

Weekly Update

12 May 2026

Middle East Situation



REGIONAL OVERVIEW

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | WEEKLY UPDATE

Key Figures from the Cross-regional Response as of 12 May 2026

IRAN/Neighbouring Countries	LEBANON	SYRIA	AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN
3.2M Temporarily internally relocated according to GIRI/30 April. Increasing numbers of people are likely returning to their places of habitual residence.	1.05M IDPs <i>35% children · Gov. of Lebanon</i>	339,761 Syrian returnees from Lebanon <i>84,322 intend permanent return</i>	352,500 Afghan returns since start of crisis <i>Total number of returnees: 619,100 in 2026</i>
1.65M Refugees & others in need of intl. protection	125,621 IDPs in 622 collective shelters	73,983 Lebanese refugees in Syria	142,900 Returns from Iran to Afghanistan · 80% deportation-driven
220,900 195,400 Iranians → Türkiye Türkiye → Iran	Ceasefire Extended 24 April for 3 weeks	~1,000 Daily Lebanese arrivals on average	209,600 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% · Idlib 13%	100,900 Newly displaced in SE Afghanistan mostly in Khost, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces
9,100 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 who had temporarily internally relocated (Gov)

 **1.65 M**

Refugees and others in need of international protection in Iran

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

According to the Government of Iran, as of 30 March, around 3.2 million people had temporarily relocated in the country, representing one of the largest internal relocations in Iran in recent decades. With public order remaining largely stable since then, increasing numbers of people are likely returning to their places of habitual residence. Iran hosts the largest refugee population in the sub-region, the vast majority from Afghanistan.

Since the onset of the crisis, approximately 142,900 people have returned from Iran to Afghanistan, bringing total returns in 2026 to 249,100 as of 9 May. Returns over the past week totalled 23,100, an increase of 2 per cent, averaging 3,300 daily. Deportations accounted for around 82 per cent of returns.

Irregular border crossings into Iran through the Saravan crossing in Sistan and Baluchestan Province increased over the past week, driven by deteriorating economic conditions and lack of employment in Afghanistan; family movements rose notably. During the same period, around 1,000 Afghans—mainly women and children—were arrested at the Saravan border while attempting to enter Iran and deported.

PROTECTION MONITORING

From 1 March to 9 May, the UNHCR Helpline received more than 71,000 calls, including 9,100 during the reporting week. More than 1,400 people approached UNHCR offices across the country — a 13 per cent increase compared with the previous week. A total of 457 individuals were identified for heightened protection follow-up. UNHCR continues to receive helpline and field monitoring reports indicating worsening socioeconomic conditions—driven by inflation, unemployment and rising living costs—contributing to increased eviction risks, harmful coping mechanisms and heightened protection and mental health concerns. Access to documentation and health insurance remains a key challenge for Afghan communities in Iran.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Since the onset of the crisis, UNHCR Iran has assisted more than 115,300 Afghan refugees through helplines, in-person counselling, registration, legal aid, multipurpose cash assistance and psychosocial support.


HUMAN IMPACT

A five-person Afghan refugee family in Markazi Province faces severe socioeconomic and protection challenges exacerbated by the conflict. Both parents lost their livelihoods, forcing their son to drop out of school. UNHCR is supporting the family with financial assistance to cover overdue rent, medical costs and debt, alongside referrals for psychosocial support to stabilise the family's situation and mitigate protection risks.


Ghamar Gol, a 34-year-old refugee widow and mother of three, faced heightened vulnerability during the recent conflict. Prolonged exposure to insecurity caused significant psychological distress among her children, leading to fear, isolation and disrupted daily functioning. The family relocated from Tehran to Mashhad in search of safety and family support. UNHCR provided counselling and psychosocial assistance, helping the family regain stability and reduce longer-term risks.

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

Displacement and loss of life continue daily across affected areas, driven by ongoing hostilities, airstrikes, evacuation warnings, and persistent insecurity, despite the ceasefire formally remaining in place. Military operations have expanded, including airstrikes in South Lebanon, Nabatieh, Western Bekaa, the Chouf, and Beirut's southern suburbs, alongside repeated evacuation warnings for towns and villages in the south. On 6 May, the Israeli army advanced 10 km into Lebanese territory beyond the Litani river. The Lebanese Prime Minister stated this week that Israel now controls 68 Lebanese villages, with residents being prevented from returning to their homes.

