

Syria

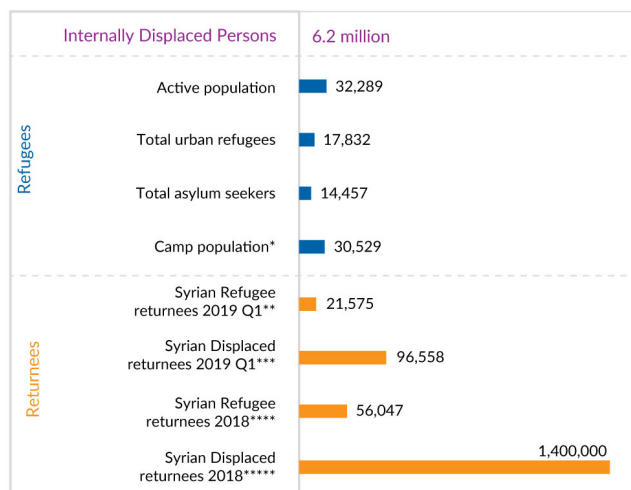
April 2019

With the Syria crisis in its ninth year, humanitarian needs remain staggering in terms of scale, severity and complexity, with significant protection risks continuing in a number of areas across the country.

According to the 2019 Syria Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), some 11.7 million people are still in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 5 million people are in acute need.

Rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access remains challenging. UN continues to advocate for sustained access for humanitarian actors to provide assistance and protection to all people in need, across the affected area.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

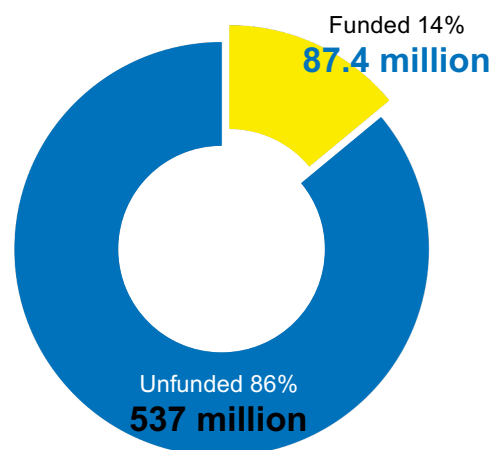


* Only 6,800 individuals that arrived to camp before the recent influx are persons of concern of UNHCR.
 ** UNHCR, March 2019
 *** HNAP, March 2019
 **** UNHCR, December 2018
 ***** OCHA, December 2018

FUNDING (AS OF 16 APRIL 2019)

USD 624.4 million

requested for the Syria Operation



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff: 530

449 National Staff

81 International Staff

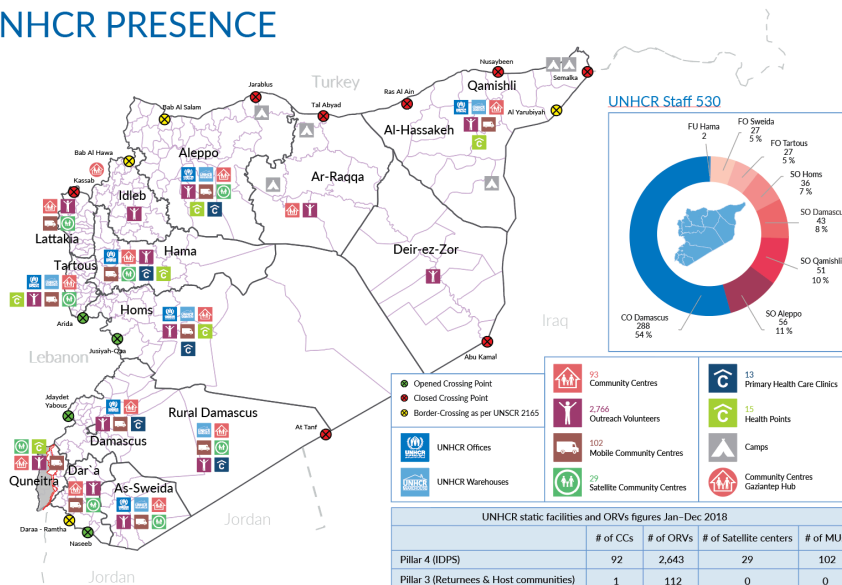
Offices:

