

# Syria – Complex Emergency

MARCH 1, 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>2.4</b> MILLION</p> <p>Estimated People USAID/BHA Reaches per Month in Syria</p> <p><i>USAID/BHA – January 2024</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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- As of early February, more than 43,000 people remain displaced in NWS due to the effects of the 2023 earthquakes in Syria and Türkiye, highlighting enduring humanitarian needs.
- On February 11, the SARG renewed the humanitarian authorization for use of the Bab al-Salama and Al Ra'ee BCPs from Türkiye into NWS until May 13, according to the UN.
- Despite continued stabilization in the average cost of a monthly food basket, the price of the basket remained at a historically high level as of December, driving persistent food insecurity. Food was recorded as the highest unmet need among households in NES and NWS, according to a survey conducted by 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

### **One Year After Earthquakes, Displacement, Food Security Impacts Persist**

February 6 marked one year since several major earthquakes—peaking at a 7.8 magnitude—struck central-southern Türkiye, resulting in the deaths of at least 6,000 people in Syria and 50,783 people in Türkiye, according to the Government of Türkiye and the UN. The earthquakes exacerbated pre-existing humanitarian needs in northwest Syria (NWS), and significant repercussions of the disaster remain. As a result of the earthquakes and ongoing conflict, an estimated 16.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2024, the highest number of people in need since the start of conflict in 2011, according to the UN. In NWS, more than 43,000 people remained displaced by the earthquakes as of early February, including 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) sheltering in 70 reception centers and 3,000 IDPs residing in displacement camps, according to a statement by UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths. As the protracted conflict in Syria reached its thirteenth year, the number of food insecure people across the country also increased following the earthquakes and amid record levels of inflation during 2023, growing from 12.1 million people in December 2022 to at least 12.9 million people in December 2023, the UN reports.

### **SARG Extends Bab al-Salama and Al Ra’ee BCP Access to NWS Through Mid-May**

On February 11, the Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG) renewed the humanitarian authorization for use of the Bab al-Salama and Al Ra’ee border crossing points (BCPs)—two of three primary BCPs from Türkiye into NWS—for an additional three months until May 13, according to the UN. The prior authorization for the two crossings was set to expire on February 13. This renewal marks the fourth extension of the BCP agreement since the SARG initially approved the use of the BCPs on February 13, 2023, following the earthquakes in early February 2023. The SARG’s additional six-month extension of humanitarian access through July 13 to the Bab al-Hawa BCP—the third border-crossing between Türkiye and NWS—as of mid-January will allow for continued humanitarian cross-border staff and commodity movements into NWS.

Approximately 5,000 trucks carrying UN humanitarian assistance crossed through the three BCPs from Türkiye to NWS between February 2023 and February 2024 to support people in need, the UN reports. Of the three crossings, UN agencies most often utilize the Bab al-Hawa BCP, the only NWS crossing point previously authorized under UN Security Council resolutions, as it has preferable road infrastructure and is geographically closer to populations in need. In December 2023 for instance, more than 90 percent of the nearly 550 total trucks crossed from Türkiye to NWS through the Bab al-Hawa BCP.

### **Monthly Food Basket Cost Stabilizes in Late 2023, Food Security Risks Remain**

The average price of the UN World Food Program (WFP) standard reference food basket—comprising staple products such as bread, lentils, rice, and vegetable oil—remained relatively stable for the third consecutive month in December 2023, according to the UN agency’s Market Price Watch Bulletin. Nonetheless, the price of the basket remained at historically high levels—approximately \$63.83 based upon the local currency traded average at year-end—in December after more than doubling during 2023. Although the SARG-established minimum monthly wage in Syria doubled in August, the increased salary only covered approximately 20 percent of the basket based on December prices. WFP attributes these price increases to the continued deterioration of socioeconomic conditions in Syria, effects of the conflict, and the lingering impacts of the February 2023 earthquakes leading to deteriorating food security conditions.

