

This summary of inter and intra-regional displacement and displacement-induced mobility is produced by DRC Middle East and North Africa regional office drawing widely on available sources. It covers events, trends and data for the Middle East region (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq).

*A note on terminology: Throughout this report the term migrant/refugee is used for all persons involved in mixed migration flows (including asylum seekers, trafficked persons, migrants, refugees) with the exception of Syrians who are recognised as persons in need of international protection. If the group mentioned refers only to refugees or asylum seekers or trafficked persons or migrants it will be clearly stated.*

### SYRIA

**Forced Displacement:** At the end of January, the total number of Syrian refugees was [4,715,695 persons](#), showing an increase of 120,497 individuals since December 31, 2015. The total number of Syrian refugees has only increased 2.62% between December 2015 and January 2016, as compared to 7.12% between November and December 2015. This may be due to various restrictions imposed at borders in countries neighbouring Syria (see later in this report). UNHCR reports that 90% of Syrian refugees, (4,123,334 individuals) are in rural, urban, or peri-urban locations while 10% (475,357 individuals) are living in camps. An estimated [6.4 million](#) people are internally displaced in Syria.

**Eastern Mediterranean Route:** Syrian refugees and other mixed migrants (asylum seekers, refugees and migrants) continue to move onward to Europe along the Eastern Mediterranean route primarily directly from Syria, and to a lesser extent from neighbouring states. UNHCR registered [60,502 arrivals](#) to Greece by sea in January 2016 (a 3471% increase from January, 2015) with an average of [1,952 individuals](#) (44% men, 21% women, 35% children) arriving per day, 46% of whom were Syrian. This marks a 44% decrease from the December average of 3,508 arrivals in Greece per day. The remaining arrivals were Afghan (29%) Iraqi (15%) Iranian (4%) Pakistani (3%) and various other groups. [FRONTEX](#) recorded the arrival of 885,386 refugees and other mixed migrants in the EU via the Eastern Mediterranean route in 2015, 496,340 (56%) of whom were Syrian. In a recent UNHCR study of [Syrians](#) arriving on the Greek islands in January 2016, 64% of respondents had travelled directly from Syria, 25% has previously lived in Turkey, and 2% had lived in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively. [Family reunification](#) was identified as the primary reason for selecting a country of destination, followed by educational opportunities, cultural community connections, and economic considerations.

**Europe via Bulgaria:** A smaller number of refugees and other mixed migrants attempt to enter Europe through the Turkish-Bulgarian border. As at January 28, Bulgarian authorities had apprehended [504](#) 'irregular migrants' at the Turkish border in 2016 with a total of 31,678 apprehensions since January 1, 2015. Syrians are reportedly the second largest group apprehended while crossing this border, after Iraqis. Though this route does not carry the same risks that come with the sea crossing to Greece it remains a less preferable option for a number of reasons: reports of [push-backs](#) at the border are widespread, as are accounts of [violence](#) and beatings. Additionally, this route is known to be more expensive than the sea crossing to Greece and the border itself is [difficult to reach](#) due to rivers, forests, winter conditions, razor fences, and surveillance technology.

**Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability:** [Multiple instances](#) of hypothermia, and related deaths, have been reported among those travelling by sea to Greece in January. Harsh winter conditions are making the passage by sea increasingly dangerous. [275 deaths](#) were recorded along the Eastern Mediterranean route in January 2016 compared with no recorded fatalities in January 2015. In [October 2015](#), smugglers were charging roughly USD1200 per adult and USD600 per child for boat passage to the Greek islands, though [prices](#) are reportedly dropped by 40-50% in bad weather as an incentive to cross the sea during the harsh winter [months](#).

