

Weekly Update

05 May 2026

Middle East Situation



REGIONAL OVERVIEW

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | WEEKLY UPDATE

Key Figures from the Cross-regional Response as of 02 May 2026

IRAN/Neighbouring Countries	LEBANON	SYRIA	AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN
3.2M Temporarily internally relocated <i>75% Tehran · Gov. of Iran</i>	1.05M IDPs <i>35% children · Gov. of Lebanon</i>	306,900 Syrian returnees from Lebanon <i>83,374 intend permanent return</i>	294,400 Afghan returns since start of crisis <i>Total number of returnees: 561,000 in 2026</i>
1.65M Refugees & others in need of intl. protection	124,200 IDPs in 625 collective shelters	64,900 Lebanese refugees in Syria	119,800 Returns from Iran to Afghanistan · 80% deportation-driven
193,400 169,600 Iranians → Türkiye Türkiye → Iran	Ceasefire Extended 24 April for 3 weeks	~1,000 Daily Lebanese arrivals on average	174,600 Returns from Pakistan
18,300 17,500 Iranians → Armenia Armenia → Iran	19% Decline in sheltered IDPs since pre-ceasefire	Top areas of return Rural Damascus 20% · Aleppo 19% · Idleb 13%	100,900 Newly displaced in SE Afghanistan mostly in Khost, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces
7,900 Iranians → Pakistan (Taftan)	3,270 Refugee families known to UNHCR remain displaced		3,500 Internally displaced in Pakistan

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Since late February, escalating hostilities in Iran and Lebanon have triggered humanitarian consequences with impact across the region, including refugee returns in adverse circumstances to Afghanistan and Syria. Events are unfolding against an already fragile humanitarian baseline, with over 24 million forcibly displaced people hosted across the wider region prior to the current escalation, alongside host communities under significant economic and social strain.

Inter agency emergency response is underway to address urgent needs. In Iran, the Flash Refugee Response Plan targets refugees and others in need of international protection alongside affected host communities. In Lebanon, a Flash Appeal complements the broader response under the Lebanon Response Plan to deliver life saving assistance and protection, including to Syrian refugees. In Afghanistan, the funding requirement for the returns response is outlined under the Humanitarian Needs & Response Plan.

UNHCR and partners have been working across countries neighbouring Iran to strengthen preparedness for possible large-scale refugee flows, in support of national authorities. Preparedness measures are in place, including border monitoring, reception and protection readiness, but these arrangements remain highly dependent on flexible and predictable funding in an increasingly constrained resource environment.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION NEEDS

UNHCR considers that Iranian and Lebanese nationals outside their countries of origin — whether already present in or newly arriving to third countries — may have international protection needs on account of the armed hostilities in Iran and Lebanon, or other reasons. Armed hostilities in Iran, together with return pressures, may compel Afghans to return to Afghanistan or move onward; UNHCR maintains that a substantial number of Afghans will have international protection needs regardless of documentation status, in line with UNHCR's September 2025 Guidance Note. Armed hostilities in Lebanon have already compelled significant numbers of Syrians to return to Syria in adverse circumstances; among them there may be Syrians with continued international protection needs.

IRAN

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS



3.2 M

Total number of people temporarily internally relocated (Gov)



1.65 M

Refugees and others in need of international protection in Iran

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

The recent escalation has triggered large-scale internal population movement in Iran: 3.2 million people have internally relocated, according to the Government of Iran. Iran hosts the largest refugee population in the sub-region, the vast majority from Afghanistan.

Since the start of the crisis, approximately 119,800 Afghans have returned from Iran to Afghanistan, with total returns since the start of the year surpassing 226,000 as of 2 May. Returns from Iran to Afghanistan increased by 12 per cent, from 20,200 people during 19–25 April to 22,600 people during 26 April–2 May, raising the daily average from 2,900 to 3,200 people. Returns continue to be predominantly deportation-driven, with deportations accounting for more than 80 per cent of total returns in the past week. The demographic profile of returnees remains consistent with trends observed since the start of the year, with single individuals comprising 85 per cent of returns and women accounting for 8 per cent. The Government's Centre for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (CAFIA) continues to report elevated levels of irregular crossings into Iran from Afghanistan, suggesting the resumption of informal movement pathways following the ceasefire.

