INGOs, and the private sector.

The bulletin is structured thematically to focus on socioeconomic conditions in areas of displacement and return, official policy and administrative procedures applying to displaced Syrians, response strategies and resources to facilitate them, reintegration and social protection, and IDP movement trends.

Key Takeaways





Key Takeaways

- Syrians face a range of socioeconomic considerations when weighing returns. For example, in Lebanon, displaced Syrian nationals are contending with reduced access to healthcare and education due to limited donor funding. Separately, conditions in Syria, including access to housing, can present a major barrier to return. While the Syrian Central Bank recently proposed a new housing loan initiative, the timeline for implementation remains unclear. Syria's reintegration into global finance also could act as a pull factor, though the extent of this influence remains uncertain.
- Lebanon and Jordan are working on several initiatives to facilitate refugee returns. Jordan eased re-entry restrictions for Syrian nationals with economic, educational, or property ties. Meanwhile, Lebanon waived exit fees, fines, and entry bans for displaced Syrians exiting the country between July 1 and September 30, while the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) stepped up enforcement of residency and identification requirements.
- Syrian refugees continue to grapple with insecurity as they weigh their return options. Inter-communal tensions in Syria have escalated, namely along the northwest coastal areas and in the south and northeast. In As-Sweida, clashes between Druze and Bedouin tribes resulted in hundreds of deaths, as well as displacement and destruction. In the northeast, clashes have broken out between the SDF and pro-government forces amid stalled negotiations over SDF integration into the national army and autonomy for Kurdish areas of the country.
- Events in Syria are driving several modes of refugee and IDP movements. In Lebanon, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded 103,455 new Syrian arrivals from December 8, 2024 to July 31, 2025 – many from minority communities with no support networks. In Jordan, the Emirati Camp closed on July 1 after operating for 12 years, with 4,932 of its residents returning to Syria, 2,331 leaving independently, and 1,147 relocating to Azraq camp, a non-UN administered camp.

Socio-Economic Conditions and Services

The image features a group of people, including a child in the foreground, walking away from the camera. They are carrying various items of luggage, such as suitcases and bags. The scene is set outdoors, with a paved area and a rocky hillside in the background. A large, semi-transparent red geometric shape, resembling a stylized 'V' or a folded piece of fabric, is overlaid on the right side of the image. The text 'Socio-Economic Conditions and Services' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font across the upper left portion of the image.



Socio-Economic Conditions and Services

Syria: Returning to Work, Returning Home

In early 2025, the Syrian transitional government [launched a phased initiative](#) to reinstate public sector employees who were dismissed for anti-government activities by the Assad regime. Led by the Ministry of Administrative Development, the initiative began with calls for registration in late 2024 and rapidly expanded across multiple ministries. By July, thousands of former public sector employees had been invited to report to their directorates, including [and over 2,000 to the Ministry of Economy](#) and many others from [the Ministry of Agriculture](#).

While largely framed as a transitional justice measure, the initiative may have wider implications for displacement dynamics. Reinstatement could incentivize former civil servants to return to their home communities, both IDPs and refugees. Informed sources in Jordan reported that some refugees expressed a desire to return after seeing their names on reinstatement lists, while others noted they would only do so once their names are included. Although these cases remain limited and anecdotal, they highlight the potential role of job security in shaping return decisions.

Going forward, closer attention should be paid to public sector reinstatement and its wider linkages. Such research and analysis should track the scale of reinstatements and assess the conditions that give them weight, including how the government mobilizes funds to sustain salaries, whether external support is needed to support such policies, and how the real value of public wages compares against inflation and private sector earnings. Taken together, these factors will shape whether reinstatement emerges as a meaningful driver of voluntary return and reintegration, or whether its influence diminishes as broader economic dynamics shift.

