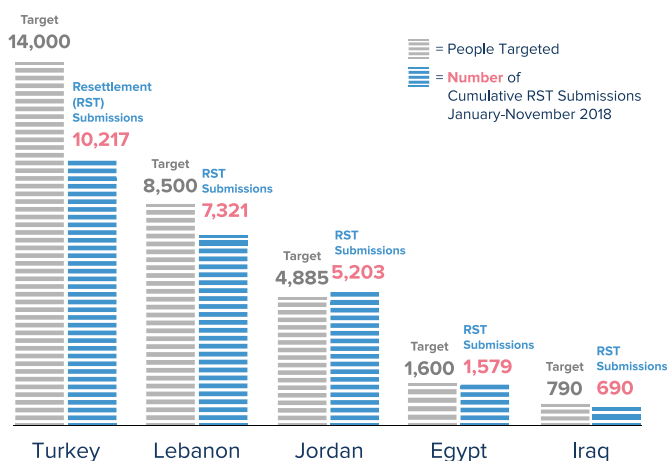


Update: Durable Solutions for Syrian Refugees

The November/December 2018 update on durable solutions for Syrian refugees focuses on: i) interagency preparedness planning efforts for refugee return; ii) the revised methodology for the next rounds of refugee intentions surveys, and; iii) a brief update on complementary pathways.

Key Figures: Return and Resettlement (2018)

Resettlement Targets* and Submissions



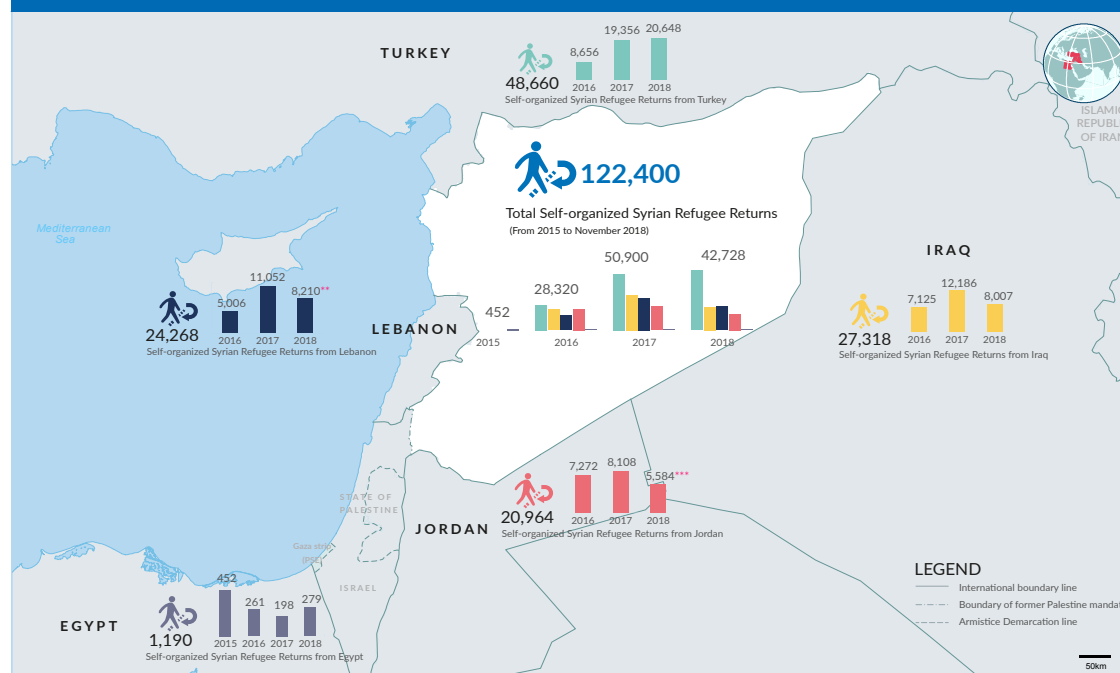
* "Targets" are based on 2018 resettlement quotas/places set by countries receiving resettled refugees. This table presents revised resettlement targets for 2018 reflecting updated country quotas. It remains well below needs.

Resettlement Needs

10 %
of Syrian refugees are in need of resettlement and meet resettlement criteria

0.5 %
of Syrian refugees will be submitted for resettlement (only one in 20 of those in need)

Self-Organized Syrian refugee returns in 2018 as verified by UNHCR*



*The numbers reported are only those verified by UNHCR and do not reflect the entire returns.

** Of this number, 4,996 individuals were verified through interviews at UNHCR reception centres as having returned on their own. From lists shared by the GSO – comprising of a total of 8,500 individuals- UNHCR has been able to match 3,214 individuals who have departed in GSO facilitated group returns and is in the process of matching the remaining 5,286 individuals on the GSO lists who have returned within the 65 group movements.

*** Returns for October and November 2018 were identified based on the Government of Jordan's departure lists. These return figures are tentative as validation in individual cases remains ongoing.