Official displacement figures remain stable at more than 1.05 million people registered on the Government's relief platform, of whom around 126,000 are hosted in 622 operational collective shelters. Most displaced families live outside formal shelter settings — with host communities, in rented accommodation, or in informal arrangements. Population movements remain fluid, with families making short return attempts before relocating again due to insecurity and housing damage.

PROTECTION MONITORING

Displaced Lebanese and refugee populations continue to face compounded protection risks linked to airstrikes, protracted displacement, economic pressure, and uneven access to services. Displaced refugees report increasing housing insecurity, with rising rental costs in Beirut and Mount Lebanon driving eviction risks. Movement restrictions linked to checkpoints, curfews, and raids, compounded by lack of legal residency, continue to constrain mobility in the North, Bekaa, Baalbek, and parts of the South. Protection reach outside collective shelters remains limited due to capacity and funding constraints, with only 39 per cent of people supported to date. UNHCR, as Shelter Sector co-lead, is advancing identification and assessment of more sustainable shelter solutions with government counterparts to enable a timely transition away from collective facilities, which are not suitable for medium- to long-term accommodation.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Affairs and within the Lebanon Response Plan, UNHCR has reached more than 24,300 people with direct protection support, including child protection, gender-based violence (GBV) assistance, support for people with specific needs, and community-based protection activities. UNHCR and WFP are scaling up targeted Emergency Multipurpose Cash Assistance for refugees, alongside a Cash for Shelter programme targeting more than 600 vulnerable refugee families. Emergency Protection Cash Assistance (EPCA) remains a key protection tool, with more than 2,000 grants issued since the onset of the emergency, reaching more than 9,700 individuals — including more than 700 persons with disabilities — with expanded coverage in areas of renewed insecurity. UNHCR is repairing around 65 collective shelters, supporting approximately 13,000 displaced people, and has distributed essential relief items to roughly 85,000 people in collective shelters and nearly 9,000 outside shelters.


The Lebanon Flash Appeal is 38 per cent funded as of 8 May, with approximately US\$117 million received against US\$308 million required. The Ministry of Social Affairs has formally requested a three-month extension (June–August 2026) to ensure continuity of assistance amid persistent displacement and instability.

HUMAN IMPACT

In Mount Lebanon, a woman and her two children faced eviction from a collective shelter. Through UNHCR-supported emergency case management and coordination with its partner Caritas, the family was relocated to secure accommodation and is now receiving ongoing support. "After we were asked to leave, I didn't know where we would go with the children. Here we feel safe again," the woman shared.

SYRIA

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **339,761**

Syrian returnees from Lebanon

 **73,983**

Lebanese refugees crossing into Syria

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

The General Authority for Borders and Customs announced the official opening of the Jisr Qamar border crossing, linking Homs Governorate with Wadi Khaled in Lebanon, effective 4 May, with passenger movement commencing in both directions. Population movements through the three other official crossings – Jdaidet Yabous (Rural Damascus), Joussieh (Homs), and Arida (Tartous) – remain stable and within the processing capacity of border authorities. Since 2 March, 413,744 people have crossed from Lebanon into Syria: 339,761 Syrian nationals, of whom 84,322 reported an intention to return permanently, and 73,983 Lebanese nationals. Over the past week, average daily movements stood at approximately 2,400 travellers at Jdaidet Yabous, 1,400 at Joussieh, and 160 at Arida. Lower volumes at Arida reflect external access constraints – ongoing bridge rehabilitation works and recent adverse weather – rather than limitations to border operations, which remain functional. Movements from Syria to Lebanon have continued at normal levels, primarily for work, education, medical appointments, and embassy or consular visits.