Syria: Housing Loans as a Return Incentive Potential and Limitations

On July 12, the [Syrian Central Bank](#) proposed a national housing finance plan that includes low-interest loans for Syrians, both in country and abroad. According to Central Bank Governor [Abdelkader al-Hassri](#), the system's design draws on Danish and Canadian models and [envisions](#) a multi-institutional framework comprising a regulatory authority, a mortgage guarantee fund, a national finance institution, and private sector lending under state oversight. While still in its formative stage, the initiative was presented as a cornerstone of post-conflict recovery that aims to deliver “a home for every Syrian family” and rebuild social stability.



It is unclear whether the plan will be fully implemented, though it has the potential to significantly affect voluntary return. Housing remains one of the primary barriers to return for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. If accessible and credible, subsidized housing loans could serve as a pull factor, particularly for returnees seeking to reclaim or rebuild property.

Despite the optimistic outlook, full implementation may ultimately be stymied by structural constraints. The Central Bank has ruled out taking on external debt, despite the destruction of nearly 2 million homes over the course of the Syrian conflict. This raises liquidity concerns, especially given Syria's financial sector and capital limitations. Despite recent sanctions relief, financing the proposed model will require massive resource inflows. Without clarity on eligibility, security guarantees, and institutional safeguards, the proposal risks functioning more as a political signal than a durable return mechanism. The team will monitor whether this housing finance plan develops into a tangible opportunity for safe and informed return or remains an aspirational policy with limited reach.

Jordan: Expanding Syrian-Jordanian Economic Ties Trade as a Driver of Return Potential

In recent months, economic and diplomatic relations between Syria and Jordan have been marked by rising trade volumes and new cooperation frameworks. More than 83,000 Jordanian trucks entered Syria between January and July 2025 through the Jaber–Nassib crossing alone, with exports reaching 72 million Jordanian dinars (JOD) – already JOD 25 million above the previous year's total. Agreements now span agriculture, energy, water, reconstruction, and investment facilitation, alongside discussions on reopening former crossings and easing business mobility.

Perhaps the most significant symbolic gesture in the recent wave of bilateral engagement, the twinning of Dar'a and Irbid, represents a formalized local-to-local partnership with the potential to yield tangible results. It marks the first such cooperation between a Syrian and Jordanian governorate since 2011 and institutionalizes dialogue on trade facilitation and joint investment planning, including around shared infrastructure like the Jaber crossing. Beyond its symbolism, the twinning could serve as an operational mechanism to coordinate commercial flows, attract capital to southern Syria, and deepen integration across the border. It may also reinforce longstanding kinship and economic networks that continue to shape cross-border mobility.

While these measures signal regional economic integration, they also carry implications for displacement. For many refugees in Jordan, economic precarity remains a core obstacle to return. Expanding investment and trade in southern Syria may gradually reduce barriers for those with family, property, or commercial ties in the region. As economic normalization advances, return decisions may increasingly hinge on livelihood opportunities rather than political alignment. Economic linkages could reshape the geography and profile of returns, requiring new approaches to host community planning, reintegration support, and long-term development programming in both Jordan and southern Syria.



Financial Linkages and Refugee Returns: What Syria's Financial Reopening Means for Syrians in Jordan and Lebanon

In summer 2025, Syria [reconnected](#) to global finance, with the [European Union](#) (EU) lifting most economy-wide measures, while targeted listings remain in place. In the [United States](#), an executive order revoked the comprehensive Syria sanctions program, though similar to the EU, targeted designations remain. Within weeks, officials and trade media reported the first international bank transfer via SWIFT since 2011, a [milestone for correspondent banking](#) and [regulated cross-border payments](#).

For refugee households in Jordan and Lebanon, the implications vary, particularly as adequate de-risking amid strict “know your customer” (KYC) regulations for individual consumer banking has yet to take hold. Return decisions and the practicalities of early reintegration depend heavily on whether money can move legally, predictably, and at reasonable cost. Two channels dominate. First, remittances from relatives and diaspora earners – which during the sanctions era often flowed through informal systems with high spreads and limited recourse – can shift toward regulated corridors as Syrian banks re-establish correspondent ties, [improving transparency and dispute resolution for senders and recipients](#). Second, private banking in Syria – providing access to savings accounts, issuing cards, and reliable domestic clearing – must function so that transfers are usable in everyday life. Without these services in place, macro changes [will not necessarily translate into household-level confidence](#).

