

HIGHLIGHTS

- Escalating violence results in growing displacement within Syria and neighbouring countries.
- Palestine refugees flee Yarmouk camp due to intense fighting.
- Lack of critical medicines affect the health system
- Funding shortages hamper humanitarian response

FIGURES

Population	22 m
Governorates	14
Affected people	4 m
Number of IDPs	2 m
Number of Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt	542,250

FUNDING (US\$)

348 million

Requested by UN for activities inside Syria for 2012

53% funded

488 million

Requested under the Refugee Response Plan for 2012

69% funded



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Crisis growing as violence intensifies

One in five Syrians in need of assistance

Violence and military confrontation escalate in Syria as the conflict reaches its 22nd month. The largest cities, in particular Aleppo and Damascus, continue to experience intense fighting. Damage and destruction of factories and key civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, water and power utilities, has a tragic impact on the life of ordinary Syrians.

The indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, including the alleged firing of missiles, leads to continued death and destruction among the civilian population. Reports of killings and maiming of civilians caught in violence are a daily occurrence. On 11 December, Aqrab, a village approximately 40 kilometers southwest of Hama, was bombarded with tens of civilians reportedly killed and injured. One week later, intense clashes and shelling took place in Yarmouk camp, south of Damascus, home to approximately 160,000 Palestine refugees, resulting in scores of civilian deaths and injuries. These events are a reminder of the brutal nature of this conflict and its consequences on ordinary women, men, boys and girls, often trapped with no safe place to go. Protection remains a key humanitarian concern.

On 16 December, the United Nations Secretary-General condemned the escalation of violence in Syria, in particular the shelling of population centres and attacks against civilians. He called on all sides to cease violence and reminded the parties of their international humanitarian law obligations to protect civilians.

Given the deteriorating security situation, and as a result of sectoral assessments undertaken by the United Nations and the Syrian Government through field missions to various governorates, the figures of people in need of assistance has been revised upwards from 2.5 million to 4 million.

Displacement accelerates rapidly – Syrians flee their homes to seek safety

Out of the 4 million people in need of assistance, at least 2 million are internally displaced, many sheltering in approximately 2,000 schools. Most internally displaced people are hosted by local communities whose capacity to support them is severely overstretched.

With temperatures dropping to freezing at night during the winter, internally displaced people are particularly vulnerable, because they do not have sufficient clothes and bedding for the cold winter. Their winter-related needs include: blankets, mattresses, warm clothes, heating fuel, heaters, and other essential items, in addition to food and cash assistance, and access to healthcare and education.

Refugees expected to double to 1.1 million next year

Syrians continue to cross borders to seek safety in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt. The number of Syrians who have registered as refugees, or are being assisted in these countries, now exceeds 540,000, with an increase of over 140,000 during the past

six weeks alone. UNHCR estimates that if fighting in Syria continues the refugee figure could reach 1.1 million by June 2013.

Palestine refugees flee Yarmouk camp amid violence

Syria hosts 525,000 Palestine refugees, the majority living in the urban areas heavily affected by the conflict. Of particular concern, is the situation in Yarmouk camp, where intense shelling and clashes last week resulted in the death and injury of scores of people, including Palestine refugees, and the displacement of two-thirds of the Yarmouk population, estimated at one million. While some Palestine refugees have returned to Yarmouk camp, many remain in shelter in UNRWA schools and other facilities. Many have also fled to Lebanon.

During this time, Palestine refugees have also fled from Ein el Tal camp in Aleppo to surrounding villages and Hama, following clashes in the immediate vicinity of the camp. Fighting is pushing Palestine refugees to seek safety outside Syria. UNRWA reports that over 10,000 Palestine refugees have fled to Lebanon and more than 2,300 to Jordan since the beginning of the conflict.

Access to health seriously curtailed

Shortages of critical medicine threaten health system

Syria's health system has been seriously disrupted. Prior to the crisis, more than 90 per cent of medicines in Syria were produced locally. In many areas, there is a critical shortage of life-saving medicines and equipment. According to WHO, insulin is unavailable in many parts of the country, putting tens of thousands of diabetics at risk. Oxytocin, routinely provided to pregnant women during labour to prevent hemorrhage, is no longer available in maternity wards. Ointment for burns as well as equipment and supplies for anesthesia and surgery are also in short supply in numerous hospitals. According to WHO, doctors at the Damascus Hospital, where up to 100 wounded are admitted on a daily basis, have to use local anesthetics for complicated operations, given the shortage of nitrous oxide gas.