PROTECTION MONITORING

From 1 March to 2 May, the UNHCR Helpline received more than 61,900 calls, more than 8,500 of which were received during 26 April–2 May. A total of 552 individuals were identified as having heightened protection risks and were referred for in-depth interviews. Mental health conditions remain a serious concern, with reports of severe distress and trauma – particularly among single parents and adolescents – underscoring urgent Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) needs. A sustained deterioration in the protection environment – notably loss of livelihoods and income leading to growing debt, evictions, and inability to renew Amayesh cards – continues to drive high demand for multipurpose cash assistance and an increasing number of individuals approaching UNHCR with resettlement requests.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

UNHCR maintains a full operational presence across five locations in Iran – Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Kerman, and the Dogharoun border – enabling continuous monitoring and the delivery of protection, documentation, and assistance to refugees despite a challenging operating environment. Since the start of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted more than 103,200 Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multipurpose cash assistance, and psychosocial support. In close coordination with CAFIA and a local NGO, UNHCR distributed 1,500 core relief item kits to conflict-affected refugee and host community households across Tehran, Hormozgan, and Bushehr provinces. Items included family tents, plastic tarpaulins, high thermal blankets, sleeping mats, and family hygiene kits.


HUMAN IMPACT

A 34-year-old single Afghan refugee mother living in Tehran with her two young sons sought UNHCR support after an explosion near her home. The incident caused severe psychological distress within the family, particularly affecting her 80-year-old father, leading to reduced mobility and communication. After approaching UNHCR, the family received psychosocial and psychiatric support, a health referral, and financial assistance to address their urgent needs.


A 28-year-old Afghan refugee father working as a street vendor in Hormozgan Province was severely injured in a motorcycle accident in April, spending seven days in a coma without health insurance. His family feared that treatment costs would leave them without any support. Through referral, UNHCR coordinated with government counterparts to significantly reduce hospital fees, and UNHCR partners connected the family to additional inter-agency assistance to support his recovery and cover basic needs for his wife and two children.

LEBANON

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **+1 M**

Total number of people self-registered as displaced

 **+3,270**

Refugee families known to UNHCR remain internally displaced

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Despite the ceasefire, displacement in Lebanon continues daily, with new movements triggered by Israeli evacuation orders and airstrikes. Although the announcement initially raised hopes and prompted some returns, widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure has forced tens of thousands of IDPs back into displacement, including into collective shelters or alternative locations. Residents of more than 55 villages in areas controlled by Israel remain unable to return. Continued insecurity — marked by demolitions, evacuation warnings and severe infrastructure damage, particularly in South Lebanon and Nabatieh — has further limited returns; Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon reportedly killed 17 people on 4 May, according to the Ministry of Health, one of the deadliest periods since the ceasefire took effect. Displacement remains large-scale and fluid, with limited prospects for sustained return.

An estimated one million people are self-registered as displaced, including 124,231 individuals accommodated in 625 government-run collective shelters. Most displaced families remain outside collective shelters, hosted by relatives or friends, renting temporary accommodation, or living in informal arrangements. Beirut and Mount Lebanon host the largest share of the displaced population, while shelter capacity — particularly in Beirut and the South — remains saturated. Political and sectarian tensions and polarisation are deepening, adding further strain to an already fragile context

PROTECTION MONITORING

Residents of collective shelters continue to face protection risks linked to overcrowding and prolonged stays, although ongoing repairs, partitioning and protection activities are mitigating risks in many sites. Documentation-related movement restrictions, particularly at checkpoints, continue to limit mobility and access to services for refugees and displaced persons without valid papers.

Access to hard-to-reach and high-risk areas, notably in the South, remains constrained due to insecurity, movement restrictions, unexploded ordnance and damaged infrastructure — this despite the existing Humanitarian Notification System (HNS).

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

UNHCR continues to support the emergency response in coordination with the Government of Lebanon and partners under the Lebanon Response Plan (LRP) and Flash Appeal. By end April, UNHCR reached more than 22,200 individuals with targeted protection interventions, accounting for approximately 14 per cent of the overall Protection Sector response, which collectively reached 156,901 people with protection, child protection and GBV services. Within this response, UNHCR provided emergency case management to 704 individuals, including children and people facing acute protection risks, and supported 4,595 people with mental health and psychosocial support through individual and group interventions in and outside shelters.

Shelter, essential item distribution and cash assistance remain priority needs amid continued insecurity and reversible movements. UNHCR assisted 83,636 people in collective shelters with core relief items, supported repairs in 64 shelters, and adapted overcrowded shared buildings for 611 families to ensure safer, more private living spaces while longer-term housing solutions are explored. Since early March, emergency protection cash has reached 8,478 individuals, including 634 persons with disabilities, with 3,000 additional refugee families identified.

UNHCR continues to support returns due to force majeure. Since 1 April, more than 8,000 Syrians have received counselling and a one-time USD 100 cash grant to mitigate protection risks during return.