Access to banking services for Syrian refugees in host countries varies, meaning developments in the Syrian financial sector could act for some as a facilitator for return. For those receiving cash aid, particularly households without access to formal banking services, alternatives have emerged in recent years. Jordan has built a digital finance ecosystem for refugees, including e-KYC. The [World Bank reports](#) that the number of e-wallets held by Syrians rose from 18,000 in 2020 to 178,419 by January 2024, alongside a broader surge to 2.9 million e-wallets and basic accounts nationwide. In 2024, [UNHCR's e-wallet program](#) in Jordan disbursed about 61.4 million US dollars (USD) to roughly 68,500 refugee households, with a large share paid through mobile wallets, which has normalized digital payments for bills and daily expenses. The [Central Bank of Jordan](#) and partners have codified inclusive rules for refugee wallet onboarding through MOI and UNHCR credentials, creating legible transaction histories for the formal sector. [JoPACC's 2024 systems report](#) also highlighted the rapid growth of digital transactions, underscoring the feasibility of policy solutions that would make balances portable at the point of return.



The situation in Lebanon sharply contrasts that in Jordan. Since 2019, deposit withdrawals have been restricted and credit creation has stalled, resulting in a cash-heavy economy and eroded confidence in banks. For Syrians, irregular residency and strict KYC practices add barriers to services. The [2024 VASyR survey](#) indicated that ATM cards from humanitarian organizations are a main income source for 19% of Syrian households and that 15% of households rely on store credit and debt account – evidence of reliance on aid instruments and informal borrowing rather than relationship banking. [UNICEF documented a shift during the crisis](#) from bank-issued ATM cards to cash through money transfer operators, a practical workaround but not a path to inclusion. [Microfinance reaches a subset of refugees](#) through institutions such as [Al Majmoua](#), with independent case studies describing thousands of Syrian clients and high repayment quality, although coverage remains modest relative to need in a stressed macro environment.

Sanctions relief alone is unlikely to trigger large return movements, [since safety, civil documentation, housing, land and property rights, and livelihoods remain primary determinants](#). Finance, however, is the connective tissue that turns improvements in those areas into viable plans. Three dynamics matter for durable solutions. First, remittance affordability and recourse can reduce reliance on hawalas during the fragile early period after return, improving predictability for basic consumption and bill payments, as reflected in reporting on resumed [SWIFT activity](#) and [correspondent links](#). Second, the continuity of financial identity through mutual recognition of host country e-KYC – for example, leveraging JoPACC’s work with UNHCR to simplify onboarding – [can shorten the cash-only gap on arrival](#). Third, portability of balances through a Jordan-to-Syria wallet bridge can prevent stranded e-wallet funds or distressed cash outs under pressure. With the removal of many financial sanctions since early 2025 and ongoing reforms by Syria’s new financial authorities, the wallet bridge’s applicability has expanded. In practice, its feasibility would depend on coordination between regulated providers in Jordan (e.g., JoPACC members), Syrian financial regulators, and humanitarian actors to establish secure cross-border settlement channels. While operational and trust barriers remain, the reform momentum suggests that pilot initiatives for cross-border humanitarian and family remittances could evolve into a scalable national system over time.

For Syria, prioritization of opening basic accounts for returnees, card issuance, transparent fee and FX schedules, and credible dispute resolution can enable macro changes that translate into everyday trust. In Jordan, operationalizing a time-bound wallet-to-account bridge with published service standards can help ease returns transitions by ensuring that funds already received – whether assistance payments, remittances, or savings – can be transferred securely into Syrian accounts rather than stranded in Jordanian wallets. In Lebanon, maintaining wide assistance channels (such as [cash grants for returns](#)) that help bridge returns, lawful dual currency options where applicable, and visible grievance mechanisms around fees and exchange rates are necessary in order to ensure that financial pressure does not substitute for voluntariness.