PROTECTION MONITORING

Protection monitoring indicates that returnees are primarily families returning after prolonged displacement, alongside households compelled to return following recent escalation. Findings highlight a combination of push and pull factors, including perceived improvements in conditions in Syria and increasingly difficult circumstances in Lebanon – notably challenges accessing education, rising living costs, and financial constraints, particularly difficulties rehabilitating partially damaged housing. Several families described staggered return patterns, with women and children returning first while male household members remained in Lebanon for employment. Protection concerns were most pronounced among families with limited or no assets in Syria, including those reporting housing loss and uncertainty about access to food and healthcare. Reduced humanitarian presence at border points has limited the availability of immediate assistance, though legal support remains available.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE


Returnees from Lebanon report urgent needs across shelter, food, livelihoods, healthcare, education, and civil documentation. Many are arriving to damaged or uninhabitable homes and staying temporarily with relatives or in informal arrangements. UNHCR and partners are supporting arrivals through immediate assistance, including transportation to areas of return, essential relief items, information provision, referrals to services, and legal support related to civil documentation. Emergency medical support is available at border points through mobile health services. Assistance demands are increasingly shifting toward areas of return, where needs are outpacing available resources. UNHCR-supported community centres are providing integrated protection support with a focus on the most vulnerable.

HUMAN IMPACT

Ahmad Marouf Hamed, a chef and father of four, returned with his family from Lebanon to Daraya, Rural Damascus, after escalating hostilities made remaining untenable. Although his home had been completely destroyed, he chose to return. Upon arrival, Ahmad and his family registered and were guided to UNHCR-supported community centres to receive protection services, activities for children, and referrals to cash assistance, livelihood opportunities, and housing repairs support. "We are now staying with our extended family. I plan to work in a restaurant, and hopefully one day open a small food business of my own," Ahmad says.

AFGHANISTAN & PAKISTAN

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **352,500**

Total number of Afghan returnees since start of crisis

 **142,900**

Afghan returnees from Iran since start of crisis

 **209,600**

Afghan returnees from Pakistan since start of crisis

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Since the onset of the crisis, approximately 352,500 people have returned from Iran and Pakistan to Afghanistan, bringing total returns in 2026 to more than 619,100 as of 9 May. During 3–9 May, returns averaged 8,300 per day, a 4 per cent increase compared with the previous week (26 April–2 May). Returnees from Pakistan accounted for 60 per cent of arrivals, with 4 per cent involving deportations.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, return processing and transit facilities across the province remained operational, including the Azakhel Voluntary Repatriation Centre. At the Torkham border crossing, administrative and customs-related disruptions continued to cause minor delays to truck movements, although crossings increased following UNHCR advocacy. Movement at the Taftan border with Iran remained stable.

PROTECTION MONITORING

Afghanistan

Protection monitoring indicates that returns from Iran continue to be driven by economic hardship and limited access to services, alongside a sharp rise in irregular migration attempts and subsequent arrests and deportations.

Pakistan

Protection monitoring and helpline reports continued to highlight concerns among Afghan communities, including arrests, detention, harassment, eviction threats and restricted access to basic services, particularly in urban areas. UNHCR and partners continued protection monitoring and legal assistance where possible. Arrests declined in Islamabad Capital Territory and Punjab compared with previous weeks but remained high in Balochistan, especially in border districts.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

In Afghanistan, UNHCR scaled up assistance at key border points, including cash assistance, hot meals, protection screening, psychosocial support, child protection referrals and transport assistance. During the reporting week, 11,515 people (2,329 households) received cash support, while partners distributed 14,124 hot meals. Vulnerable returnees and unaccompanied children were referred to partners for psychosocial support and family tracing.

Inter-agency coordination in Afghanistan focused on addressing operational bottlenecks at border and reception sites, including congestion, service delivery and protection gaps. The Protection Coordination Group also reviewed response gaps related to internal displacement in the east, including NFI needs and monitoring of returns and emerging informal settlements.

In Pakistan, UNHCR continued close engagement with authorities and partners to reinforce protection monitoring and service delivery at border points, including Torkham, Chaman and Taftan.



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HUMAN IMPACT

A family of ten returned to Afghanistan after more than 40 years in Pakistan, following sustained pressure, extortion and eviction notices. During the journey, the pregnant mother developed severe complications after a vehicle accident. Upon arrival, UNHCR partner WADAN facilitated emergency medical care, enabling a safe delivery, and provided immediate assistance including cash, food and referrals for livelihood and reintegration support in their area of return.

TÜRKIYE

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **220,900**

Iranian nationals → Türkiye

 **195,400**

Iranian nationals → Iran

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Cross-border movements have returned to pre-conflict levels, including daily crossings by traders for commercial purposes. The Kapıköy (Van), Gürbulak (Ağrı), and Esendere (Hakkari) border crossings remained generally operational throughout the reporting period. Movements continue predominantly as families or groups, alongside individuals travelling alone. The most frequently cited reasons for crossing are routine travel, business, family visits, 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.