The LRP and Flash Appeal remain critically underfunded, with only 38 per cent of required funding received; additional resources are urgently needed as funding is stretched amid prolonged displacement and growing needs.

HUMAN IMPACT

In overcrowded collective shelters, displaced families often live in classrooms or hallways with little privacy, heightening stress and protection risks. Simple interventions, such as installing partitions, help restore a sense of security and dignity. As one displaced mother explained, "Now I have a room for my children. I can rest, and I feel safe again."

AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **294,400**

Total number of Afghan returnees since start of crisis

 **119,800**

Afghan returnees from Iran since start of crisis

 **174,600**

Afghan returnees from Pakistan since start of crisis

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Approximately 294,400 Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan since the onset of the crisis, bringing total returns in 2026 to more than 561,000 as of 2 May. In the past week (26 April–2 May), returns averaged 8,000 per day, representing an 8 per cent decrease compared to the previous week (19–25 April). Returnees from Pakistan accounted for 60 per cent of arrivals during the week, of which 6 per cent were deportees. Overall returns from Pakistan decreased by 18 per cent, from 40,900 people during 19–25 April to 33,600 people during 26 April–2 May.

In Pakistan, the introduction of online scheduling improved processing capacity at the Azakhel Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following UNHCR advocacy with provincial and central authorities, outbound truck movement to Afghanistan at the Torkham crossing increased, indicating a potential easing of congestion relative to the previous week, though around 1,800 trucks remain queued. While overall returns from Pakistan declined over the past week, significant increases in voluntary repatriation processing at the Baleli VRC in Balochistan and returns across the Chaman border were recorded throughout April.

Post-return challenges remain acute: many arrivals are unable to move immediately to areas of origin due to shelter and livelihood gaps, documentation barriers, limited access to basic services, unresolved land disputes, or insecurity – increasing the risk of prolonged displacement and the expansion of informal settlements.

Pakistan

Protection concerns for Afghan nationals remain significant amid continued enforcement and pressure to repatriate. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Torkham remained the sole operational crossing; severe congestion continued to cause delays, with some families waiting four to seven days to complete crossing formalities. Demand for UNHCR services remained high, driven by concerns over documentation, deportation, access to assistance, and disruption to education and livelihoods, while resettlement continued to feature prominently among expressed needs. In Islamabad, enforcement against Afghans intensified, with reported police raids and detention of entire Afghan households, including individuals with valid documentation. UNHCR interventions on behalf of high-risk individuals continue to prevent their refoulement. In Balochistan, arrests increased significantly, with more than 21,900 arrests reported in April compared to some 2,500 in March.

PROTECTION MONITORING

Afghanistan

Returnees interviewed at border points reported coercive conditions prior to departure, particularly in Pakistan, where intensified enforcement under the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan and gaps in documentation have increased exposure to arrest, detention, and deportation. Key reported concerns include police harassment, raids, arrests, confiscation of documents and belongings, family separation, poor detention conditions, and rising transport costs. Along the Iran border, returnees reported similar concerns, including increased enforcement, arrests during border crossings and inter-city travel, workplace raids, and public checks.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

In Afghanistan, UNHCR assisted 10,639 returnees (2,228 households) during 26 April–2 May, primarily from Pakistan, providing cash and protection assistance at border areas. At Torkham/Omari Reception Centre, UNHCR resumed hot meal distribution, reaching 4,194 individuals through its partner WADAN during 1–2 May. In eastern Afghanistan, UNHCR participated in an OCHA-led inter-agency assessment of the response to conflict- and flood-related displacement that identified some 650 displaced families living in makeshift shelters with gaps in WASH and essential services. The assessment informed advocacy for targeted assistance and rehabilitation of basic facilities in areas of return. In Pakistan, UNHCR engaged with IOM and the Federal Investigation Agency in Quetta to strengthen operational coordination on border monitoring, data collection, and joint field missions.

HUMAN IMPACT

Afghanistan: An Afghan woman with a disability and chronic illness was deported from Pakistan with her daughter after 11 days of detention. Upon arrival, UNHCR/WADAN identified her vulnerabilities, facilitated her referral to Takhtapul Reception Centre, and provided medical assistance, cash support, and Protection Case Management follow-up to address her immediate needs.

Pakistan: An Afghan student temporarily visiting Balochistan was arrested despite being enrolled at a university in Switzerland, placing his education and freedom at risk. Prompt engagement by UNHCR and partners with local authorities led to his release on humanitarian grounds, enabling him to continue his journey safely to Quetta.