Lebanon: Health and Education at Risk Impact of Funding Shortages on Displaced Syrians

On May 28, UNHCR [announced](#) that it will halt hospital coverage for displaced Syrian nationals in Lebanon and its support to primary healthcare facilities as of [December 2025](#). Ivo Freijsen – the UNHCR Representative in Lebanon – said that the decision was prompted by limited donor funding. Minister of Public Health Rakan Nasser El-Din and that the Lebanese health system is not able to fully meet the needs of patients amid new waves of displacement. According to a [UNHCR factsheet](#) covering June and July 2025, some 40,000 displaced Syrian nationals in Lebanon are no longer be able to access primary healthcare and 45,000 will no longer receive secondary healthcare, including pregnant women. [Uphold its humanitarian responsibilities](#) and that the Lebanese health system is not able to fully meet the needs of patients amid new waves of displacement. According to a [UNHCR factsheet](#) covering June and July 2025, some 40,000 displaced Syrian nationals in Lebanon are no longer be able to access primary healthcare and 45,000 will no longer receive secondary healthcare, including pregnant women.*

Displaced Syrian nationals in Lebanon also contend with limited access to education. While UNHCR estimated that Lebanon hosts about 470,000 school-aged Syrian refugee children, [15,000](#) no longer benefit from community-based learning and education retention support due to underfunding. Displaced Syrian nationals in Lebanon already face [systemic barriers](#) such as residency requirements, which further limit refugees' access to education and increase drop-out rates.

* All displaced Syrians (The government of Lebanon estimates there are 1,500,000 displaced Syrians in Lebanon), whether registered or non-registered with UNHCR as refugees, are eligible for hospital coverage according to UNHCR Standard Operating Procedures for Referral Care.

Policy and Administration





Policy and Administration

Lebanon: Governmental Policies and Measures

According to the latest [UNHCR estimates](#), Lebanon hosts around 1.4 million displaced Syrian nationals, of whom only 722,000 are registered with UNHCR, making it the country with the [highest number of refugees](#) per capita. On July 1, the [Lebanese Directorate of General Security announced](#) that displaced Syrian nationals and Palestinian refugees from Syria will be allowed to exit Lebanon through official border checkpoints without paying fees or fines and without facing entry bans from July 1 to September 30, 2025. These [measures](#) applied to refugees who entered Lebanon legally or illegally and those who have overstayed their residency permits.

The Lebanese Ministerial Committee on Syrian Displacement has also [finalized a plan](#) to [facilitate](#) the return of between 200,000 and 300,000 displaced Syrian nationals by September 2025. Under the plan, returnees will be given USD 100 each and USD 400 for each family. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi [pledged support](#) for safe and voluntary returns, while urging the international community to provide urgent funding for Syria's recovery.

Lebanon: Security Measures

As of Mid-July, the LAF had conducted several [raids](#) and established [checkpoints](#) across Lebanon, [arresting approximately 500 Displaced Syrian nationals](#) for breaching residency and identification requirements. These practices could prompt displaced Syrian nationals to return to Syria under unfavorable or rushed circumstances.

Jordan: Eased Re-Entry Rules for Select Syrians in Jordan Narrow Policy, Broader Signals

In April 2025, Jordan's Ministry of Interior [eased](#) re-entry restrictions for some Syrian nationals. The new measures, which [eliminate the need for prior approval](#), apply to Syrian university students enrolled in Jordan, faculty members at Jordanian universities, individuals with valid commercial licenses, retirees receiving pensions from Jordan's Social Security Corporation, and property owners whose assets are valued above JOD 50,000 (approximately USD 70,000). These changes reflect a balance between economic interests, bilateral coordination, and domestic security concerns.

