

# Q&A on Returns to Syria

June 2018

## 1. What is UNHCR position regarding refugees' return to Syria?

- UNHCR respects individual decisions of refugees to return home, and does not discourage or oppose returns taking place based on an individual's free and informed decision.
- UNHCR is not organizing or having specific programmes for returns to Syria at this stage. UNHCR, together with the rest of the United Nations and international partners, is however actively working to help address the obstacles that refugees see for return to their homes. Once conditions are in place, UNHCR will organize or facilitate returns.
- UNHCR continues to work with the Government of Lebanon towards the protection and dignity of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon until they are able to return in safety and dignity, and to support the Lebanese communities to improve their services and infrastructure.
- The Government of Lebanon has confirmed that no refugee will be forced back to Syria.

## 2. Irrespective of UNHCR's position, can I return to Syria?

- Everyone has the right to return to her or his own country, irrespective of the conditions in the country at the time of return. In any conflict around the world, it has been observed that some refugees decide to return voluntarily to their home country, even before peace is in place. Common reasons cited for current returns include looking for family members, checking on property and economic challenges in host countries.

## 3. What should I do if I have questions regarding return to Syria?

- Please call UNHCR or approach any of the UNHCR reception centers. UNHCR will receive you in person and provide you with counselling on returns to Syria (for instance regarding exit procedures, documentation that will help you re-establish yourself in Syria, the status of your UNHCR file in Lebanon if you decide to return, etc.).

## 4. What should I do if I wish to return to Syria but am missing important documents?

- If you are missing documents regarding civil events (like birth, marriage or death) or schooling (school certificates) that took place in Lebanon, please approach the nearest UNHCR reception center. UNHCR will provide guidance on how to obtain them and will try to help accelerate the procedure.

## 5. Why is UNHCR asking refugees about their intentions to return?

- Collecting information regarding the intentions and views of refugees in relation to their future has been part of ongoing activities undertaken by UNHCR Lebanon since the beginning of the crisis. It is essential for UNHCR to understand refugees' intentions to conduct appropriate advocacy and to plan for effective support programme in Lebanon and in Syria.
- When refugees express an intention to return home, UNHCR checks if they lack any important documentation that UNHCR can help them obtain. This documentation can include birth, marriage and death certificates certifying that such events have taken

place in exile, and school records; all which help the refugee re-establish him or herself back home and access schools and services

- The information collected during these activities is kept anonymous and the participation is on a voluntary basis. It is not compulsory to respond. Participation in these activities is not related to humanitarian assistance in Lebanon and does not affect refugees' eligibility to receive assistance and services.

## **6. Why is UNHCR recording information relating to Housing, Land and Property in Syria?**

- Copies of these important documents will be safely stored and recorded and can be made available to you in the future in case of loss or theft, like copies of your ID documents previously collected. It will also give UNHCR a clearer picture of the situation of Syrian refugees as regards their land and property rights in Syria and to plan legal aid programmes in the future should there be disputes or other issues related to your property.
- Participation in this initiative is strictly on a voluntary basis. In addition, documents given to UNHCR will not be shared with any other organization or government without the concerned person's written consent.

## **7. Until when would UNHCR undertake its work?**

- UNHCR continues to carry out all its regular activities. There has not been any change to UNHCR's programmes.
- UNHCR has a global mandate to provide protection to refugees and help them find sustainable solutions to their situation as refugees. This responsibility will continue until all refugees have found sustainable solutions outside of Lebanon.

## **For more individual counselling, advice and support, you can approach or call UNHCR:**

- **Beirut/Mount Lebanon:**
  - In person: Ramlet El-Baida, Dr. Philippe Hitti St., behind Spinney's Supermarket Beirut (Monday to Friday 8:00 - 14:00)
  - Over the phone: 01-820848 for Information and Appointments (Monday to Friday 7:00 - 17:00)
- **Bekaa:**
  - In person: Zahle highway, near Kaysar Ata IceCream, Zahle (Monday to Friday 8:00 - 16:00)
  - Over the phone: 76-611811 for Information / 08-930468 for Appointments: (Monday to Friday 8:30 - 16:00)
- **North:**
  - In person: Next to Rachid Karame Exhibition Centre, Tripoli (Monday to Friday 8:00 - 14:00)
  - Over the phone: 71-911496 for Information (Monday to Friday 8:00 - 16:00)
- **South:**
  - In person: Villa Krischt, Al Hosh, Tyre (Monday to Friday 8:30 - 16:00)
  - Over the phone: 76-500370 for Information / Appointments: 76-500380 (Monday to Friday 8:30 - 16:00)
- **Lebanon:**
  - Over the phone: 01-594250 (Monday to Friday 8:00-17:00)