TÜRKIYE

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **193,400**

Iranian nationals → Türkiye

 **169,600**

Iranian nationals → Iran

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Since 27 April, daily entries have on occasion exceeded 6,000, with one day recording more than 7,000; entries and departures returning to pre-conflict levels including daily crossings by traders for commercial purposes. Since late February to 3 May, approximately 193,000 Iranian nationals entered Türkiye via the Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) border crossings while approximately 169,000 departed to Iran, with entries continuing predominantly under the visa exemption regime and no mass irregular movement observed. The three crossings remained generally operational, with UNHCR monitoring the situation in close coordination with authorities and partners. Observations at the border indicate that movements continue predominantly as families or groups, alongside individuals travelling alone. The most frequently cited reason for crossing is routine travel, followed by business, visiting relatives, and transit, though a substantial proportion of individuals within the routine travel category indicated that their decision to cross was influenced by recent developments in Iran.

The overall security situation in Türkiye remained stable. No changes in movement patterns, access developments, or political or security events are anticipated as of 4 May.

PROTECTION MONITORING

Current cross-border movements largely reflect routine mobility, family travel, and precautionary movement. Some of those crossing may have international protection needs, with some individuals citing recent developments in Iran as their reason for leaving.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

National preparedness plans are being coordinated by the Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management, while UNHCR is reinforcing coordination with United Nations agencies and partners in both Ankara and the border regions to enhance preparedness and strengthen information management. Response capacities are being mapped and data coordination consolidated in preparation for potential contingency plan activation, should the authorities request support in the event of large-scale movements. On 30 April, UNHCR led an inter-agency coordination meeting on the Middle East situation, covering contingency planning, preparedness efforts, and UNHCR's Multi-Year Strategy for 2027-29, including an exchange of situation updates and planning assumptions.

ARMENIA

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **18,300**

Iranian nationals entered Armenia

 **17,500**

Iranian nationals exited through Agarak

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Cross-border movements of Iranian nationals through the Agarak border crossing remained active. Approximately 7,002 crossings were recorded during 26 April–2 May, comprising 3,440 entries (49 per cent) and 3,562 exits (51 per cent), consistent with circular and return mobility rather than a one-directional inflow. Monitoring windows captured approximately 464 individuals (6–7 per cent of total movements), with movements predominantly truck-driven (55–60 per cent), followed by pedestrian crossings (20–25 per cent) and cars and buses (15–20 per cent). A temporary spike on 29 April linked to bus arrivals associated with a public event does not indicate a change in protection dynamics.

Since 28 February, official crossings at Agarak have totalled approximately 35,800 – 18,300 entries and 17,500 exits – confirming high-volume but balanced two-way mobility without evidence of a sustained surge in arrivals. There is no evidence of large-scale conflict-related displacement or a sustained one-way population movement into Armenia. Movements are expected to remain active but broadly stable in the coming one to two weeks.

Border monitoring relies on partial observation windows capturing less than 10 per cent of total daily movements, used primarily to assess trends, profiles, and modalities. Reasons for travel are not systematically collected and motivations may be multi-layered; current data should be interpreted as indicative, with continued emphasis on triangulation.

PROTECTION MONITORING

A total of 289 people from Iran approached UNHCR since 28 February, 64 per cent of whom were male, with primary needs centred on asylum information (82 per cent), financial assistance (26 per cent), and accommodation (24 per cent). During the reporting period, 19 people approached UNHCR, 74 per cent of whom were male, with no increase in family groups or vulnerable cases. Intentions were varied: 42 per cent were considering asylum, 32 per cent indicated temporary stay, and 26 per cent planned onward travel, suggesting exploratory rather than settled decision-making. Primary needs were asylum procedure information (100 per cent), accommodation (84 per cent), and financial assistance (84 per cent), reflecting an information-driven caseload with increased requests for basic needs support. Protection-related approaches remain limited at approximately 0.3 per cent of total flows. Available data may underestimate protection needs among less visible populations who transit quickly or rely on private networks.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Observed trends remain fully aligned with current preparedness assumptions, based on continued mixed mobility patterns, absence of large-scale displacement indicators, and manageable border operations under Government leadership. Current data does not trigger any revision of contingency planning assumptions, with preparedness efforts focused on proportionate readiness – coordination, communication, and scalable response planning. Activities continued under Government leadership, with partners maintaining a light operational footprint proportionate to current needs. Inter-agency engagement remained focused on technical alignment and preparedness planning.

HUMAN IMPACT

During the reporting period, a person arriving from Iran approached UNHCR seeking information on temporary stay options and asylum procedures should regional conditions deteriorate. UNHCR and partners provided counselling on legal pathways, procedural steps and available services, including referral options. The case reflects the broader pattern of people seeking information to inform short-term decisions rather than immediate need for humanitarian assistance.