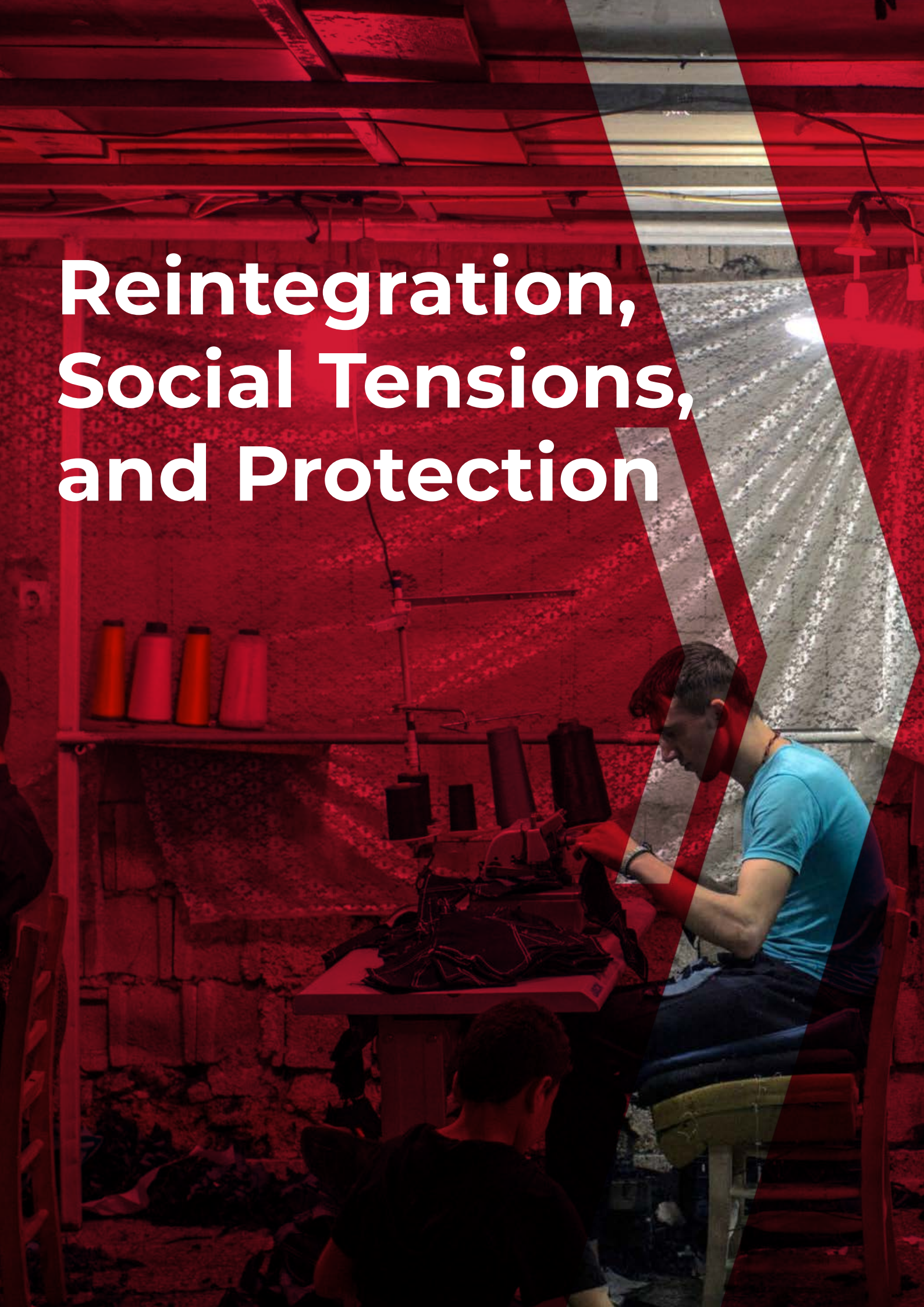


While the policy affects only a narrow segment of the Syrian refugee population, by relaxing restrictions for individuals with economic, educational, or property ties to Jordan, the government may be creating space for exploratory movement, especially for those with roots on both sides of the border. Importantly, it may reduce the perception of “one-way” return, making temporary or partial returns more feasible. However, the scale of impact is limited. Most Syrian refugees in Jordan – [72% according to June 2025 surveys](#) – express unwillingness to return to Syria due to unresolved security and economic concerns. Moreover, the categories eligible under the new rules represent a small and relatively privileged subset of the refugee population.

These changes also highlight the different ways host states manage protracted displacement. While most refugees remain excluded, eased re-entry restrictions in Jordan underscore how access to capital, education, and property ownership are increasingly shaping mobility and return opportunities. This raises questions about equity, access, and the long-term implications of policies that privilege specific groups while leaving the majority constrained. The result could, hypothetically, be an increasingly complex determination of refugee status, the responsibility for which continues to fall between various Jordanian ministries and UNHCR.

The Jordanian government's decision to exempt certain categories of Syrians from prior approval for exit and return has already affected the status of those registered with UNHCR. [According to a UNHCR spokesperson in Jordan](#), individuals who obtain exit and return permits from the Ministry of Interior and travel to Syria voluntarily will have their UNHCR files suspended, with the option to reactivate them if they later return to Jordan. By contrast, the files of Syrians who leave without the ministry's permission will be closed under the new policy, and [their refugee status with UNHCR will be revoked](#). The future legal status of these individuals in Jordan remains uncertain. Many currently reside legally as students or investors, but if refugee status is revoked – particularly for students after completing their studies – it is unclear what avenues will exist to resume their lives in Jordan or whether state policy may prompt them to leave the Kingdom.