1 Country Office in Damascus

4 Sub Offices in Aleppo, Homs, Damascus and Qamishli

2 Field Offices in Tartous and As-Sweida

UNHCR PRESENCE



Working with Partners and Public Institutions

UNHCR's main governmental counterpart in Syria is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates. Line ministries essential for UNHCR's work include the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment and the Ministry of Interior. UNHCR with other UN agencies also maintained its relations with the High Relief Committee and the Coordination Commission on Returns that is chaired by the Minister of Local Administration and Environment.

For 2019 UNHCR has 26 partners including six international NGOs, 18 national NGOs and two government entities (Ministry of Local Administration and Environment and Ministry of Higher Education). The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) is one of the key humanitarian agencies in Syria that is engaged in various aspects of humanitarian response.

UNHCR's position as lead agency for the Protection/Community Services, Shelter and NFI sectors make it a key player in the coordination structures and response. The Shelter sector is co-led by UNHCR and Ministry of Local Administration and Environment, whereas the NFI Sector is led by UNHCR in close coordination with SARC.

UNHCR will maintain its strategic partnerships with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, WFP, UN HABITAT, WHO, UNRWA and FAO focusing on livelihoods and self-reliance projects. Along with other UN agencies, UNHCR will increasingly engage with development actors to analyse and assess needs for a smooth reintegration of returnees within the broader recovery and development agenda of these actors should the situation evolve. UNHCR Syria will continue to engage in and the inter-agency discussion on a framework which succeeds the 2016-2019 "Strategic Framework for Cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations".

Strategic Directions

According to the 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), a total of 11.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.2 million displaced persons. Some 5 million are in acute need due to a convergence of vulnerabilities resulting from displacement, direct exposure to hostilities, conditions in sites and collective shelters, returns to destroyed and improvised areas and limited access to basic needs and services. In 2018, 1.6 million population movements were recorded due to simultaneous crises in north-west (Idleb and Afrin), parts of south-west (Dar'a and Quneitra) and eastern Syria (Deir-ez-Zor) including Eastern Ghouta that required massive humanitarian response. At the same time, self-organized returns of IDPs and refugees from neighbouring countries continue to areas where stability has been restored, hostilities declined or ceased and that have become accessible, requiring an expanded response. Around 1.4 million spontaneous IDP returns were recorded in 2018, with 56,047 Syrian refugees who were registered with UNHCR offices particularly in Lebanon and Jordan returned. By end of first quarter in 2019, 21,575 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan and Lebanon spontaneously returned to Syria. It is noteworthy that the numbers of returnees that are not verifiable in UNHCR database are perceived to be much higher. In 2019, while progress is being made towards safe and dignified return of Syrians, UNHCR is prepared for potential larger-scale voluntary returns.

Based on the above assumptions, and within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), UNHCR's strategic directions and operational priorities are:

- Prepare for and respond to potential influx of IDPs and refugees, as well as returns of IDPs and refugees.
- Contribute to fostering an environment for voluntary, dignified, safe and sustainable return of refugees and IDPs with particular focus on support for those who have returned spontaneously and their communities
- Enhance protective environment for refugees and promote innovative solutions shifting from individualized approaches to more community-based interventions.
- Strengthen delivery-focused partnerships to achieve the above through inter-agency and sector coordination fora, including the Special Situations Group (SSG),

UN Country Team (UNCT), Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), Return and Reintegration Working Group (RRWG) and Area Humanitarian Country Teams (AHCTs).