SYRIA

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **306,900**

Syrian returnees from Lebanon

 **64,900**

Lebanese refugees crossing into Syria

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Movements from Lebanon into Syria through the three official crossings remain steady and within border management operational capacity, while travel from Syria to Lebanon continues at normal levels for work, trade, education, medical and consular reasons. As of 2 May, 371,753 people have crossed into Syria, including 306,888 Syrians – of whom 83,374 reported an intention to return permanently – and 64,900 Lebanese refugees.

PROTECTION MONITORING

UNHCR engaged with families at the Jdaidet Yabous border crossing, primarily travelling to Rural Damascus, Idlib (Falyoun), Deir-ez-Zor (Al-Bukamal), Aleppo and Damascus Governorates. For some families who expressed an intention to return permanently, the decision was taken independently of recent security developments in Lebanon; for others, insecurity was a contributing factor. Families cited an improving situation in Syria alongside increasingly difficult living conditions in Lebanon as key drivers of return. Monitoring identified specific vulnerabilities across several cases, including families lacking resources to rehabilitate damaged housing, women returning with children while spouses remained in Lebanon for work, and individuals with medical conditions expressing concern about continued access to assistance upon return.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

UNHCR and partners continue to provide standard assistance at border points, including legal counselling and case referrals – primarily related to lineage authentication and marriage registration – to lawyers in returnees' areas of residence. Assistance needs and service pressures are increasingly shifting to areas of return, where demand is rising faster than available capacity and resources.

IRAQ

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Following the recent hostilities, limited arrivals of Iranian and Afghan asylum-seekers and refugees have been reported in Iraq. Overall figures remain stable and in line with previous trends, with only a small number of new arrivals indicating to UNHCR that they fled Iran due to the conflict.



PROTECTION MONITORING

Continued drone strikes against Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups displaced Iranian refugees and asylum-seekers from their settlements in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In coordination with authorities, UNHCR has been following up with affected communities to assess needs and provide adequate support.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

From 27–30 April, UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and Intersos conducted a joint border mission to four official Iraq–Iran border crossings to assess preparedness gaps and identify response options. As a follow-up, UNHCR Iraq will initiate border monitoring through its partner Intersos at three official border crossing points under federal administration.

Financial & Partner Information

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | FUNDING, PARTNERS & CONTACTS

Funding Status

INTER-AGENCY APPEALS

IRAN FLASH REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

USD 80M

2.8M people in need
Launched 26 Mar 2026
1.65M refugees + 1M host community in need
9 partners: USD 36.2M

LEBANON FLASH APPEAL (in line with the LRP)

USD 308.3M

1M people
Issued 13 Mar 2026 · 3-month window
Vulnerable Lebanese · Syrian Refugees · Palestine Refugees in Lebanon · Palestinian Refugees from Syria · Migrants

UNHCR BY OPERATION · AS OF END-MARCH 2026

Operation	Req.	Funded	%
South-West Asia (Afghanistan)	USD 454M	<div><div style="width: 19%;"></div></div>	19%
Iran	USD 140M	<div><div style="width: 11%;"></div></div>	11%
Lebanon	USD 472M	<div><div style="width: 19%;"></div></div>	19%
Iraq	USD 61M	<div><div style="width: 38%;"></div></div>	38%
Türkiye	USD 210M	<div><div style="width: 43%;"></div></div>	43%
Armenia	USD 9M	<div><div style="width: 51%;"></div></div>	51%
Turkmenistan*		Upon Request	

*Due to contextual considerations, requirements are not mentioned but can be shared upon request. UNHCR budget for Turkmenistan falls under the UNHCR Multi-Country Office (MCO) in Kazakhstan, which also covers the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. UNHCR MCO Kazakhstan operation budget is \$7.9 million, currently 15% funded.

CRITICAL FUNDING GAP

Severe funding shortfalls risk creating a 'crisis within a crisis' at a time when humanitarian needs and operational risks are rapidly increasing. Without additional resources, UNHCR's ability to scale up preparedness, protection and response will be critically constrained.

INTER-AGENCY PARTNERS · IRAN FLASH RRP



INTER-AGENCY PARTNERS IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Partners directly involved in preparedness efforts include AASW, ACH, ARCS, ASAM, FAO, Harikar, InterSOS, IOM, IRC, JCCC, KRISO, MH, Mission Armenia NGO, NRC, PC-MOI, PiN, RSPN, SCI, SOROUH, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, WFP, WHO; coordinated with UN OCHA and DCO.

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For more information, visit the Operational Data Portal (data.unhcr.org) and unhcr.org.