Since late February to 9 May, more than 220,900 Iranian nationals entered Türkiye via the three border crossings while approximately 195,400 departed to Iran, with entries continuing predominantly under the visa exemption regime and no mass irregular movement observed.

The overall security situation in Türkiye remained stable during the reporting period. On 9 May, the Turkish Minister of Interior stated that "From the very first day the war began, there has been no regular or irregular migration movement from Iran to our country." No changes in movement patterns, access, or political or security conditions are anticipated in the near term.

PROTECTION MONITORING


UNHCR continues to monitor the situation along the border in close coordination with authorities and partners. Current movements largely reflect routine mobility, family travel, and precautionary movement. Some individuals cited recent developments in Iran as their reason for crossing; some of those crossing may have international protection needs.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE


National preparedness plans are being coordinated by the Ministry of Interior's Presidency of Migration Management. UNHCR is reinforcing coordination with UN 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 authorities request support in the event of large-scale movements. UNHCR is holding regular inter-agency coordination meetings with the participation of several civil society actors active in Van.

ARMENIA

MIDDLE EAST SITUATION | COUNTRY ANALYSIS

 **18,300**

Iranian nationals entered Armenia

 **17,500**

Iranian nationals exited through Agarak

ANALYSIS & TRENDS

Cross-border movements through the Agarak border crossing remained active and broadly balanced during 2–9 May, with approximately 7,075 crossings recorded – comprising 3,772 entries (53 per cent) and 3,303 exits (47 per cent). Movements are predominantly truck-driven (55–60 per cent) and individual-based, primarily linked to commercial activity, short-term travel, and precautionary movement, with no increase in families or vulnerable groups observed. Since 28 February, official crossings at Agarak have totalled approximately 42,800 – approximately 22,000 entries and 20,800 exits – indicating high-volume but balanced mobility with no evidence of a sustained surge in arrivals or shift towards displacement dynamics.

Movement categorisation continues to indicate heterogeneous, primarily non-displacement-driven patterns, with pendular or circular movement dominant, with entries and exits broadly balanced. A smaller proportion reflects precautionary temporary movement linked to regional uncertainty. There continues to be no evidence of large-scale conflict-related displacement or sustained one-way movement into Armenia.

During the reporting period, Yerevan hosted several high-level international events – the Armenia–EU Summit, the European Political Community Summit, and the Yerevan Dialogue – resulting in increased international arrivals and temporary pressure on accommodation and city infrastructure, which may have contributed to short-term fluctuations in observed travel patterns. Cross-border movements in the coming one to two weeks are expected to remain active but broadly stable, with no immediate triggers for large-scale response activation anticipated.

PROTECTION MONITORING

During the reporting period, 21 individuals from Iran approached UNHCR – 81 per cent male and 19 per cent female – with primary needs comprising asylum information (95 per cent) and accommodation and financial inquiries (35–40 per cent). Reported intentions were split between temporary stay (43 per cent), considering asylum (38 per cent), and onward movement (19 per cent). Since 28 February, 327 individuals from Iran have approached UNHCR, more than 60 per cent of whom were male, with asylum information as the dominant primary need. Cumulative needs data show 271 asylum procedure requests, 99 financial assistance requests, and 96 accommodation requests, with intentions remaining mixed and precautionary.

Recent interactions reinforced the broader pattern of people seeking information and reassurance to support short-term, precautionary decision-making rather than emergency humanitarian assistance. Several individuals expressed uncertainty regarding duration of stay and possible next steps should regional tensions continue, with concerns centred on legal stay options and access to temporary accommodation. UNHCR and partners provided counselling on legal procedures, temporary stay arrangements, and referral pathways.

PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

Preparedness activities continue under Government leadership with no revision to contingency assumptions; observed trends remain within current parameters. The inter-agency response posture is unchanged.

The Emergency Preparedness Working Group convened a thematic session on communication products, referral systems, and hotlines. Priority gaps include multilingual harmonisation (particularly Farsi) and referral mechanism alignment. The Iran border situation remains stable and manageable.

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.

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	

UNHCR's 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.