Main Activities

Protection

UNHCR's IDP response strategy for 2019 aims at reducing vulnerabilities, strengthening resilience and enhancing protection through a wide range of community-based activities, with particular attention to the most vulnerable. UNHCR leads the Protection/Community Services Sector and continues to adapt operational activities to address the needs of affected populations including the anticipated larger number of IDP returns and growing refugee returns, capitalizing on expected further improvements in access to people of concern and the integrated protection response provided through community centres, satellite centres, mobile teams and outreach volunteers. Also, continuous priority is given to the legal aid project to address civil documentation needs. UNHCR is co-leading the working groups on civil documentation and Housing, Land and Property (HLP).

Till end of March, the number of operational UNHCR-funded community centres and satellite centres stands at 92 community centers and 29 satellite centers, supported with a network of 102 mobile units and 2,654 Outreach Syrian Volunteers (ORVs) which are all providing protection interventions including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, prevention and response of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), livelihood and services for persons with specific needs.

In April, UNHCR opened a new community centre in the Old City of Aleppo in cooperation with its partner Namaa. The centre is providing a wide range of free services to IDPs, refugees, returnees, and the local host community, including legal counselling, educational services, primary health care, awareness sessions, child friendly spaces and livelihood services.

Moreover, in the first quarter of 2019, UNHCR partners; SARC and the Syria Trust provided legal assistance to 56,896 displaced persons on issues related mainly to documentation of civil events, authentication of customary marriages, birth registrations, lineage authentication, and divorce authentication in the context of prevention of gender-based violence, alimony, and custody rights of women, property documentation, lease contracts and inheritance.

Furthermore, 355,111 individuals were reached by end of March through protection interventions, including 275,720 individuals reached with general protection activities, 33,360 individuals with child protection activities and 46,031 individuals reached through awareness raising campaigns on SGBV prevention and response activities throughout 14 governorates.

Emergency response

Since the beginning of December 2018, more than 64,000 individuals arrived from Hajin to Al-Hol camp due to hostilities. The total population of Al-Hol camp as of end of April is 73,477. At least 262 persons including children passed away on the way to the camp, or shortly after arrival due to malnutrition or acute respiratory infections. More than 90 percent of the new arrivals are women and children. At least 470 unaccompanied and separated children were identified of which at least 140 were reunified as of end of April.

As an Inter-Agency response, all humanitarian actors on the ground intensified efforts during this humanitarian emergency. UNHCR responded through provision of core-relief items, shelter kits and tents as well as protection services. UNHCR and partners set up a 24-hour response teams to receive the newly displaced people, quickly identify the most vulnerable cases and provide urgent assistance, especially to unaccompanied or separated children and those who require immediate medical assistance. UNHCR is also

scaling up its protection services by opening community, satellite and mobile centres in the camp to be able to respond to the urgent and dire protection needs.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Due to massive destruction of homes, shelter needs are overwhelming and the capacities of UN agencies, NGOs and local institutions are inadequate to provide the required large-scale response. The strengthened sector led by UNHCR since 2015 has provided a sound basis for increasing traditional emergency services while developing more durable shelter solutions, such as owner-oriented shelter assistance.

At a strategic level humanitarian assistance is intrinsically linked with protection. UNHCR aims to mitigate protection risks by providing Core Relief Items (CRIs) to internally displaced persons and returnees as well as to vulnerable host community members. The standard family kit of core relief items includes five high thermal blankets, three sleeping mats, three mattresses, two jerry cans, one plastic sheet, one kitchen set and one solar lamp. Supplementary items are also distributed to those most in need including sleeping bags, winter jackets, rechargeable fans, hygiene kits and family tents.

Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR provided 498,428 individuals with at least one core relief and supplementary item.

A core part of UNHCR's protection mission is to guarantee access to adequate shelter in humanitarian emergencies. Therefore, UNHCR Syria provides shelter support for internally displaced people who fled hostilities as well as returnees who were back to completely or partially damaged houses in their areas of origin.

Emergency shelter assistance involves the provision of immediate lifesaving assistance, such as the rehabilitation of public and private collective shelters, the provision of shelter kits, and establishment of camp-related infrastructure, as well as the distribution of tents. Long-term shelter assistance focused on the provision of support to those returning to their places of origin. Capacity building of partners was also delivered to provide UNHCR counterparts with the skills to conduct safety structure assessments for damaged buildings, project management, and technical engineering in emergencies.

Infrastructure rehabilitation for returnee and host communities includes debris removal, solid waste distribution, minor rehabilitation for water and sanitation in returnee areas, in association with the rehabilitation of the damaged houses.

From January to March 2019, UNHCR provided shelter interventions to 52,816 individuals.

Livelihoods and Self-Reliance

UNHCR's livelihoods and self-reliance activities aim at increasing the level of people's self-reliance and reducing their dependency on assistance by building their skills and knowledge, as well as providing access to the resources, training, assets, inputs, services and markets they need and providing a sufficient source of income.

UNHCR livelihood activities are linked to the network of community centres where displaced persons, refugees, returnees and host communities benefited from life skills and vocational training with topics based on market assessments. Tailored livelihood toolkits were distributed following the courses to allow participants to generate income on the basis of their newly acquired skills. In addition, UNHCR supports families with business start-up grants and entrepreneurship and vocational training.

By end of March 2019, UNHCR distributed livelihood toolkits to 1,020 persons of concern in 10 governorates. The toolkits included blacksmithing, mobile maintenance, sewing, carpentry, female hairdressing and mobile maintenance.

Health

The physical damage of health facilities and the lack of qualified health staff have seriously affected the availability and quality of primary healthcare services in Syria. Following years of sustained support in the health sector, UNHCR will continue disengaging from supporting primary healthcare clinics and adopting a community-based approach through the establishment of health points in the community centres. This aims at raising awareness on health promotion and disease prevention, empower communities to actively influence their own health to efficiently prevent health problems, and identify diseases early to

prevent serious complications, death and disability. Health workers also provide individual and family counselling, conduct focus group discussions and engage the community in centres and through outreach volunteers and mobile teams.

Assistance and support to refugees and asylum seekers

The Government of Syria continues with its policy of tolerance and support to the refugees and asylum seekers on its territory. UNHCR is working closely with the Syrian government to address a number of issues related to protection and assistance of asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR's strategy for refugees is to provide support to increase their physical and legal protection and identify durable solutions, through the provision of a multi-purpose cash grant for vulnerable refugees, material assistance, health care, education, livelihoods, legal aid, community mobilization, resettlement and voluntary repatriation. In terms of statelessness, UNHCR will focus on advocacy for legal reform and a simplification of procedures, develop capacity and provide legal aid for civil documentation for prevention of statelessness purposes.

Syria is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor 1967 Protocol, however the State has mostly ensured access to territory, reception arrangements, and asylum for those in need. UNHCR has continued to exercise its mandate for refugee protection in Syria by ensuring continuous registration, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), issuance of documentation, provision of legal protection and basic needs, and identification of durable solutions for refugees.

UNHCR undertook Participatory Assessments (PA) and Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) with refugees for the first time since the advent of the crisis in end 2018 /early 2019. The results of the PAs have been used to inform programming, activities and strategies and to move UNHCR Syria away from a traditional Refugee Status Determination (RSD)-based protection approach and towards Community-Based Protection (CBP) interventions for 2020. The CBP has become a strategic approach in UNHCR Syria operation, recognizing the central role that individuals and communities, including the host population, can play in mitigating protection risks, providing response and facilitating access to services. The community-led initiatives included light rehabilitation of schools, WASH facilities, elderly homes and public parks, setting-up libraries managed by students, street lighting, supporting reading campaigns for youth and children and training on handicraft production.

As of end of March 2019, UNHCR assisted a total of 12,327 refugees/4,020 families with multi-purpose cash, and 5,331 asylum-seekers/1,011 families with cash for food. UNHCR provided cash-related counselling to 970 families, as well as hotline support to 722 families.