**Access to Territory:** Syrians are facing increasing difficulties accessing territory in Syria's neighbouring countries. Reportedly [closed borders](#) and tightening [visa requirements](#) are limiting access to Turkey. New visa policies for Syrians travelling by air to Turkey (introduced in January) resulted in the return of more than [400 people](#) to Syria

who arrived by plane in Beirut with the intention of taking a connecting flight to Turkey. Syrians are also facing restrictions at the Jordan border. Reports indicate that roughly 50-100 people are allowed to cross the Jordan border each day leaving an estimated [16,000 people](#) stranded at the border. See 'Jordan' and 'Turkey' sections below for further detail.

## JORDAN

**Arrivals:** As at January 31, 2016 there were [636,169](#) Syrians registered by the UNHCR in Jordan, representing an increase of 0.3% (2,105 people) since December 31, 2015 although Jordanian officials estimate that this number is closer to [1.26 million](#). Of this population 82% (519,653 Syrians) live in urban, peri-urban, or rural locations and 18% (115,671 Syrians) live in camps. [UNHCR](#) has recorded 1,799 Syrian arrivals and registered 3,893 Syrians to date in 2016, though they report [no backlog](#) on registration.

A government spokesman has indicated that between [50 and 100](#) Syrians are allowed to cross into Jordan by land each day. Priority is given to women, children, the elderly and the sick. The [Jordan Armed Forces](#) report that 17,100 refugees entered Jordan in 2015, while 2015 Census results indicate that Jordan's population of 9.5 million is made of up [1.26 million](#) Syrians, over 13% of the total population.

There were 53,334 registered [Iraqis](#) in Jordan as of January 15, 2016 marking an increase of 320 individuals in 2016. UNHCR reports that 64 Iraqis arrived in Jordan in 2016 and 368 have been newly registered. According to the Government of Jordan there are a total of 130,911 Iraqis living in Jordan. A recent [Census](#) conducted in Jordan estimates that one third of Jordan's population are foreign-born (2.9 million out of 9.5 million).

**Departures:** A January report from [EUISS](#) noted that in December 2015, as many as 70-75 Syrians per day were cancelling their registration with UNHCR and returning to Syria. In a new [study](#) conducted by UNHCR with Syrians arriving on the Greek islands in January, 2% of respondents indicated that they had lived in Jordan prior to departing for Europe. In January, IOM reported the arrival by sea of [48 Jordanian nationals](#) in Greece in 2015 and as at January 25 had registered [2 Jordanian nationals](#) in 2016.

**Syrians at the Border:** A spokesman for the Government of Jordan acknowledged the presence of [12,000 Syrians](#) stranded at Jordan's Northeastern border. These [Syrians](#) are camped on a ridge, or berm, in the demilitarized zone at the southern edge of Syria. They are grouped at two main crossing points, Ruqban and Hadalat. On January 11<sup>th</sup> the same spokesman indicated that this number has grown to roughly [16,000](#) individuals. Syrians pay smugglers to transport them, through government held territory, to the Jordanian border. The [journey](#) can reportedly take up to 21 days, and is often over rough roads with limited food and water. [Aid officials](#) report the deaths of elderly and vulnerable Syrians stranded at the border, though Jordanian authorities maintain they are unaware of any deaths. The government also announced an [offer of help](#) to any country willing to resettle refugees from these border areas.

## LEBANON

**Departures:** As of May 6, 2015 the Lebanese government has instructed UNHCR to [suspend new registrations](#) of Syrians in the country. Consequently there were no new registrations during the reporting period. As at January 31, 2016 there were [1,067,785](#) Syrians registered in Lebanon, a decrease of 1,326 individuals (0.1%) since December 31, 2015. The government estimates that the number is closer to [1.5 million](#). Informal estimates suggest up to 150,000 Syrians have left or transited through Lebanon for Turkey in the hope of taking a boat to Europe in 2015. In a [study](#) conducted by UNHCR with Syrians arriving on the Greek islands in January 2016, 2% of respondents said that they had lived in Lebanon prior to departing for Europe.