## REACH Assessment Underscores Significant Multi-Sectoral Needs in Northern Syria

More than 70 percent of households surveyed in northeast Syria (NES) and NWS during August and September 2023 reported being unable to meet their basic needs largely due to increased hostilities across northern Syria, according to a multi-sector needs assessment of approximately 5,600 households conducted by REACH. Respondents—including host community members and IDPs residing in and outside of camps—most frequently noted food as the highest unmet need, overwhelmingly among IDPs in camps. Among those unable to meet their basic needs, nearly 20 percent of respondents reported implementing emergency coping mechanisms, the highest level on the four-tiered scale based on the Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index, including borrowing money, selling household assets, or requiring children younger than 15 years of age to work. Nearly 80 percent of IDPs both in and outside of camps were unable to afford heating fuel for the winter, and approximately 70 percent of host community households reported not owning or being able to afford heating fuel, according to REACH.

### KEY FIGURES



17

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



13

Number of USAID/BHA partners providing health assistance in Syria

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

USAID/BHA supports the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), WFP, and 15 nongovernmental organizations (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 3.5 million people with critical assistance across Syria during December 2023, distributing more than 18,500 metric tons of in-kind food assistance to approximately 3.1 million people and providing \$1.7 million in cash-based general food assistance to approximately 162,100 individuals. USAID/BHA assistance also supports cash transfers for food and food vouchers for Syrian refugees in the region. As of January, WFP and USAID/BHA NGO partners provided 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. Additionally, with State/PRM support, UNICEF provides child nutrition assistance in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye.

### HEALTH

USAID/BHA funds 13 partners, including the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN World Health Organization (WHO), and UNICEF, to provide critical health assistance in Syria, including community-based health education, direct health services through mobile medical units, 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 by delivering medical supplies, deploying mobile health and nutrition teams to hard-to-reach areas, and dispatching 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 Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. With State/PRM support, UNHCR Jordan provided nearly 1,300 refugees residing in camps with emergency health assistance and access to vital health care outside of the camps in January.



**17**

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

## WASH

USAID/BHA supports 15 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 are increasing 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 undertake hygiene promotion activities—including through cholera response efforts—by distributing soap and other WASH commodities and providing additional water for handwashing and cleaning. 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 replaced a water pipeline between the city of Aleppo’s Bab al-Nayrab and Sha’ar neighborhoods, enabling regular access to safe drinking water for approximately 700,000 people during 2023.



**230**

Centers through which State/PRM provides protection assistance in Syria

## PROTECTION

USAID/BHA funds 17 protection partners, including IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and 13 NGOs, to provide case management and referral services, as well as 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 people in need of protection assistance, 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 also supports IOM, UNICEF, and NGO partners to provide protection assistance, including legal documentation and case management services, for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. As of January, UNHCR was supporting nearly 120 community and satellite centers and more than 110 mobile units and engaging more than 2,500 outreach volunteers to strengthen its protection activities.



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Number of USAID/BHA partners providing shelter and relief commodities in Syria

## **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 and maintain and rehabilitate IDP camps and collective centers. In addition, State/PRM partner UNHCR supports the replacement of damaged tents for households in IDP camps in NES. State/PRM also supports IOM, UNHCR, and five NGO partners to provide shelter and relief commodities to refugees in Syria and neighboring countries. UNHCR cleared nearly 1.9 million cubic feet of earthquake and conflict-related debris in 2023, allowing approximately 280,000 returnee families to safely access their houses. Additionally, UNHCR provided more than 114,500 individuals with emergency shelter support throughout Syria in 2023.

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 NWS in support of dually conflict- and earthquake-affected communities. As of February 1, nearly 340 trucks carrying humanitarian assistance had crossed to NWS via the three BCPs since February 14, 2023, according to the UN.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Following peaceful demonstrations against the 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 January 11, the Permanent Mission of Syria to the UN announced the six-month extension of the consent-based mechanism for humanitarian assistance to the Bab al-Hawa BCP until July 13.
- 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. The SARG has approved or extended humanitarian access four times to the two BCPs, including from May 13, 2023, until August 13, 2023; thereafter until November 13, 2023; subsequently until February 13, 2024; and recently until May 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://cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://reliefweb.int).

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