Interagency Preparedness Planning for Refugee Return

The conflict in Syria continues to drive the largest displacement crisis in the world. Over six million people remain internally displaced and there are over 5.6 million refugees across the region. The conflict is now in its eighth year, with refugees continuing to require access to territory, international protection and humanitarian support in host countries. Meanwhile, some refugees have been returning in a spontaneous, self-organized manner since the beginning of the crisis in movements not organized or assisted by UNHCR. Although the number of returnees remains low as compared to the number of refugees in host countries, the pace of returns to Syria has increased over the previous two years, with over 93,000 refugee returns verified by UNHCR from the start of 2017 through November 2018. It is important to highlight that this figure is an underestimate, as it only includes returns verified by UNHCR.

While UNHCR is not facilitating large-scale return due to the current conditions inside Syria, return preparedness has risen as a prominent issue to be addressed proactively. In view of a possible further increase of refugee returns in 2019, an Interagency Preparedness Plan for Refugee Return was developed by the Regional Durable Solutions Working Group, which works within the framework of the 3RP. The purpose of this Plan is to set a regional interagency framework and action plan through which country operations develop/update country-specific interagency preparedness plans for a potential scenario of 250,000-500,000 refugee returns. The Plan confirms/articulates standards, policies, approaches and actions at regional and country levels.

The Regional Plan was initially developed in October and endorsed on 7 November 2018 by the Regional Durable Solutions Working Group. At country level, preparedness planning through the Durable Solutions and/or Inter-Sector groups is taking place during the months of December 2018 and January 2019. The country-level plans on refugee return will align with the Regional Plan, while also reflecting respective context-specific needs, limitations and opportunities. Both regional and country plans remain rooted in and aligned with the [Comprehensive Protection and Solutions Strategy: Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Return to Syria](#).

Looking forward, the Plan will be updated and reviewed as needed based on contextual changes in Syria and host countries. Moreover, it is expected that once the country plans will be finalized, key elements will be consolidated into a summary plan, providing an overview of both regional and countries' preparedness plans.

On a final note, while preparedness planning efforts are taking place, the interagency community's engagement on refugee return remains primarily focused on refugee counselling, monitoring cross-border movements, analysis of return trends, advocacy, and removing obstacles to return for those making a free and informed choice to do so.

Refugee Intentions Survey

To improve the quality and timeliness of analysis of refugees' return intentions, UNHCR has revised the methodology of the Survey on Syrian Refugees' Perceptions and Intentions on Return to Syria. The most up-to-date survey is being conducted in end-2018, with a report to be issued in early 2019. This survey is carried out in host countries neighbouring Syria and aims to assess Syrian refugees' future return intentions. The updated methodology will allow for more regular and timely information on refugee return intentions, while also building upon efficiencies and improvements in data collection. The methodology, which will be aligned with country-specific needs, should include: 1) twice-yearly large scale intentions surveys; 2) continuous monitoring through integration of questions related to return into registration/protection monitoring activities; 3) Establishment of a "Reference Group" for intention monitoring over time; 4) Systematic and regular validation of the findings, through participatory assessments, of the large-scale intention surveys and results of the Reference Group survey(s). [Intentions survey reports](#) will continue to be available on the [Syria Regional Refugee Response Durable Solutions web portal](#).

Complementary Pathways

Complementary pathways provide a safe and legal alternative – other than resettlement - for refugees to access protection and solutions in a third country. They are not necessarily vulnerability-based, but can also focus on other criteria that might qualify a refugee for entry into a third country. Complementary pathways should be pursued in addition to State-led resettlement programs, and while some complementary pathways, such as private sponsorship and humanitarian visas, may be based on protection and vulnerability criteria, others that support work, study and family reunification can facilitate refugees' acquisition and retention of skills, stability, family unity and self-reliance.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, UNHCR has accrued a rich experience on complementary pathways over the past years and has continued to attract various new initiatives. Specifically, in 2018, UNHCR has intensified its efforts to realize family reunification. Children have been reunited with parents in third countries, travel documents have been obtained, airfare provided, and financial support to facilitate reunification of vulnerable families from asylum countries to their families in third countries. A specific pilot project to expand family reunification in a more efficient and scalable manner is in process. Activities related to third country scholarships have also been scaled up to provide increased support and guidance to scholarship providers and UNHCR country offices; UNHCR works closely with five specific programmes providing third country scholarships. Other complementary pathways initiatives are humanitarian corridors, which allow persons in need of international protection to seek asylum in a third country, and community sponsorship initiatives, which allow individuals, groups of individuals, or organizations to directly engage in refugee admission efforts by providing financial, social and/or settlement support to help newly-arrived refugees integrate in a third country.

Considering the variety and nature of the public and private pathways used by refugees, exact statistics are not yet available. UNHCR is working with partners and complementary pathway providers to have an improved estimate of the number of refugees that benefit from this solution.

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Further Information: http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions