

# Syria – Complex Emergency

JANUARY 10, 2024

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE

<p><b>16.7</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Population in Need of Humanitarian Assistance in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p><b>12.9</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Food-Insecure Population in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p><b>7.2</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Number of IDPs in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – July 2023</i></p>	<p><b>3</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated People USAID/BHA Reaches per Month in Syria</p> <p><i>USAID/BHA – September 2023</i></p>	<p><b>2</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated People State/PRM Reaches per Month in Syria</p> <p><i>State/PRM – September 2023</i></p>
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- Approximately 16.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance in Syria in 2024, the highest level of need since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, the UN reports.
- Meanwhile, requested funding under the UN’s 2024 Syria Country and Regional Appeals outpace all other global crises in the 2024 GHO, emphasizing the persistent scale of humanitarian need.
- Hostilities in NWS since early October have resulted in at least 99 civilian deaths, OCHA and local health authorities report.
- Drought and a subsequent reduction in water availability in NES continue to adversely impact food security, livelihoods, and WASH services, according to REACH.



<b>TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING</b> For the Syria Response in FYs 2012–2023	USAID/BHA <sup>1</sup>	\$8,743,977,748
	State/PRM <sup>2</sup>	\$8,442,280,455
	<b>Total<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>\$17,186,258,203</b>

<sup>1</sup> USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)  
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)  
<sup>3</sup> FY 2024 funding for the Syria Complex Emergency will be included in future products when committed/obligated. For information on the U.S. Government’s (USG) funding toward the response in FY 2023, refer to Syria Fact Sheet #9, dated September 30, 2023, available on the USAID website at <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work>.

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **Syria Country and Regional Response Funding Appeals Top UN's 2024 GHO at \$4.4 Billion and \$5.5 Billion Respectively**

The UN's Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) for 2024, released in early December, emphasizes the persistent, large-scale humanitarian needs in Syria, with the country and regional appeals outpacing all other global crises. The 2024 GHO reports that relief actors require \$4.4 billion to reach populations in Syria in need of humanitarian assistance, followed in scale by Ukraine, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen. Moreover, the 2024 Syria Regional Appeal requests \$5.5 billion for relief actors in neighboring countries to respond to the crisis, surpassing the next highest regional appeal—the Venezuela Joint Refugee and Migrant Plan—by nearly \$4 billion. Ongoing conflict in Syria and the effects of more than a decade of war continue to drive humanitarian needs for 32.5 million people in Syria and neighboring countries, according to the 2024 GHO. The adverse effects of the February 2023 earthquakes, high inflation, and subsequent increases in essential commodity prices have exacerbated conflict-driven humanitarian needs, increasing poverty and reliance on humanitarian assistance.

### **16.7 Million People in Syria to Require Humanitarian Assistance in 2024, Highest Since 2011**

An estimated 16.7 million people in Syria—45 percent of whom are children—are anticipated to require humanitarian assistance in 2024, an increase from 15.3 million people in need (PiN) in 2023 and marking the highest number of PiN since the conflict began in 2011, according to the 2024 Summary of the Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO). The population forecast to require assistance in 2024 includes approximately 5.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and is largely driven by climatic events, macroeconomic conditions, and protracted conflict. Recurrent disease outbreaks, food insecurity, and a prolonged drought and water crisis are additionally exacerbating humanitarian needs and contributing to rising mortality and morbidity, including elevated rates of malnutrition. IDPs face limited access to sustained food, livelihood opportunities, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, with the December-to-February winter season intensifying access challenges to essential services, the UN reports. Approximately 2 million of those IDPs are in northwest Syria (NWS) alone, where they face limited predictable access to heating, clean water, and other necessities across more than 1,500 camps or self-settled sites as of December, according to UN. The sectors facing the largest numbers of PiN include early recovery and livelihoods, food security and agriculture, protection, health, and WASH. Notably, at least 12.9 million people in Syria need food assistance in 2024, as inflation and rising prices have strained household purchasing power, with the cost of a monthly food basket—comprising staples such as bread, lentils, rice, sugar, and vegetable oil—doubling from January to October 2023, the UN reports. Meanwhile, active hostilities in the north continue to impede humanitarian access and increase civilians' exposure to protection violations, such as forced displacement and violence. Armed conflict resulted in the deaths of at least 454 civilians from January to October, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The UN plans to release the complete 2024 HNO in late January 2024, while the Humanitarian Response Plan requirements will be available in February 2024.

### **Conflict Escalation in NWS Results in at Least 99 Civilian Deaths in Three Months**

Since early October, an escalation in hostilities between Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG) forces and the Syrian Salvation Government—affiliated with the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham armed group—in NWS had resulted in at least 99 civilian deaths, nearly 40 percent of whom were children, and injury to more than 400 individuals as of December 18, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and local health authorities report. Nearly daily hostilities largely shifted to frontline

areas in November following the prior month’s escalation more broadly across Aleppo and Idlib governorates, including shelling of residential areas. Conflict and resultant economic hardship prompted the displacement of more than 9,000 people during November, with displaced populations citing hostilities and loss of income as the two most common push factors, according to the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, the coordinating body for humanitarian CCCM activities, comprising UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders.