Reintegration, Social Tensions, and Protection





Reintegration, Social Tensions, and Protection

Lebanon: Sources of Tensions and Impact on Displaced Syrians

UNDP's [Tension Monitoring System \(TMS\)](#) from March 2025 found that 43.1% of respondents cited job competition, 41.2% competition for services, and 28.2% political situations as the main sources of Lebanese-Syrian tensions. Respondents also noted “competition for higher skilled jobs” as a concern. Such survey insights should be understood in the context of labor market dynamics – for example, [Lebanese medical professionals recently protested the unauthorized employment](#) of Syrian doctors and nurses using visitor visas, warning of increased competition and accountability risks in the health sector.

Tensions are not exclusive to labor market competition, as fighting in As-Sweida in the first half of July prompted [Lebanese authorities, municipalities, and security agencies](#) to monitor movements, impose curfews, and enforce registration requirements for Syrians to prevent potential inter- and intra-communal violence.³ Protests broke out in several areas of Lebanon over the same period. In [Saadnaye](#), Syrian nationals organized convoys displaying ISIS flags, while in [Mount Lebanon](#), Druze communities blocked the Sawfar–Aley highway in solidarity with As-Sweida. Separately, clashes between Lebanese citizens and displaced Syrian nationals erupted in [Kfarouman](#), prompting intervention by security forces.

Following the death of a Syrian detainee in Roumieh Prison, Syrian tribes organized a [protest](#) on August 15 in Lebanon and Syria, calling for their relatives to be released and repatriated. Lebanese Minister of Justice Adel Nassar stated that Lebanese prisons accommodate about [1,700 Syrian detainees out of which 389 have been convicted](#) of various crimes, while other sources estimate there are [2,575 Syrian detainees](#) in Lebanon, 800 of whom are incarcerated or detained for terrorism-related offenses.

