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4.5.5. Displacement and return

The number of individuals newly displaced by conflict since 27 November 2024 saw an initial large wave that peaked at 1.1 million people on 12 December.881 These initial displacements, driven by fear of the escalating armed conflict,882 were mainly recorded in Hama and Aleppo, 883 including in Aleppo city, western Aleppo884 and notably Tall Rifaat885 and Manbij,886 following the takeover of the two cities by Türkiye-backed armed factions.887

UN sources subsequently estimated the number of newly displaced since late November 2024 who remained in displacement at 859 460 as of 18 December 2024,888 around 627 000 on 10 January 2025,889 and 650 000 as of 5 February 2025.890 In early 2025, UNOCHA noted additional waves of conflict-related displacements from the Manbij area, with up to 15 000 displacements in mid-January 2025,891 followed by more than 25 000 later the same month.892 Sources estimated the number of people who had fled the SNA offensive in northern Syria in early December 2024 at between 100 000893 and 120 000.894

Following the downfall of Assad, returning IDPs moved to reach areas previously controlled by the former government, including in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus.895 UN sources estimated that the number of newly displaced people returning to their home bases had increased to more than 522 000 by 10 January 2025.896 At the same time, return movements from IDP camps remained 'steady but minimal', with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster quoted as saying in late January 2025 that around 57 000 people had departed from camps since 3 December 2024. These returnees were mainly comprised of individual families or men returning to reunite with their families or assess the condition of their homes.897

UNHCR, Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview, 2 March 2025

Map 6: Overview of IDPs and IDP returnees by governorate898

According to UNHCR estimations, by 26 February 2025, an estimated 885 294 IDPs had returned, while about 7.4 million remained internally displaced. The governorates that saw the largest share of IDP returns were Aleppo with 425 705 IDP returns, followed by Hama with 155 561 and Idlib with 116 053 IDP returns.899

As UNOCHA noted, reported concerns influencing IDPs' return decisions included destruction of property, inadequate infrastructure, insecurity, as well as access to civil documentation and

judicial services, including documents regarding housing, land, and property rights (not all civil registries and courts were operational as of the end of January 2025).900 Another critical concern that has been raised was contamination with unexploded war remnants.901

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