Also, 109 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration to Norway and the United Kingdom and 90 refugees departed for resettlement to the United Kingdom. UNHCR also facilitated the departure of 24 refugees under humanitarian or family reunification programmes to Australia and Canada.

Moreover, 136 individuals/76 families underwent interviews by UNHCR at different stages and decisions were submitted for 103 individuals/46 families. Reviews were undertaken for 103 individuals/54 families, of which 40 individuals/14 cases were recognized as refugees, and 11 individuals/9 families were rejected. In addition, UNHCR continues to support 64 refugee students who were previously enrolled by covering their tuition fees.

During the first quarter, 112 refugee outreach volunteers representing the refugees communities of Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Chad, Eritrea continued to support their communities in four governorates; Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus and Al-Hasakeh.

Also a total of 21 new SGBV survivors were identified and assisted with the needed services and 22 SGBV awareness sessions were conducted mainly in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Al-Hasakeh governorates.

Furthermore, 11,877 refugees and asylum seekers received free-of-charge comprehensive primary health care through nine UNHCR-supported primary health care clinics run by two NGO partners in Al-Hasakeh, Damascus, Rural Damascus and Aleppo. Secondary and tertiary health care was also provided to 802 refugees and asylum seekers through designated public, charitable and private contracted hospitals in Syria.

Assistance and support to spontaneous returnees

Self-organized returns of IDPs and refugees from neighbouring countries continue to several areas where stability has been restored, hostilities declined or ceased, and which have become newly accessible. UNHCR will continue to respond to the needs of the IDP and refugee returnees with the same community based protection approach as it has been implementing to assist internally displaced Syrians. While building on its significant capacity to respond to the needs of the returnees, UNHCR is also expanding its capacity and its programmes to assist IDP and refugee returnees as well as the affected population, including the host communities.

Under the UN Country Team (UNCT), the Return and Reintegration Working Group was established for which UNHCR was the secretariat in support of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). UNHCR continues to lead on the Refugee Return pillar. In collaboration with the RC/HC and the 3RP Regional Directors' Group, the RRWG is also the main point of contact between the UNHCR-run Durable Solutions Working Groups in neighbouring countries on refugee return. In April 2019, the first Technical Working Group of the RRWG was convened as a forum to engage in dialogue on thematic issues, where best practice guidance can be shared and formulated, so as to facilitate coherence and coordination between partners working in Syria on returns. The TWG would be a forum for exchange of information, collaboration in building complementarities between efforts of various agencies and humanitarian actors working on issues related to the return of Syrian refugees, developing solutions strategy and in this regard suggest action point for coordination efforts pursued by the RRWG and its members.

In the first quarter of 2019, UNHCR field teams conducted over 60 missions to access conditions and needs of refugees and IDP returnees. Through these missions as well as follow up over the phone with families who have recently returned to Syria from Lebanon and Jordan, the top three key concerns identified by returnees include destroyed homes, lack of livelihood opportunities and lack of civil status documentation.

In preparation for returns, UNHCR and partners have gathered community level information to produce 71 sub-district profiles in key areas of returns. These profiles provide a snapshot of gaps in infrastructure and services as well as priority needs of returnees and other community members.

On 24 April, some 1,900 individuals reached the collective shelters in Homs coming from Al-Rukban settlement, south-east Syria near the Jordanian border which raised the number of individuals residing in these shelters to approximately 7,329 persons.

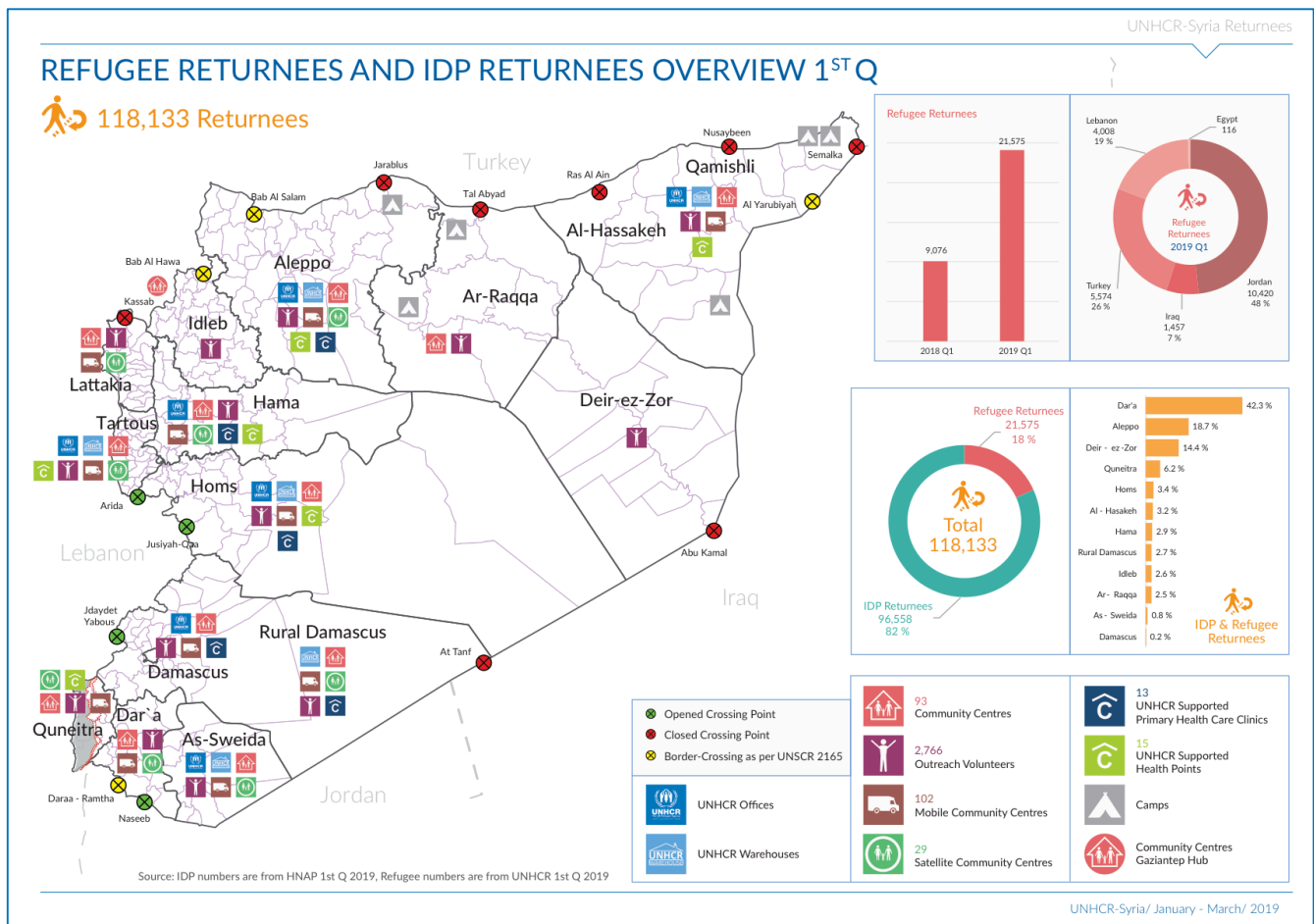
After obtaining the necessary approvals, same day UNHCR, together with other UN agencies as well as SARC conducted the first inter-agency mission to five collective shelters hosting people that have left Al-Rukban to assess the situation.

The overall situation in the five collective shelters was acceptable, in general, SARC's organization of the reception of people, registration and provision of assistance and distribution of room on arrivals was very good. SARC's legal team assisted the new arrivals in dealing with their civil documentation by providing advice. UNHCR provided NFIs and shelter kits, WFP provided food assistance, which is the only source of food as evacuees do not have purchase power nor access to market to get their needs. WASH facilities were working but the sewage system was not working at all times due to the influx of IDPs. Rubbish material was spread around the open yard and shortage of cleaning material was clear. Some protection concerns were; early marriage, adolescent pregnancy, high number of female headed households with no income and lack of civil documentation.

