

7.6.4. Return procedures

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UNHCR reported that at least 5 678 Syrians were deported between January and October 2024 746 and another 7 047 between February and June 2025.747 Sources interviewed by the Syrian Investigative Journalism Unit (SIRAJ) and The New Humanitarian (TNH), including recent deportees, reported sudden and violent raids involving beatings, mass deportations by lorry and long marches across the Lebanese-Syrian border zone.748

Meanwhile, one of the new measures announced by the General Directorate of General Security in May 2024 was to resume 'the organization of (voluntary and safe) returns of Syrian nationals wishing to return to their country under the auspices of the General Directorate',749 a repatriation plan that had initially been introduced in 2022.750 In July 2025, the General Directorate of General Security waived exit fees, overstay fines, and bans on re-entry for all Syrian nationals returning to Syria751 who had entered Lebanon illegally or overstayed their legal residency period. They were allowed to return to Syria via the official border crossings, with the waivers valid for three months until 30 September 2025.752

Immediately following this announcement,753 UNHCR launched its Self-Organized Voluntary Repatriation Programme.754 This framework consists of three main operational schemes, including the provision of assistance with structured General Security-facilitated short-term 'Go-and-See' visits, assistance with General Security-facilitated voluntary return and support to self-organized voluntary return.755 It involves a voluntary repatriation assessment and payment of a cash grant of USD 100 per returning person756 (provided by UNHCR Lebanon).757 In addition, returnees may be eligible to receive USD 400 in reintegration grants per family upon return758 (provided by UNHCR Syria).759

Alternatively to these 'self-organised' returns (where returnees arrange for their own transportation), refugees can also opt for an 'organised' return760 as part of the Organized Voluntary Repatriation Programme jointly launched by UNHCR and IOM in August 2025, which included assisted transportation761 on buses provided by IOM, from designated return centres to the border.762 The vast majority (97 %) of the 281 120 Syrians known to UNHCR who were confirmed or presumed to have returned to Syria between January and early September 2025 had returned spontaneously,763 rather than opting for organised returns, mainly due to the faster timeframes and greater flexibility of spontaneous (self-organised) returns.764

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