

Syria – Complex Emergency

FEBRUARY 2, 2024

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

<p>16.7 MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Population in Need of Humanitarian Assistance in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p>12.9 MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Food-Insecure Population in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – December 2023</i></p>	<p>7.2 MILLION</p> <p>Estimated Number of IDPs in Syria</p> <p><i>UN – July 2023</i></p>	<p>2.4 MILLION</p> <p>Estimated People USAID/BHA Reaches per Month in Syria</p> <p><i>USAID/BHA – January 2024</i></p>	<p>2 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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- In 2024, the newly released 3RP aims to reach approximately 12.9 million refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, and host community members with humanitarian assistance in Syria’s neighboring countries.
- TAF airstrikes and artillery offensives in NES between January 11 and 17 caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure, resulting in critical shortages of electricity, fuel, and safe drinking water, according to international media and relief actors.
- Approximately 37,500 Syrian refugees returned from countries in the region to localities of origin in 2023, UNHCR reports.
- A recent surge in acute respiratory infections in NWS continues to strain health facilities.



TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the Syria Response in FYs 2012–2023	USAID/BHA ¹	\$8,743,977,748
	State/PRM ²	\$8,442,280,455
	Total³	\$17,186,258,203

¹ USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

² U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

³ 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

2024 3RP Targets Support to 12.9 Million People Across the Region

The 2024 Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), co-led by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Development Program, appeals for \$5.7 billion to reach 12.9 million people in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye with assistance during the year. The Syria crisis—now reaching its 13th year—remains one of the largest displacement crises globally. The 3RP, released December 21, aims to reach approximately 6.3 million refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons—including 5.8 million Syrians—and more than 6.6 million host community members; the total number of people targeted in 2024 represents a 4 percent decrease compared with the 2023 plan, reflecting relief actors' efforts to prioritize humanitarian resources. Therein, the UN plans to provide support to 7.5 million people in Türkiye, 3.2 million people in Lebanon, 1.4 million people in Jordan, 734,000 people in Iraq, and 188,000 people in Egypt, calling for more than \$5.7 billion in 2024 to facilitate such relief operations. The 2024 3RP aims to support populations around the region facing deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian conditions, which have increased stress on both host communities and refugees. Approximately 90 percent of the Syrian refugee population in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon have gone into debt to meet basic needs, and inadequate access to social services, such as health and education, continues to push more households below the poverty line, disproportionately affecting women, children, and people with disabilities.

TAF Airstrikes in NES Damage Civilian Infrastructure, Hinder Humanitarian Operations

Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) resumed airstrikes and artillery offensives in northeast Syria (NES) between January 11 and 17, resulting in damage to civilian infrastructure and adversely affecting humanitarian operations in Aleppo, Al Hasakah, and Ar Raqqa governorates, according to international media and relief actors. After an approximately three-week pause in aerial bombardments from late December 2023 to mid-January 2024, the resumption of airstrikes followed the deaths of nine TAF soldiers due to Kurdistan Workers' Party-led attacks in the Kurdistan Regional Government-held area of northern Iraq, international media reports. As a result, a series of TAF airstrikes on Al Hasakah's Swadiyah power station—the primary source of electricity and gas for NES—and four additional power plants disconnected or severely limited electricity for more than 1 million individuals in the region as of January 26.

The mid-January attacks have hindered civilians' access to electricity, fuel, health care, and safe drinking water as of January 30 and resulted in shortages and elevated prices of cooking and heating oil, according to the NES Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Forum. Approximately 1.4 million people faced limited access to safe drinking water as of January 26, as power outages have impeded the operation of boreholes, the NES NGO Forum reports. The outages compounded existing water shortages resulting from the shutdown of Alouk water station—one of the region's primary sources of safe drinking water—following a series of TAF strikes in October that destroyed vital electricity infrastructure needed to power the water station. Limited access to electricity and water supply in recent weeks has also adversely affected operations in health facilities, relief actors report. Moreover, without electricity to operate oil and gas production sites, fuel availability for humanitarian operations—including service provision in internally displaced person (IDP) camps—may decline as reserve stocks are depleted. Nearly 234,000 IDPs face increased health and malnutrition risks without improved fuel access, according to the NES NGO Forum.