Additionally IOM reports that [1,974](#) Lebanese nationals were registered as arrivals in Greece in 2015, making up [0.2%](#) of arrivals for 2015. [52](#) Lebanese have been registered in 2016. [Reports](#) show that Lebanese are leaving the country to improve their economic situation and to seek a better life. In October, nine members from a [Lebanese family](#) of twelve perished when the boat they took from Izmir, Turkey sunk in the Aegean.

[ECHO](#) estimates that Lebanon is also hosting 42,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, 450,000 refugees from Palestine, and 6000 Iraqi refugees.

**Forcible Return:** On January 8, 2016 [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) reported the forced return of [400](#) individuals to Syria. These individuals had flown to Beirut with the intention of continuing onward to Turkey.

According to these reports, the Syrians were unable to enter Turkey due to new entry visa requirements for all Syrians arriving by air or sea. They were subsequently returned to Syria.

**Deteriorating Conditions:** New reports from [DRC](#) and [INTEROS](#) show that deteriorating conditions in Lebanon are motivating Syrians and others to move onward to Europe or consider returning to Syria. Lack of access to livelihoods, deteriorating food aid, restricted movement and limited access to services are all cited as motivations to leave Lebanon. For further information on entry restrictions and legal status in Lebanon see [Oxfam](#)'s December discussion paper.

**Human Rights Watch** has reported on major human rights issues in Lebanon in 2015. The report highlights changes in refugee policy, deportations, and other migration related events and is accessible [here](#). Of note is the January 2015 implementation of visa requirements (with mandatory ID and supporting documents to prove reason for entry) for Syrians entering Lebanon, and prohibitive visa renewal fees (USD200) for those already in Lebanon. In April 2015 the Lebanese government also asked UNHCR to de-register Syrians who had entered Lebanon after January 5 and to suspend the registration of any new Syrian arrivals. [Authorities](#) have stated that these measures were taken to "reduce the numbers" of refugees in the country.

## TURKEY

**Arrivals:** As at December 31, 2015 there were [2,503,549](#) registered Syrians in Turkey, marking a 61% increase from December 31, 2014. [OCHA](#) reports indicate that increased fighting led to an average of 250 Syrians crossing into Turkey per day. Refugees and other mixed migrants [enter Turkey](#) by land through Syria, Iraq and Iran.

December 2015 figures show large increases in the arrival of other nationalities over the duration of the year. As of [December 31, 2015](#) there were 118,605 Iraqis in Turkey, a 440% increase from 21,947 (as at [December 31, 2014](#)). Afghans represent another growing group in Turkey with 94,030 individuals arriving in 2015, an 835% increase from 2014. Additionally 24,001 Iranians (144% increase from 2014), and 3,974 Somalis (48% increase from 2014) arrived in Turkey.

**Departures to Europe:** The [Turkish Coast Guard](#) reported 133 "irregular migration" cases in January 2015 involving 5,491 "irregular migrants." UNHCR reported [60,502](#) arrivals in Greece in January, 2016. These refugees and other mixed migrants arrive almost exclusively from Turkey transiting mainly through coastal towns such as Izmir and Bodrum. In [January](#) the main groups of arrivals were Syrians (46%), Afghans (29%), Iraqis (15%), Iranians (4%), Pakistanis (3%) and smaller percentages of other nationalities. [IOM](#) reports the arrival by sea of at least 10 Turkish nationals in Greece in January 2016. In January, an average of 1,952 refugees and other mixed migrants arrived per day. In an unrepresentative but informative [study](#) of Syrians arriving on the Greek islands in January, 25% of respondents indicated that they had lived in Turkey prior to departing for Europe.

On other border crossings, the [land border](#) in the north of Turkey is blocked by both a river and a fence and according to Greek police there are no crossings at this border. As of January 28, Bulgarian authorities had apprehended [504 refugees](#) and other mixed migrants entering through the Turkish border at Edirne and Kırklareli. According to IOM most enter on foot through the green border, though those coming from border checkpoints usually hide in buses or other vehicles. The main nationalities entering Bulgaria are Iraqi, Syrian, Afghan, and Pakistani.