Syria: Domestic tensions and implications on refugee returns

The past months have underscored how fragile and unsettled Syria's political landscape remains, with [events along Syria's coast, the south, and northeastern Syria](#) driving uncertainty about the trajectory of the transition. In July, [violence](#) in As-Sweida between Druze factions and Bedouin tribes resulted in significant casualties and displacement, with estimates ranging into the hundreds killed and thousands displaced. By August, [protests](#) in the governorate expanded, with some demonstrators reportedly [calling for independence](#), the formation of a “[Druze National Guard](#)”, and appealing for external support from Israel and the United States. Israeli [airstrikes](#) in response to the crisis and a parallel track of Syrian–Israeli negotiations in Paris have added to regional volatility. The outcome is heightened perceptions of insecurity among Druze communities, with reports indicating growing concerns about Damascus' ability to guarantee their safety.



Meanwhile in the northeast, negotiations between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Damascus have oscillated between progress and backlash. The March 10 Agreement created a roadmap for integration into the Ministry of Defense, though this has been marked by [mistrust](#), disputes over disarmament, and bouts of violence involving SDF, tribal actors, and pro-government forces in July and August. [Damascus hardened its tone](#) in August, demanding the dissolution of AANES institutions and [suspending dialogue](#) after [SDF-backed conferences](#) drew opposition from both tribal and government figures.

Taken together, these developments send troubling signals for displaced Syrians weighing return. For minority communities such as the Alawites, Druze, and Kurds, the combination of violence, contested authority, and regional interference creates an unstable environment to which Syrian refugees consider returning. Within Syria, the Druze community has already experienced fresh large-scale [displacement](#), with reports indicating more than 170,000 people were displaced during the July clashes, while the prospect of an autonomous Druze enclave has raised fears of further fragmentation and insecurity. For Kurdish populations, uncertainty over the future of the SDF, coupled with signs of Damascus' unwillingness to accommodate meaningful autonomy, suggests that conditions for safe return remain distant. Continued dynamics and tensions may even compel minorities to seek pathways out of Syria altogether rather than contemplate return.

For the wider refugee population, political turbulence similarly reinforces the need for caution. Israeli incursions and airstrikes in the south highlight the volatility of border areas, while the lack of clarity around SDF integration underscores the unpredictability of the northeast. Even if livelihoods slowly improve through trade and investment, the presence of unresolved political and military tensions is likely to weigh heavily on return decisions. For now, the prospect of return remains constrained not just by material barriers but by the unsettled and conflict-prone trajectory of Syria's political transition.

Ultimately, return dynamics cannot be read in isolation from inter-communal turbulence. While material conditions and economic opportunities are critical to understanding return dynamics, equally as important are implications related to security breakdowns, unresolved minority grievances, and regional interference that shape the perceptions of safety and protection for Syrians refugees. If Alawi, Druze, and Kurdish communities continue to experience violence, exclusion, or coercion, the likelihood of voluntary return could diminish in parallel to continued (or increasing) outward migration pressures – particularly among minority demographics. For the broader refugee population, even if return numbers continue to grow, the persistence of political fragmentation and communal volatility suggests that response resources could continue to be strained, between reactive emergency responses and longer-term, forward-thinking recovery. Programmatic strategy, therefore, should prepare for protracted (or novel) displacement from Syria and delayed large-scale returns, even as localized economic opportunities begin to emerge.

A photograph of a man and a young child, with a large blue UNHCR logo overlaid on the right side. The man is on the left, looking towards the right. The child is in the center, looking towards the right. The background is a solid red color. The UNHCR logo is a large blue shape with the UN emblem and the text 'UNHCR' and 'The UN Refugee Agency' in white.

Refugee and IDP Movement

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



Refugee and IDP Movement

Lebanon: Returnees and Arrivals

Tracking returnees is difficult, as returns occur through both official and unofficial channels. So far in 2025, a total of 168,078 Syrian individuals have been removed from UNHCR registration records in Lebanon due to either verified or presumed return. This includes [70,445](#) Syrian individuals who fled from late September to November 2024 – during the 2024 Hezbollah-Israel war – and have remained in Syria. From December 8, 2024 to July 31, 2025, UNHCR recorded [103,455](#) new Syrian arrivals into Lebanon. UNHCR reported that [as of August 27](#), 25,930 Syrians who had arrived in Akkar and North Lebanon since March 2025 were still in the governorates. In the Bekaa and Baalbek Governorate, the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) has reported [72,929 arrivals](#) since December 2024.