According to revised government data, nearly 35 per cent of the country's hospitals and approximately 10 per cent of health centres have been damaged. The emergency transport system is also affected, as over 40 per cent of the country's ambulances are damaged. The deteriorating security situation also prevents many health workers from reporting for duty. In Aleppo, Damascus and Homs, at least 70 per cent of health providers live in rural areas and find it increasingly difficult to reach their workplace, due to irregular public transportation and unsafe roads. Furthermore, it is reported that 50 per cent of medical doctors have left Homs.

Medical facilities and health personnel are routinely hit by shelling. The presence of military personnel in health facilities often discourage people from seeking the assistance they need. All parties in Syria must abide by their obligations to distinguish between military objectives and civilian objects and must respect the sanctity of medical facilities and staff.

Socio-economic effects of crisis increase people's vulnerability

Fuel shortages limit goods and services and hamper aid programmes

Syria continues to experience fuel shortages, which are seriously affecting the lives of people across the country. Fuel prices have more than doubled in Damascus and quadrupled in Hassakeh, making it increasingly difficult to access heating and cooking gas. The acute shortage of fuel is gravely affecting aid delivery.

In order to tackle this issue, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has secured with the Government the authorization of WFP to import fuel on behalf of the humanitarian agencies operating in Syria, in order to run its humanitarian programmes. The Ministry of

Petroleum has agreed to work with customs officials to secure the necessary permissions for WFP to begin importing fuel in the coming days.

Rising food prices contribute to increasing reliance on food aid

Access to food is increasingly difficult due to sharp price increases and limited availability. Staple commodities are still available in cities, but in the past year prices have risen by 80 per cent to 100 per cent in some areas. Bread shortages are increasingly common as many bakeries have been destroyed or face fuel shortages. Moreover, there has been an increase in demand for food in areas drawing internally displaced people. Subsidized bread is not always available, aggravating the situation of many Syrians who have lost their livelihoods and live in deepening poverty. In Aleppo, the majority of the population is now dependent on private bakeries where the price of 1 Kg of bread, when available, has reached SYP 250 (US\$3.4). There are also reports of shortages of wheat flour in most parts of the country as many mills, the majority of which are in the Aleppo area, have been damaged.

Violence affects the response

Fighting hampers access

Humanitarian access continues to be hampered by fighting, insecurity, checkpoints, roadblocks and road closures. Criminal activities are also on the rise, further aggravating the situation. In recent weeks, there has been an increase in security incidents affecting aid workers and convoys, resulting in loss of humanitarian supplies and damage to vehicles. WFP reported that since the beginning of October, ten of its trucks have been stolen or confiscated by armed groups. Although WFP has recovered some of the aid after negotiations through third parties, truck drivers are reluctant to drive on some roads or deliver aid to risky areas.

Humanitarian aid continues despite re-location of UN non-essential staff

In light of the security situation, UN agencies temporarily relocated non-critical international staff. However, UN agencies, working closely with their national and international partners, continue to deliver humanitarian aid; approximately 1,000 UN national staff and 3,700 UNRWA staff are deployed across the country where they continue work, despite the conditions.

Partners continue to respond amid challenges

More than 1.3 million children vaccinated against polio and 1.1 million against measles

With support from UNICEF and WHO, since 26 November, the Ministry of Health has been implementing a national vaccination campaign against measles and polio for children under the age of five. Thus far, a total of 1,350,193 children have been vaccinated against polio and 1,100,971 against measles. Approximately 4,400 health workers and volunteers are taking part in the campaign in all governorates except Deir ez-Zor governorate as most of its residents have relocated to other areas.

UNHCR and its partners reach 400,000 people with essential items

Essential items are being distributed throughout the country. UNHCR and partners have reached over 400,000 people in 2012 with hygiene kits, blankets, mattresses, kitchen sets and other basic items. UNHCR's partners provided rapid emergency non-food items and shelter assistance in the aftermath of the Yarmouk displacement with support from local non-governmental organisations and community-based organizations. On 20 December, UNICEF, working with non-governmental organisations, dispatched winter clothes, clothes for children, blankets, quilts, food baskets, and family and baby hygiene kits for 14,000 people in Yarmouk.

