

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: As of December 31, 2015 UNHCR had recorded [4,595,198 Syrian refugees](#) globally, an increase of 418,057 individuals since October 31. Estimates of the number of internally displaced Syrians had increased to [6.6 million](#) in December. IOM estimates that due to increased fighting in northern Syria 20,000 individuals were displaced in December 2015 alone. With conflict continuing conflict, it is projected that displacement will continue into 2016.

Eastern Mediterranean Route: Syrian refugees and mixed migrants (asylum seekers and migrants) continue to move onward to Europe along the Eastern Mediterranean route both directly from Syria, and from neighbouring states. 56% of sea arrivals in Greece, departing primarily from Turkey, were of Syrian origin in 2015. The remainder of arrivals were Afghans (25%), Iraqis (10%) Pakistanis (3%) and various other groups (6%). No estimates are available of how many Syrians travelled directly from Syria to Europe and how many resided in neighbouring countries and for how long. [UNHCR](#) data indicates that 151,249 individuals arrived in Greece in November, 2015 and 108,742 in December, making a total of 259,991 arrivals in the past two months.

Western Balkan Route: The majority of Syrian refugees and other mixed groups heading to Europe journey along the Eastern Mediterranean route. A smaller number take the Western Balkan route from Turkey to Bulgaria. Smugglers charge an estimated [\\$6700](#) for passage by land into Bulgaria. In 2015 Bulgarian authorities apprehended [31,174](#) mixed migrants crossing the border irregularly. The most prominent nationalities of these arrivals were, in descending order: Iraqis, Syrians, Afghans, Pakistanis and Iranians.

Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability: [IOM](#) reported 305 deaths on the Eastern Mediterranean route in November and December, 2015. On the Western Balkan route people face robbery, extortion and [violence](#) at the Bulgarian border, with some [reports](#) of migrants and refugees being abused. Bulgarian authorities plan to extend a fence running along the border with Turkey.

JORDAN

Arrivals: As of December 31, 2015 there were 634,064 [Syrian refugees](#) registered by UNHCR in Jordan. This is an increase of 3,888 individuals from October 31. The Jordanian Government estimates the number to be higher. There was also an increase of 1,515 [Iraqis](#) in Jordan since October 31, putting the total Iraqi population figure at 53,014 at the end of 2015.

Departures: There are indications of Syrian refugees continuing to leave Jordan. [Andrew Harper](#), the head of UNHCR in Jordan, said that Russian engagement in Syria and increased destruction on the ground in Syria, is motivating Syrians to consider moving onward to Europe. Reductions in assistance and declining conditions in Jordan are causing [many Syrians](#) and others to consider the journey to Europe.

Deportations: On December 16, 2015 Jordanian authorities detained approximately [800 Sudanese](#) asylum seekers, who had been protesting outside UNHCR's office in Amman and [deported](#) several hundred back to Sudan. [UNHCR](#) appealed for the cessation of deportations of anyone registered as an asylum seeker or refugee. A [spokesman](#) for the Jordanian Government said that asylum provisions do not apply to the Sudanese, as they entered Jordan under the pretext of seeking medical treatment. Prior to the deportations there were approximately [4000](#) Sudanese in Jordan.

Syrians at the Border: In December UNHCR and Human Rights Watch called upon the Jordanian government to allow around 12,000 [Syrians stranded](#) outside the northeastern border to enter the country. The number of people waiting at this border has [tripled](#) to 12,000 from the beginning of November, and comprises primarily [women](#) and children in the remote desert area. [Human Rights Watch](#) estimates that, on a daily basis, only a few dozen Syrians are being allowed to cross Jordan's open borders in the Northeast at Rukban and Hadalat. The [Jordanian Government](#) has said this is due to security related concerns.

LEBANON

Arrivals: There is no data on arrivals in Lebanon during the reporting period. In May 2015 UNHCR stopped registering refugees in the country under instructions of Lebanese authorities. Tightened regulations for entry and exit into Lebanon, brought into effect in January 2015, have caused many Syrians to '[go underground](#)'. Some [estimates](#) suggest there may be 1.5 million Syrians in Lebanon.

Departures: A pattern of departures from Lebanon was evident in the last quarter of 2015 primarily of Syrian refugees but also Lebanese nationals. On October 31, 2015 the UNHCR reported 1,075,637 registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. By December 31 this number had decreased to [1,069,111](#) a difference of 6,526 individuals. [Reports](#) from October 2015 estimated that thousands of Syrians were leaving Lebanon each week.

In December UNHCR released a [report](#) indicating that throughout September and October, Syrian onward migration to Europe, both through and from Lebanon to Turkey, had increased. Syrians travelled to Turkey via plane or by maritime route after entering Lebanon through Masna'a or Aboudiyeh. Residency challenges, high cost of living, and reductions in assistance were cited as [motivations](#) by those who had been residing in Lebanon.

434 [Lebanese asylum seekers](#) arrived in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) from Greece between June 19 and November 23, 2015.

TURKEY

Arrivals: Syrians registered in Turkey have increased by 322,256 since 3 November. The total population was [2,503,549](#) as at December 31, 2015. There has also been an increase in the number of UNHCR registered asylum seekers and refugees of other [nationalities](#) since October 31, 2015. As of December 31, 2015 there were 118,605 Iraqis (3,265 increase), 94,030 Afghans (10,475 increase), 24,001 Iranians (1,258 increase) and 3,974 Somalis (decrease 102) in Turkey. Many from these countries of origin travel along the same routes as Syrians and are migrating onwards to Europe.