The inter-agency team met with the new arrivals who mainly originate from Palmyra or its vicinity in the desert and observed that they arrived in large tractors or trucks, loaded with luggage, pieces of “nomad” tents, and in some cases with domestic animals. The new arrivals spent one night and were receiving their assistance, mostly core relief items and food or getting their children vaccinated, and then moving out.

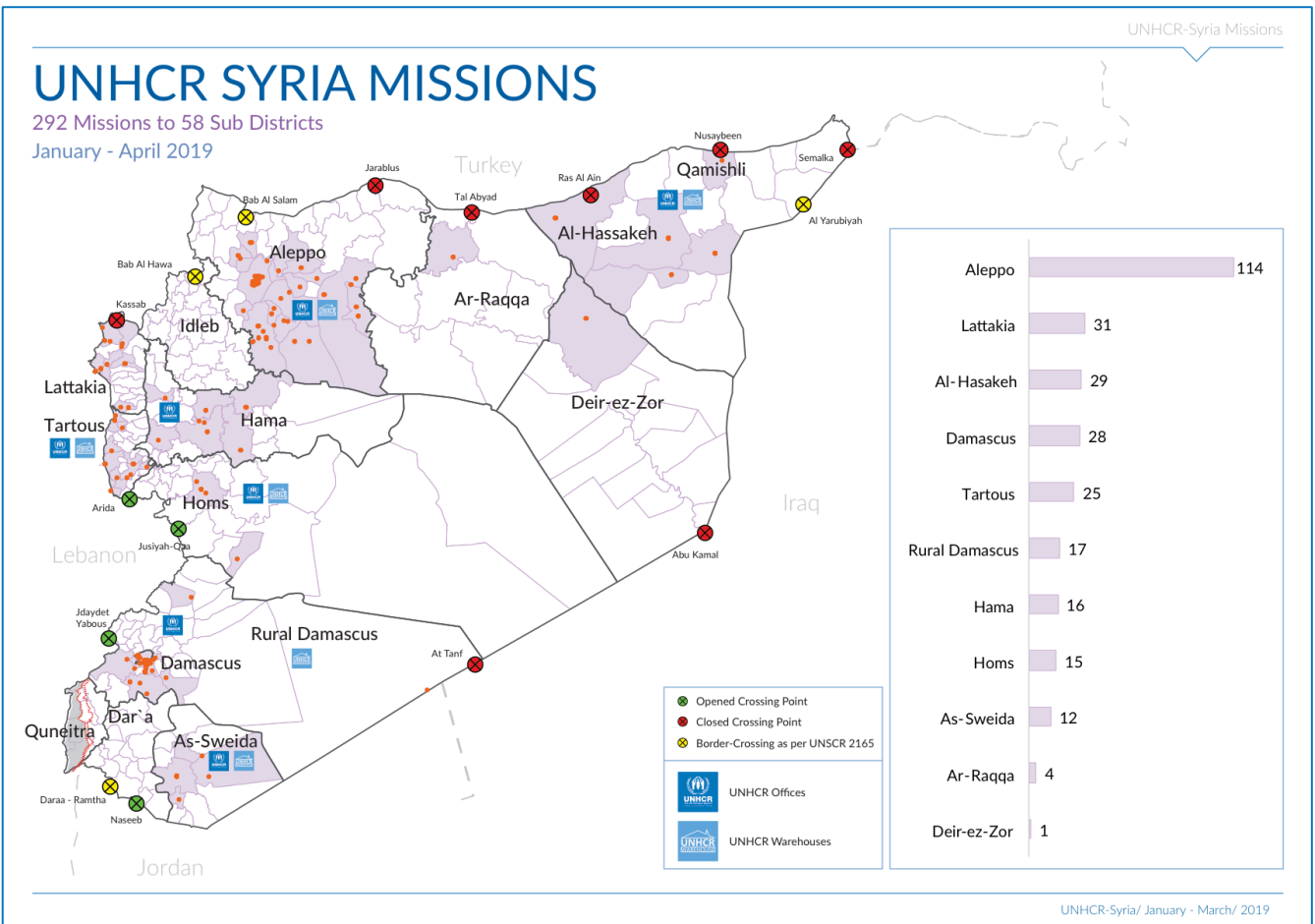
The majority would be allowed to move onwards awaiting approvals to return. Guarantors, mostly relatives, were waiting in front of the collective shelters for their relatives to come out. The main destinations for those who left the shelters are Hassya in southern Homs in addition to Shamsin in southern Homs and Qaryatin and Mahin in eastern Homs.