UNICEF supports efforts to combat malnutrition

The crisis has resulted in food shortages which, coupled with unhygienic living conditions, limited healthcare services, and reduced immunization for children under five, has impacted the nutritional status of children and pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health and other partners to ensure appropriate treatment for malnutrition. A total of 7,000 cartons of high energy biscuits for children under five and pregnant and lactating women were delivered in Aleppo, Damascus, Dera'a, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib, and Rural Damascus.

Food delivery continues amid challenges

On 10 December, WFP concluded food dispatches under the November cycle, reaching over 1.4 million people in all governorates. In the past two weeks, WFP dispatched food to assist more than 63,000 people in Ar-Raqqa, Damascus, Homs, Idlib, Latakia, Rural Damascus, and Tartous governorates. A total of 1.5 million people are expected to benefit from food distributions. Approximately 3 million Syrians were exposed to food shortages and at real threat of complete erosion of their sources of income, according to a Joint Rapid Food Security Needs Assessment carried out by FAO, WFP, and the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, undertaken earlier this year. In view of the crisis resulting from fighting in Yarmouk, WFP is now prioritizing distributions in Damascus and Rural Damascus so as to meet the rising needs of internally displaced people, particularly those from Yarmouk camp.

Humanitarian partners support water, hygiene and sanitation facilities

UNICEF, SARC and the Ministry of Water Resources, carried out a national WASH assessment which indicates that water rationing is now extending up to 20 hours per day in some neighbourhoods of Aleppo and Homs. Water pumping has decreased by 20 per cent in Damascus while it has dropped by 90 per cent in certain localities of Deir Ez-Zor. Nationally, 35 per cent of sewage is being treated compared to 70 per cent before the crisis.

UNICEF and Secours Islamique have reached over 6,800 displaced persons in 25 collective centres in Damascus and Rural Damascus with programmes aimed at providing safe drinking water, light rehabilitation of the water system, rehabilitation and maintenance of latrines, and installation of showers.

107 UNICEF school clubs benefit over 24,000 children

UNICEF continues to support children's right to education through the activities of 107 school clubs in Dera'a, Latakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous governorates. The clubs offer remedial classes, recreational activities and psycho-social support to students and thus far, have benefited 24,774 children.

The Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR and the Ministry of Education procured 4,280 student tables and 12,840 chairs for schools in Damascus, Dara'a, Rural Damascus and Sweida. The Danish Refugee Council, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, also implemented an extra-curricular activities training in four schools in Damascus, which benefited 56 participants.

Emergency Relief Coordinator visits Syria, briefs Security Council

On 15 December, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, carried out a visit to Syria where she held discussions with the Syrian authorities and humanitarian partners on how to improve humanitarian access and enhance the response. Following her visit, the Syrian Government provided the United Nations with the authorization to import fuel for humanitarian programmes.

On 17 December, ERC Amos briefed the United Nations Security Council on her visit to Syria and her prior visit to Lebanon and Jordan. She provided information on the growing needs on the ground and highlighted the outcome of her discussions in Syria and the

region to enhance the humanitarian response. She also briefed on contingency plans to address possible further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. She called on the Security Council to find a solution to the crisis in Syria to protect civilians from the scourge of war and to help facilitate humanitarian access to all those in need of assistance and protection.

Outflow of refugees continues

Refugees likely to increase from 542,000 to 1.1 million by June 2013

Syrians continue to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, putting further pressure on host communities. More than 542,000 people have fled Syria since the beginning of the conflict, with 140,000 during the last six weeks alone. The bulk of the refugees are hosted by Syria's four neighbouring countries – Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey – followed by Egypt. An estimated 25,000 Syrians have also fled to various European countries. UNHCR estimates that the number of refugees could double to 1.1 million by June 2013.

On 15 and 16 December, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, traveled to Lebanon and Jordan where he met with Syrian refugees. He commended the generosity of the host countries, and urged the international community to support humanitarian programmes aimed at assisting refugees in need.

Country	Refugees registered and/or assisted	Estimated number of refugees by June 2013
Egypt	11,190	30,000
Iraq	66,532	90,000
Jordan	155,147	300,000
Lebanon	164,626	300,000
Turkey	144,755	380,000
Total	542,250	1,100,000

Source: UNHCR as of 21 December 2012. Refugee figures are based on estimates and thus may vary.
* Figure provided by the Government of Turkey.

Lebanon hosts the largest Syrian refugee community

Lebanon continues to host the largest Syrian refugee community, with refugees scattered across the country in over 540 locations. More than 164,000 refugees from Syria are currently registered and/or assisted in the country with over 13,000 arriving in recent days, mainly from Aleppo, Damascus and Homs.