Departures to Europe: Turkey continues to act as a significant country of transit for mixed migrants and refugees entering Europe. In November and December [259,991](#) individuals arrived in Greece, primarily from Turkey. [UNHCR](#) reported the average number of arrivals per day in Greece to be 3,508 individuals (December). Of these [36%](#) were Syrian, 26% Iraqi, 25% Afghan, and the remaining 13% Iranians, Pakistanis and Moroccans.

Other mixed migrants depart Turkey through the north via the Bulgarian border, a route that may increase in prevalence due to the [closing](#) of the Greece-FYROM border to all those who cannot prove Iraqi, Syrian or Afghan citizenship. In the last week of December, Bulgarian authorities apprehended [426 irregular migrants](#) (31,174 in 2015) most of whom entered Bulgaria on foot through the border with Turkey where reports of [police brutality](#) have been made.

Refugee and Migrant Vulnerability: The Turkish Coast Guard reported [8,630 rescues](#) and 74 deaths at sea in December. [IOM](#) estimates 805 deaths on the Eastern Mediterranean route in 2015.

Turkey and the EU: On November 29, 2015 Turkey finalized an [agreement](#) with the European Union, aiming to curb the flow of refugees and other groups into Europe. Under the plan, Turkey will be given 3 billion Euros to assist Syrians, while lagging negotiations around Turkey's accession to the EU will be reinvigorated. Much [criticism](#) has followed this agreement, along with [arguments](#) that the flow of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants into Europe will not be [affected](#).

IRAQ

Displacement: Since January 2014 over 3.2 million Iraqis have been internally displaced due to armed conflict and [climate conditions](#) (December 31). IOM's displacement tracking matrix has identified [3,235,476](#) displaced individuals and 539,246 displaced families in Iraq.

Refugees in Iraq: The number of registered [Syrians](#) in Iraq has decreased by 492 since October 27 putting the total at 244,642 on December 31, 2015.

Departures: Between January and October of 2015, 44,349 Iraqis arrived by sea in Greece. In December alone roughly 28,273 individuals who arrived in Greece by sea were Iraqi, making up [26%](#) of the monthly total. There is no data on the number 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

Landmark Arrivals in Europe: According to UNHCR figures, over [1 million people](#) have crossed the Mediterranean and reached Europe in 2015, primarily through Greece and Italy. This figure was reached on December 29.

Afghans in Europe: 2015 has seen a significant increase in the number of Afghans seeking asylum in Europe. [IRIN](#) reports that 88,205 Afghans made asylum claims in the EU between January and September 2015 (compared to [38,149](#) in 2014) and that most of these asylum seekers are travelling to Europe through Greece via Iran and Turkey.

Iranian Protests at FYROM Border: In November six Iranian men [protested](#) the closure of the Greece/FYROM border at Eidomeni, by sewing their lips shut and painting messages on their chests and foreheads. The border was closed to all migrants who are not fleeing conflict. It remains open for Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans.

Canadian Resettlement: By the end of 2015 Canada resettled [6,000 Syrian refugees](#) from Jordan and Lebanon as part of a larger plan to resettle 25,000 people by the end of 2015 and up to 50,000 by the end of the year.

Winterization: November and December have seen the adoption of major winterization programs from humanitarian organizations across the region. [UNHCR](#) has a \$236 million aid program designed to help 2.5 million Syrians and 70,000 Iraqis during the winter months.

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

NEW RESEARCH, REPORTS OR DOCUMENTS

In December the **Refugee Studies Centre** at Oxford University published a [report](#) addressing the discrepancies in perceptions of refugees, policy makers and host communities with regards to the 'Syrian humanitarian disaster.' The report examines why history and context are important when considering the approaches that Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon take to the crisis.

A number of INGOs based in the Middle East (**CARE, DRC, IRC, NRC, Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision**) released a joint agency briefing [paper](#) in November calling for a new approach to those displaced persons and host communities affected by the crisis in Syria. The organizations call for the empowerment of refugees via self-reliance, access to services, legal residence, and a 'resilience agenda.'

The **Arab Institute for Research and Policy Studies** released its 2015 [Arab Opinion Index](#), the fourth in a series of yearly public opinion surveys. The survey was conducted with over 16,000 participants in 12 Arab countries, and asked respondents for their opinions on a number of issues including the so-called Islamic State, the Iranian nuclear deal, radical extremism as well as their attitudes towards democracy and political affairs.

IOM has released a report on '[The Other Migrant Crisis](#)' addressing the exploitation of migrant workers in the Middle East and North Africa. Trafficking and detention are among the key topics of the report, which ultimately offers recommendations for protecting migrants from such exploitation.

The Guardian has published a three-part [illustrated report](#) depicting the plight of three Syrian refugees as they travel to Europe in search of asylum. The pieces depict the hardships and suffering endured by Syrian refugees and were created in consultation with the subjects of the stories.

In November the **Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat** in the Horn of Africa and Yemen released 'Beyond Definitions' a [discussion paper](#) about the relationships between smuggling, trafficking and global migration. The paper describes a 'smuggling-trafficking nexus' and examines the ways in which this both facilitates and motivates migration, while calling attention to the shortcomings of current legal concepts and structures in describing current migration trends.

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