### **Severe Water Scarcity Exacerbates Humanitarian Needs in NES**

Since 2021, dwindling water availability in northeast Syria (NES) has severely impacted food security, livelihoods, and WASH needs, the NGO REACH reports. Climate change-related drying conditions with decreasing rainfall over the past three years—leading to 20-year record low groundwater levels and the lowest flows ever recorded on the Euphrates River—have compounded the current water crisis. As a result, humanitarian assistance remains vital for communities experiencing water scarcity, with relief actors providing consistent maintenance of water networks and stations, supplies of electricity due to the region’s reliance on hydroelectric dams, and water trucking. However, larger communities are still vulnerable to conflict-related shocks and reduced power generation that ultimately impact humanitarian operations. Al Hasakah Governorate’s Alouk water station was non-operational as of August 2022 for approximately a year, impacting an estimated 1 million people, and has faced intermittent challenges to functionality since September 2023, according to REACH. Meanwhile, smaller communities often depend on unregulated and expensive private trucking. A lack of sewage management in NES has also increased the risk of contracting waterborne diseases such as cholera. Moreover, while local agriculture and food sectors continue to report lower yields as of November due to drought, production costs and money spent on imported goods have increased, diminishing income for agricultural workers, decreasing affordability of food, and ultimately driving vulnerable populations to resort to negative coping strategies, according to REACH. In response, relief actors continue to advocate for coordinated climate adaptation measures to slow climate change effects and mitigate humanitarian impacts.

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#### **KEY FIGURES**



**15**

Number of USAID/BHA partners providing emergency food and nutrition assistance in Syria and to Syrian refugees in neighboring countries

#### **U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

##### **FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

USAID/BHA supports the UN World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and 13 NGOs providing emergency food and nutrition assistance within Syria and to Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. In Syria, USAID/BHA partners provide vulnerable populations with cash transfers for emergency nutritional products, food vouchers, and monthly in-kind food rations, while also distributing wheat flour and yeast to bakeries. USAID/BHA assistance also supports the provision of cash transfers for food and food vouchers for Syrian refugees in the region. WFP and USAID/BHA NGO partners provide monthly food assistance to vulnerable populations inside Syria and to Syrian refugees across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye as part of their complex emergency response. In addition, State/PRM supports UNICEF to monitor, identify, and respond to cases of malnutrition in Syrian refugee populations throughout Türkiye and to provide awareness campaigns on breastfeeding and best practices to prevent chronic malnutrition.



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Number of USAID/BHA partners providing health assistance in Syria

## HEALTH

USAID/BHA funds 12 partners, including the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, and the UN World Health Organization (WHO), to provide critical health assistance in Syria through activities such as community-based health education, direct health services through mobile medical units, the provision of equipment for health facilities, reproductive health services, and training for Syrian medical workers. UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and nine NGOs continue to deliver critical health assistance to earthquake-affected populations in Syria, including the delivery of medical supplies, deployment of mobile health and nutrition teams to hard-to-reach areas, and dispatching of mobile medical units and surgical teams to treat trauma injuries and provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services at temporary shelters housing displaced populations.

State/PRM supports the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, WHO, and 20 NGO partners to provide health assistance—including medical consultations, specialized health services, MHPSS services, and vaccinations—for refugees in neighboring countries. In November, State/PRM partner UNHCR Syria, in collaboration with WHO, organized a five-day capacity-building workshop related to mental health assistance for 25 participants, including case managers, community health workers, midwives, nurses, and referral focal points. The workshop aimed to ensure that individuals with mental health conditions receive high-quality health services, including evidence-based treatment.



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Number of USAID/BHA partners providing critical WASH assistance in Syria

## WASH

USAID/BHA supports 13 NGO partners, as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF, to provide WASH assistance in Syria. USAID/BHA partners distribute essential hygiene items to vulnerable populations and enhance WASH facilities by rehabilitating small-scale sanitation and water systems—such as handwashing stations and latrines—in displacement camps and informal settlements. In northern Syria, USAID/BHA partners continue to increase access to safe drinking water through emergency water trucking and the distribution of water storage tanks and water treatment devices. USAID/BHA is also supporting NGOs to strengthen cholera response activities by distributing soap and other WASH commodities, increasing water trucking frequency to IDP sites, and providing additional water for handwashing and cleaning. State/PRM also supports partners—including international organizations in Jordan and Lebanon and a partner in Syria—to provide WASH assistance to Syrian refugees, as well as to vulnerable populations inside Syria. With State/PRM support, UNHCR and its partners repaired more than 15,400 linear feet of the sewage system and started repairing nearly 3,300 linear feet of the system for potable water in several governorates in Syria from January to November 2023.