**Afghans on the Move:** Afghans made up 29% of arrivals in Greece during January 2016 (nearly 17,000 individuals), but despite ongoing violence in Afghanistan there is little media coverage of this major movement of people. Recent [research](#) with Afghans arriving in Greece in January reveals that at least 95% of respondents passed through Turkey en route to the Greek islands. Individuals listed a variety of motivations for leaving Afghanistan though the majority (71%) said that they were fleeing [conflict and violence](#). 19% indicated that they had never lived in Afghanistan, but were born and lived in Iran. For the [26%](#) of respondents who had lived outside of Afghanistan for at least 6 months before heading to Europe, the fear of expulsion, lack of viable livelihood opportunities, lack of documentation, and discrimination were the main reasons for departure to Europe. UNHCR registered the arrival by sea of [210,221 Afghans](#) in Greece in 2015.

**Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability:** The journey by boat from Turkey to the Greek islands continues to be have many risks, with [275 individuals](#) reportedly perishing on the Eastern Mediterranean route in January 2016. The [Turkish Coast Guard](#) recorded 102 deaths at sea in January 2016, while the Greek Coast Guard reported the deaths of at least [45 migrants](#) in 3 incidents on January 20 and 21 alone. The crossing has been made more dangerous in recent

months by rough waters, cold temperatures, and inclement winter weather.

**New Visa Requirements:** As of January 8, 2016 Syrians arriving in Turkey from a third country by air or sea will be required to obtain an [entry visa](#). Syrians entering Turkey through the land border, however, do not face the same requirements. Despite claims by [Turkish officials](#) that Turkey maintains an ‘open door policy’ for refugees, [Human Rights Watch](#) reported in November that all of the borders are effectively closed (with exceptions for those in need of medical attention) and that Syrians are being intercepted and turned back by border guards. Some report being [beaten](#) by Turkish border guards. This comes in the same month as announcements of new regulations granting registered Syrians, who have been in the country a minimum of 6 months, the right to apply for a [work permit](#).

## IRAQ

**Refugees in Iraq:** As at January 15, 2016 there were [245,022](#) registered Syrians in Iraq, a 380 person decrease from December 31, 2015. Of those Syrians in Iraq 39% (96,006 individuals) live in camps and 61% (149,016 individuals) are in rural, urban or peri-urban areas.

**Displacement:** Since January 2014, [3.2 million people](#) have been internally displaced due to violence and conflict in Iraq. See [IOM](#)’s Displacement Tracking Matrix for detailed monitoring of displacement trends in Iraq, and [OXFAM](#)’s December briefing note for further information about internal returnees in Iraq.

**Departures:** As of January 26, 2016 IOM has registered the arrival of [4,801 Iraqis](#) in Greece out of a total 45,361 arrivals since the beginning of 2016. There were also [53,334 Iraqis](#) registered in Jordan on January 15, 2016. In January 2016, Bulgarian authorities apprehended 504 ‘irregular migrants’ entering [Bulgaria](#) through its Turkish border the majority of whom were reportedly Iraqi.

The majority of Iraqis surveyed in a recent [IOM](#) study conducted in Greece, FYROM, Croatia, and Macedonia said they intended to go to Germany. Sweden was a distant second choice followed by the Netherlands, Austria and Great Britain. There is no data on the number of departures from Iraq during the reporting period, though reports indicate that Iraqis are using the same routes as Syrians to travel to Europe.

## OTHER REGIONAL NEWS

**New Danish Law:** On January 27, 2016 the [Danish parliament](#) passed a law aimed at deterring refugees from seeking asylum in Denmark. The measures allow police officers to search asylum seekers and confiscate their valuables, as well as extending the family reunification time period for refugees. A report by [IRIN](#) argues that this is only one of an increasing number of EU laws aimed at deterring people from seeking asylum in Europe.