Some refugees are settling in the border area where they have acquaintances or family members. Insecurity remains high due to intermittent violence spilling over into Lebanon and shelling reaching Lebanese villages on the Syrian-Lebanese border.

UNHCR and its partners have responded by providing approximately 45,000 people with receiving winterization items as well as food vouchers, food parcels, hygiene and baby kits. In addition, the Danish Refugee Council is assisting 25,500 people not registered with UNCHR with similar items. The unregistered population includes newly arrived families, Lebanese nationals, Palestine refugees, and poor and vulnerable host families.

Over 150,000 refugees in Jordan

The number of Syrian refugees registered or assisted in Jordan has reached over 150,000. The Jordanian Government estimates the number of Syrian refugees to be much higher; at about 250,000, including Syrians who have arrived in the country without having registered.

UNHCR reports that an increasing number of wounded are crossing the borders to Jordan. There has also been an increase in the number of elderly people arriving in the country in the past few weeks, necessitating a re-enforcement of health staff at the reception centres with enhanced screening for acute and chronic diseases.

Over 70 per cent of Jordan's Syrian refugees live amongst host communities with the rest staying in camps, including Za'atari camp in northern Jordan which hosts over 38,000 refugees.

With over 140,000 refugees, Turkey's camps exceed capacity by 12 per cent

According to figures provided by the Government, Turkey currently hosts more than 140,000 Syrian refugees in 14 camps. These camps were originally meant to host up to 126,000 people and the capacity to respond to needs is limited.

In order to address the growing refugee population six additional camps are being built in Adana, Gaziantep, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye-Düzici, and Sanliurfa.

UNHCR is working in close cooperation with the Government of Turkey to support the winterization of the camps and provide kitchen and cooking sets for the expansion of the WFP food card system.

Refugee numbers in Iraq reach 66,000

Over 66,000 Syrian refugees are registered and/or assisted in Iraq, of which 55,000 are in the Kurdistan region. The majority of these refugees are Syrian nationals of Kurdish origin, who registered with UNHCR and the Kurdistan Region's Department of Displacement and Migration in Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniya governorates.

In Al Qa'im, UNICEF provided 28 solar boilers to one of the camps to provide warmth to children during the cold winter months. It also supported training to forty-two Syrian refugee hygiene mobilizers in two camps to carry out daily hygiene promotion.

Egypt hosts 11,000 Syrian refugees

Egypt is hosting close to 11,000 Syrian refugees, making it the fifth largest host. The number is expected to rise significantly as registration capacity on the ground increases.

Funding shortfalls constrain the response in 2012

Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan only 53 per cent funded

The \$348 million Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan has remained seriously underfunded (53 per cent as of 21 December). Critical sectors, such as WASH and Health, are only 24 per cent and 35 per cent funded.

More funds needed to implement the Refugee Response Plan

The current regional Refugee Response Plan seeks US\$488 million to address the needs of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. To date, the plan has received 69 per cent of the needed funds.

New SHARP and RRP for January-June 2013

Revised appeals seek over US\$1.5 billion to address urgent needs

In order to better address growing needs in Syria and countries hosting Syrian refugees, both the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) have been revised and were launched on 19 December in Geneva. Together, they seek over US\$1.5 billion dollars for the January-June 2013 period to respond to the basic needs of more than 5 million people – 4 million inside Syria and over 1 million in host countries.

The requirements for the revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan stand at US\$520 million for the implementation of 61 projects in ten sectors (Food; Non-Food Items and Shelter; Health; Water, Hygiene and Sanitation; Education; Livelihoods; Community Services; Coordination; Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications; and Staff Safety Services) in all Syria's 14 governorates. The SHARP aims to: provide relief and basic services to the most directly affected; assist displaced people and the communities helping them; repair vital infrastructure and services; and address humanitarian needs of the poorest to avoid further destitution. Four million people in need are expected to benefit from the SHARP during the January-June 2013 period.

The revised Regional Response Plan seeks US\$1 billion to provide support to 1.1 million Syrian refugees in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt. In addition to the Syrian refugee population, the RRP contains provisions to assist other groups affected by the Syria crisis, including third country nationals, refugees and asylum seekers (not of Syrian origin) fleeing Syria. The Lebanese chapter of the RRP also contains activities to assist around 20,000 Palestine refugees from Syria.