The UNHCR is [ramping up its efforts](#) to support Syrians who have expressed a willingness to return to their home country. As of August 15, nearly [13,478 Syrian families \(around 71,909 individuals\)](#) have registered for UNHCR's self-organized voluntary return program and received counseling and guidance. This marks a sharp rise from July 11, when only about [4,000 families \(18,000 individuals\)](#) had registered, underscoring the accelerating pace of returns. As part of this initiative, [UNHCR has begun distributing Repatriation Forms and issuing cash grants](#) to returning families. The trend suggests that registration numbers are likely to increase further in the coming period, especially as return [policies are coupled with enhanced security measures](#).

Jordan: The Closure of the Emirati Camp A Marker of Shifting Models and Uncertain Futures

The [closure](#) of the Emirati-Jordanian Camp (EJC), also known as Mrajeeb al-Fhood, marks a significant change in the refugee landscape in Jordan. The UAE Red Crescent formally [announced](#) that it was withdrawing its support on May 12, with the camp set to close by July 1. Relocation of residents [began](#) on May 21 and continued through the end of June. The first voluntary return convoy, carrying 350 individuals in 64 families, [departed](#) for Syria on May 26 under the “Waqf Farah” initiative.

[Not all former camp residents returned to Syria](#). Of the roughly 8,410 refugees who had been residing in the camp, 4,932 returned via the Armada/Waqf Farah program, 2,331 departed independently, and 1,147 were relocated to Azraq. The relocation of residents to Azraq raises operational concerns, as the EJC was funded and administered almost entirely by the UAE and the Jordanian Armed Forces, operating outside the standard UN-managed camp framework. Azraq, by contrast, depends on multilateral humanitarian funding and is already under strain. The closure highlights the need to better integrate non-UN camps into coordinated contingency planning, especially as donor priorities continue to shift.

One of the most notable aspects of the Emirati Camp's closure was the prominent role played by the private sector in facilitating returns. The [repatriation process](#) was led by Syrian-Emirati businessman Dr. Raheef Hakmi through his philanthropic initiative “Waqf Farah,” in partnership with [Armada Holding](#), which he co-founded. This private actor-led model of voluntary return adds another layer to the evolving landscape of return pathways. As more camps face funding pressures, the EJC case underscores the urgency of rethinking exit strategies, contingency protocols, and how returns, voluntary or otherwise, are framed and facilitated.



Notable Research and Data

- a. [Despite Assad's Downfall, Less Than 10% of Syrian Refugees Have Returned - Karam Shaar Advisory LTD](#) July 28, 2025
 - i. In this article, the pace and challenges of refugee returns to Syria following Assad's fall are examined. The scale of displacement inside the country and abroad is outlined, along with the low rates of return recorded to date and the differing policies and tracking methods across host countries. Barriers such as insecurity, destroyed housing, economic instability, and the loss of refugee status are highlighted, while new government and UN-led initiatives to encourage return are noted.
- b. [The Dynamics between Syrian Refugees and Lebanese Returnees in Beirut's Southern Suburbs](#) Lebanese Center for Policy Studies July 16, 2025
 - i. In this report, Carlos Naffah and Rasha Akel explore the social and economic dynamics between Syrian refugees and Lebanese returnees in Beirut's southern suburb of Ghobairy following the 2023 conflict. Based on interviews with refugees, returnees, local leaders, NGOs, and business owners, the report highlights key tensions over housing, jobs, and aid, while also noting instances of cooperation and shared hardship. The authors emphasize that both communities face overlapping vulnerabilities amid Lebanon's economic crisis, calling for inclusive policies to support sustainable recovery and reduce tensions.



ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.