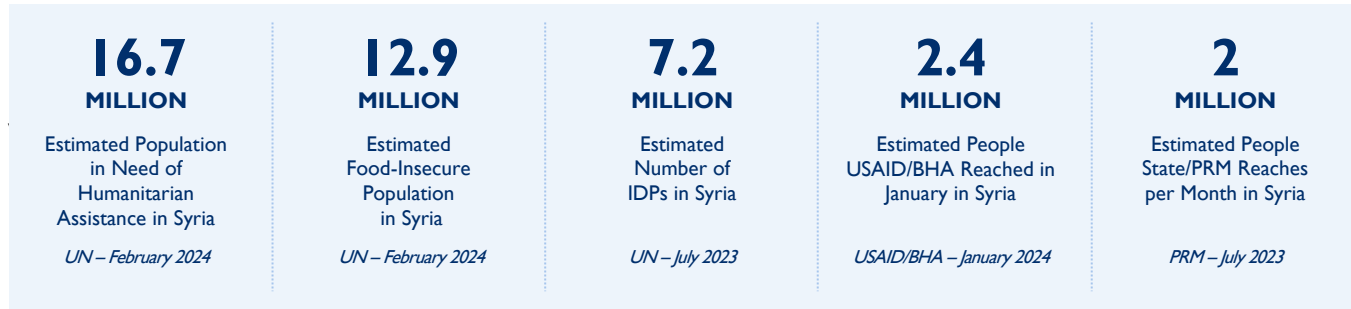


Syria – Complex Emergency

APRIL 9, 2024

SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- Approximately 16.7 million people need assistance across Syria, representing the highest figure since the conflict began 13 years ago, according to the 2024 HNO. Mental health needs have sharply risen countrywide amid deteriorating health infrastructure. In response, USAID/BHA partners continue to provide MHPSS services through mobile medical units.
- Reported airstrikes in Aleppo, Damascus, and Deir Ezzor governorates between March 26 and April 1 killed an estimated 80 people, including one UN employee.
- Oil contamination in NES threatens access to safe drinking water and pollution of up to 59,000 acres of cropland.



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 U.S. Government (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

Humanitarian Needs Increase Countrywide as Syrian Crisis Enters Fourteenth Year

An estimated 16.7 million people are in need of assistance in Syria in 2024, representing more than 70 percent of the country's total population as of 2023 and the highest figure since the beginning of the conflict in March 2011, according to the 2024 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Syria, released on March 3. Nearly 50 percent of the population in need are children and approximately 20 percent are individuals with a disability. The HNO classifies nearly every sub-district across the country as facing severe or extreme humanitarian conditions, indicating areas are experiencing moderate-to-high strain on basic services limited ability to meet basic needs, largely due to hostilities, continued socioeconomic deterioration, and in some areas the lasting effects of the February 2023 earthquakes. Since the Syrian conflict began, the USG estimates that the complex emergency has resulted in the deaths of more than 500,000 people and the displacement—both internally and across international borders—of more than one-half the population, many of whom have been displaced more than once, as of March 2024. Displacement remains a primary driver of humanitarian needs, with approximately 7.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) countrywide, of whom more than 2 million reside in camps or informal settlements. Furthermore, the effects of broader regional insecurity since October 2023, compounded by global funding shortfalls, have exacerbated humanitarian actors' concerns regarding worsening humanitarian conditions inside Syria, particularly regarding food security, access to livelihoods, and protection violations.

Reported Airstrikes Across Syria Result in the Death of One UN Employee, Increased Risk to Humanitarian Staff and Facilities

A series of reported airstrikes in northeast Syria's (NES) Deir Ezzor Governorate on March 26—reportedly targeting state and non-state armed groups—killed an estimated 20 people, primarily among the groups but also including one UN World Health Organization (WHO) staff member as of April 5, according to international media. The strikes also injured at least ten civilians and an estimated 21 members of state and non-state armed groups. The presence of multiple armed actors, in addition to tribal factions, in Deir Ezzor contributes to an increasingly unstable security environment within the governorate and elevated risks for humanitarian staff and other civilians, including displaced populations. Previously, beginning in the summer of 2023, Deir Ezzor had already been experiencing its most significant escalation of hostilities since 2019, resulting in the displacement of up to 6,500 households, according to the UN. Ongoing hostilities have also limited civilians' ability to safely access public health facilities, schools, and water stations due to military actors' presence in and use of the facilities.