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Centers through which State/PRM provides protection assistance in Syria

## PROTECTION

USAID/BHA funds 17 protection partners, including IOM and UNFPA, to provide case management and referral services, learning and recreational opportunities, and psychosocial support for children at high risk of exploitation and abuse. USAID/BHA also supports safe spaces for women and girls, as well as medical supplies and specialized training for health staff to provide appropriate care for gender-based violence survivors throughout Syria.

Further, State/PRM partner UNHCR provides comprehensive protection services—including facilitating community-based protection interventions, identifying protection cases, providing educational services for parents and children, and providing referrals to legal aid services—for conflict-affected and displaced Syrians in both Syria and neighboring countries. UNHCR also supports community-led initiatives that aim to foster better community relations and support the needs of IDPs, returnees, and host communities. State/PRM additionally supports IOM, UNICEF, and NGO partners to provide protection assistance, including legal documentation and case management services, for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. In November, UNHCR supported nearly 120 community-based satellite protection centers and more than 110 mobile units across Syria in conducting protection activities, such as legal assistance, mental health training for medical professionals, and gendered-based violence prevention. To carry out these protection activities, UNHCR collaborated with more than 2,500 community outreach volunteers in all 14 governorates.



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Number of USG partners providing shelter and relief commodities in Syria and neighboring countries

## SHELTER AND RELIEF COMMODITIES

USAID/BHA supports nine partners, including IOM, to distribute shelter materials and basic household items and conduct shelter rehabilitation activities in Syria. In northern Syria, USAID/BHA partners distribute emergency shelter items, maintain IDP camps, and rehabilitate existing IDP camps and collective centers. In addition, State/PRM partner UNHCR supports the replacement of damaged tents for households in IDP camps in northeast Syria. State/PRM also supports IOM, UNHCR, and five NGO partners to provide shelter and relief commodities to refugees in Syria and neighboring countries. In November, State/PRM partner UNHCR Jordan conducted repairs on more than 510 shelters and installed approximately 260 new shelters in Jordan's Azraq and Zaatari camps and distributed materials and provided training for shelter maintenance to approximately 240 households. UNHCR also repaired the solar plant in Zaatari camp, which now operates at an improved capacity of 90 percent. In November, UNHCR distributed and installed more than 3,100 shelter material packages, including doors, electrical cables, water tanks, and windows, benefiting nearly 16,000 individuals in Aleppo, Al Hasakah, Dar'a, Dayr az Zawr, Hamah, Homs, Idlib, and Quneitra governorates as of November.

Seven UN agencies—including IOM, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO—continue to

transport in-kind food assistance, pharmaceuticals, and other relief items to northwestern Syria in support of dually conflict- and earthquake-affected communities.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Following peaceful demonstrations against the SARG in March 2011, SARG President Bashar al-Assad pledged legislative reforms. However, reforms failed to materialize, and SARG forces loyal to President al-Assad responded to demonstrations with violence, leading armed opposition groups to retaliate. The escalation in conflict led to widespread displacement and a humanitarian crisis within Syria and the region. Hostilities continue to date, as shifting frontlines and areas of control force IDPs into smaller and more congested areas, exacerbating humanitarian needs.
- At a November 2012 meeting in Doha, Qatar, Syrian opposition factions formed an umbrella organization, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, also known as the Syrian Coalition. The USG recognized the coalition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people on December 11, 2012. On March 19, 2013, the Syrian Coalition established the Syrian Interim Government, which opposes the SARG and is based in decentralized locations throughout opposition-held areas of Syria. During 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) captured significant areas of Syria, adding additional complexity to the multi-actor conflict. In March 2019, the Syrian Democratic Forces announced the capture of the last ISIS strongholds in Syria.
- On January 9, 2023, the UN Security Council (UNSC) adopted UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 2762, reauthorizing UN cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected populations in Syria for six months. The resolution permitted the UN's use of Türkiye's Bab al-Hawa crossing for the delivery of UN humanitarian assistance into Syria until July 10, 2023. The resolution was a partial renewal of previous cross-border aid resolutions, beginning with UNSCR 2165 on July 14, 2014, which authorized four border crossings from Iraq, Jordan, and Türkiye. In July 2023, the UNSC failed to reauthorize UN cross-border access. The UN and SARG reached an understanding in early August 2023 to resume UN cross-border assistance via the Bab al-Hawa border crossing point with transshipments beginning in September.
- On February 6, 2023, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck central-southern Türkiye—near the border with Syria—at a depth of 11.1 miles. The earthquake and subsequent aftershocks resulted in at least 6,000 deaths and injury to more than 11,200 people in Syria as of March 24, as well as damage to or the destruction of at least 34,000 buildings. On February 13, SARG President Bashar al-Assad granted the UN three months of cross-border access to two additional border crossings—Al Ra'ee and Bab al-Salama—for aid deliveries from Türkiye to northwest Syria. On May 13, access to the two border crossings was extended until August 13, and on August 6, the SARG further extended access until November 13. The SARG extended UN access for a third time to Bab al-Salama and Al Ra'ee border crossing points through February 13, 2024, the UN announced November 13.

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## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)