**Rejection at German Border:** Austrian police are [reporting](#) that Germany has been sending hundreds of refugees and other mixed migrants (roughly 200 per day), back to Austria. Asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Morocco and Algeria, intending to claim asylum in Scandinavian countries, are [reportedly](#) being turned back at the Bavarian border.

**Protests in Greece:** On January 23, a day after 46 people died at sea, [protesters demonstrated](#) in Greece, demanding against the militarized border with Greece. Protesters argued that the fence, guards, and cameras are forcing thousands to cross the Aegean and risk death at sea. Protesters demanded that the fence be removed and a safe point of passage be made available to refugees and asylum seekers.

See also **MHUB Monthly Trend Bulletin** (accessible [here](#)).

## NEW RESEARCH, REPORTS OR DOCUMENTS

The **Danish Refugee Council** produced a report on ‘Going to Europe: A Syrian Perspective.’ The [publication](#) draws upon research conducted with Syrians in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey to address the motivations for and challenges of onward movement. It also explores the various expectations that Syrians have of life in Europe, as well as their networks of information and support.

The January Edition of **Forced Migration Review** is entitled ‘Destination: Europe’ and includes a diverse collection of articles covering issues of mass displacement as it affects European countries. Articles range in topic from durable

solutions and smuggling on the Mediterranean to Iraqis in Jordan and Syrians in Brazil (accessible [here](#)).

**ICMPD** has released a new [study](#) entitled ‘Targeting Vulnerabilities: The Impact of the Syrian War and Refugee Situation on Trafficking in Persons. The piece highlights trafficking routes, forms of trafficking, national policy and vulnerable groups in the context of Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon with relation to the ongoing conflict in Syria.

The **UNESCWA** and **IOM** have released the 2015 Situation Report on International Migration with a focus on the Arab region. The [report](#) looks at regional migration patterns, developments in migration governance, various types of migration and includes a section on mixed migration flows.

**INTERSOS**, in collaboration with the **Migration Policy Centre**, has produced a new report entitled ‘Tariq al-Euroba: Displacement Trends of Syrian Asylum Seekers to the EU. The [research report](#) uses data and information from Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan to shed light on the journey of Syrians to Europe. The piece considers ‘push and pull’ factors, protection risks, and the availability of information to Syrians.

‘No Safety for Refugee Women on the European Route’ is a new report from the **Women’s Refugee Commission** detailing protection risks for women, girls and other vulnerable groups in the Balkans en route to Europe. The report finds that there are virtually no considerations of gender based violence for refugees and asylum seekers on the move in Serbia and Slovenia (accessible [here](#)).

The **Institute for Security Studies**, in partnership with the **Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime**, have produced a [paper](#) detailing ‘the economics of smuggling refugees and migrants into Europe.’ In it the authors examine the growing and violent smuggling industry that has grown around mass migration flows to Europe. This idea is expanded upon in a recent **Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat** [article](#) expands on this ‘multi-million dollar industry.’

In response to the 5<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the 2011 ‘Arab Spring’ **the Economist** has published a comprehensive [article](#) detailing the current state of Arab countries, and the legacy of the protests that arose in 6 countries (Libya, Yemen, Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain and Syria) in 2011.

In January the **UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition** launched a [resource collection](#) for “exploring the links between climate change, the conflict in Syria and the refugee situation in Europe.” The collection offers a variety of briefings, videos, and other resources related to migration and climate change.

**Human Rights Watch** has released its 2016 [World Report](#) detailing human rights issues worldwide. The report gives country based overviews of human rights events and issues in over 90 countries and territories in 2015.

**MSF**’s [December report](#), ‘Obstacle Course to Europe’ examines the EU’s asylum framework and policies and the ways in which these have actively contributed to worsening the situation of vulnerable populations. The report relies upon the stories of refugees and asylum seekers to argue that the EU has failed to respond to both the humanitarian and medical needs of people on the move.

**RMMS** has released its January monthly summary of mixed migration issues and news in the Horn of Africa and Yemen region (accessible [here](#)).