Multiple subsequent reported airstrikes on March 29 in Aleppo Governorate and April 1 in Damascus Governorate allegedly targeting state and non-state armed groups killed up to 60 people and injured an unknown number of civilians, according to international media. The airstrikes in Damascus struck a consulate building adjacent to the Government of Iran's Embassy, leading to the reported deaths of at least seven Iranian military officers. No actor had publicly claimed responsibility for the strikes across the three governorates as of April 8. The attacks countrywide have highlighted an increasingly unpredictable operating environment for relief agencies, including the risk of retaliatory attacks, amid escalating regional tensions. The proximity of recent strikes to UN and nongovernmental organization (NGO) offices and residences further contributes to the precarious operating environment for humanitarians.

Mental Health Needs Rise Amid Deteriorating Public Health Infrastructure

The prevalence of recorded mental health conditions in Syria rose sharply between 2022 and 2023, with

a nearly 570 percent increase in stress-related conditions, including acute stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a February report published by the Health Cluster.⁴ Depression and suicide rates rose by more than 80 percent during the same reporting period. In the first nine months of 2023, the number of specialized consultations had risen by 365 percent for stress-related disorders and by 205 percent for depression. Amid widespread mental health needs, more than 40 percent of public hospitals and primary health care facilities in Syria reported being only partly functioning or entirely inoperable, according to the same report. Recurrent attacks on healthcare facilities, displacement, and insufficient salaries have prompted an estimated 70 percent of health workers to leave the country. This departure of health workers has resulted in a ratio of approximately 2.1 healthcare workers per 1,000 people, significantly below the 4.5 to 1,000 ratio recommended to reach the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the cost of medicine had reportedly risen more than 220 percent between 2022 and February 2024 due to inflation, limited local manufacturing capacity resulting from export sanctions, and shipping disruptions due to hostilities in the Red Sea and attacks on airports in Aleppo and Damascus. With public health facilities lacking sufficient supplies and personnel, local communities are increasingly reliant on aid delivery to meet their health needs. However, the number of national and local NGOs and community-based organizations delivering local health services also declined from 70 to 25 across all of Syria between 2019 and 2024, underscoring the dire health situation and increasing strain on remaining humanitarian health organizations.

Environmental Contamination in Northeast Syria Prompts Agriculture and Water Concerns

Inefficient oil waste management across NES since 2014 has resulted in repeated oil leaks into water sources in the region. In addition, recurrent airstrikes by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in the region damaging critical oil infrastructure—including collection tanks, gas production sites housing crude oil, and transportation pipes—have exacerbated oil saturation in agricultural fields and water sources, according to the NES NGO Forum. TAF strikes in NES from October 2023 to January 2024 in Al Hasakah Governorate resulted in oil contamination of at least three rivers that flow into Areesha Lake, a key source of water for agricultural use. Relief actors have expressed concern regarding the sustainability of food production across more than 59,000 acres of cropland in the region. Oil pollution of surface and groundwater also threatens access to safe drinking water for populations in NES. Local authorities and humanitarian organizations in NES are working to map the extent of contamination, remove polluted soil, prevent further spread, and mobilize awareness-raising campaigns on the impacts of utilizing polluted water for irrigation and livestock.

⁴ The Health Cluster is the coordinating body for humanitarian health activities, comprising UN agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders.

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



17

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

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

USAID/BHA supports the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Program (WFP), and 15 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. One USAID/BHA NGO partner delivered nearly 1,100 metric tons (MT) of flour and 2 MT of yeast to bakeries in February, yielding more than 9.3 million loaves of bread for displaced and vulnerable populations living in Deir Ezzor, Al Hasakah, and Ar Raqqah governorates. On average, WFP and USAID/BHA NGO partners provide monthly food assistance to an estimated 2.9 million people, including 2.1 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 10 NGOs, UNICEF, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and WHO, to provide critical health assistance in Syria, including 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. Relief actors also provide community-based health education and training for Syrian medical workers.

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.

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 by distributing soap and other WASH commodities and providing additional water for handwashing and cleaning. In February, one NGO partner delivered more than 19.5 million gallons of safe drinking water, supporting more than 20,000 IDP households. The organization also supported waste management activities, transferring approximately 408,000 gallons of solid waste from nearly 160 IDP sites to dump locations, benefitting approximately 63,000 residents. State/PRM supports partners—including international organizations in Jordan and Lebanon and a partner in Syria—to provide WASH assistance to Syrian refugees and to vulnerable populations inside Syria.



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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, referral services, 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 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 supports IOM, UNICEF, and NGO partners to provide protection assistance, including legal documentation and case management services, for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. In January, UNHCR support nearly 117 community and satellite centers and 115 mobile units in all 14 governorates of the country and engaged more than 2,500 outreach volunteers to strengthen its protection activities in March.



9

Number of USAID/BHA partners providing shelter assistance 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 rehabilitate shelters 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.

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

northwest Syria in support of dually conflict- and earthquake-affected communities.

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) 2672, 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.

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)