Between 24 and 29 April, 7,660 individuals left Al-Rukban arriving to the collective shelters in Homs city. As of 29 April 6,791 individuals left the shelters, remaining 869 individuals in the shelters.



UNHCR missions in the field

UNHCR conducts daily missions to the field in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Tartous, Lattakia, As-Sweida, Rural Damascus and Al-Hasakeh. The missions are conducted through multi-functional teams, including colleagues from Protection, Shelter, Non-Food Items (NFI), Health and Livelihood units. The purpose of the missions is to follow up on the work of the partners and the outreach volunteers on the ground, visit high returns areas to meet with returnees and produce sub-district profiles, monitor NFI distributions and assess the overall needs in the different sectors. By end of March, UNHCR Syria conducted 292 missions to 58 sub-districts across Syria.

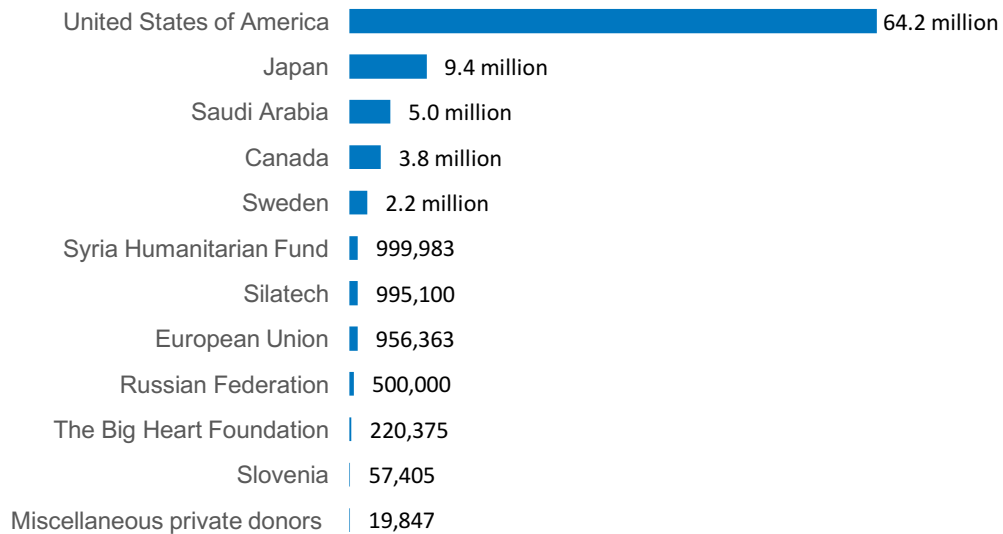


Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 88,319,871 million**.



BROADLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of broadly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

Germany 56.6 million | Sweden 3.3 million | Private donors Australia 2.5 million | United States of America 2.3 million

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 90.4 million | Norway 44.5 million | Netherlands 37.5 million | United Kingdom 31.7 million | Germany 26.7 million | Denmark 24.4 million | Private donors Spain 19.5 million | Switzerland 15.1 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 10.4 million.

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