Number of Syrian Returns from the Region Trends Down in 2023 Compared to 2022

In 2023, approximately 37,500 Syrian refugees returned from the region to their localities of origin, a 26 percent decrease from the approximately 50,800 returnees in 2022, according to UNHCR. Among 2023 returnees, the majority—approximately 53 percent—of Syrian refugees returned to the country from Türkiye, followed by returns from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Shocks affecting Syria in 2023—such as deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, the February earthquakes in southern Türkiye and northwest Syria (NWS), and periodic escalations in violence across the country—continued to exacerbate humanitarian needs. Nearly 391,500 Syrian refugees returned to the country between 2016 and 2023, UNHCR reports.

Acute Respiratory Infections in NWS Reach Record High, Straining Health Facilities

The number of acute respiratory infections—including influenza-like illnesses (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI)—recorded in NWS reached a five-year high following a surge beginning in mid-November, according to a report from a Syrian NGO. During the second week of December 2023, the local partner registered more than 80,000 ILI cases in NWS in 2023 compared to approximately 45,000 cases during the same period in 2022. In addition, health facilities in NWS reported more than 1,200 confirmed SARI cases during the second week of December 2023, compared to fewer than 800 cases during the same reporting period the previous year. The surge in cases continues to strain health facilities, reduce the number of available beds in intensive care units, and worsen health risks for already-vulnerable populations, such as children and older people.

In response to the elevated infection rate, USAID/BHA partner the UN World Health Organization (WHO) distributed nearly 70 new hospital beds across medical centers in Idlib Governorate in December, enhancing health facilities' ability to treat more severe ILI and SARI cases. The UN agency also delivered additional medicine to hospitals across the region, sufficient to meet the immediate and increased needs of populations affected by SARI. Furthermore, WHO-supported warehouses maintain stocks of emergency medicine ready for distribution if needs persist.

KEY FIGURES



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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. Notably, WFP reached approximately 3.4 million people with critical food and nutrition assistance across Syria during November, distributing nearly 17,200 metric tons (MT) of in-kind food assistance to approximately 2.8 million people and providing \$3.4 million in cash-based assistance to nearly 353,000 individuals. USAID/BHA assistance also supports the provision of cash transfers for food and food vouchers for Syrian refugees in the region. As of January, WFP and USAID/BHA NGO partners provide food assistance to an estimated 3.2 million people, including approximately 2.4 million people inside Syria and approximately

800,000 Syrian refugees across Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye, as part of their complex emergency response. In addition, State/PRM supports UNICEF to address child nutrition in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye.



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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 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 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 2023, UNHCR supported five primary and secondary healthcare facilities in Jordan, providing an average of more than 4,000 consultations a week.



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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 water, sanitation, and hygiene (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. Additionally, State/PRM 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 Syria and its partners restored more than 18,800 linear feet of the sewage system, along with three boreholes supporting over 80,000 individuals, throughout 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.

Furthermore, 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 December, UNHCR Syria, in collaboration with UNICEF, conducted a six-day parenting workshop for 19 facilitators working in UNHCR-supported community centers in As Suwayda', Dar'a, and Quneitra 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. During 2023, UNHCR Syria provided emergency shelter support to 114,500 individuals, which included repairing nine collective shelters, providing nearly 8,400 tents, and ensuring the regular operation and maintenance of nine camps in NES.

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. As of November, more than 970 trucks carrying humanitarian assistance crossed to NWS via Bab al-Salama and Al Ra'ee border crossing points (BCPs) since their opening on February 14, 2023, according to WFP. In November alone, the WFP-led Logistics Cluster facilitated the cross-border transshipment of nearly 180 trucks carrying approximately 2,500 MT of humanitarian commodities through Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salama BCPs.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Following peaceful demonstrations against the Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG) in March 2011, SARG President Bashar al-Asad pledged legislative reforms. However, reforms failed to materialize, and SARG forces loyal to President al-Asad 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 BCPs 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 BCP 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 had 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-Asad granted the UN three months of cross-border access to two additional BCPs—Al Ra'ee and Bab al-Salama—for aid deliveries from Türkiye to northwest Syria. On May 13, access to the two BCPs 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 BCPs through February 13, 2024, the UN announced on November 13.

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
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at 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)