

Syrian border crossings

Syria Needs Analysis Project - September 2013

Key issues

The border policies of Syria's neighbouring countries have fluctuated regularly over the past year due to the security situation, political developments and the increasing number of refugees. This has caused uncertainty among those trying to flee and international responders. Some people trying to leave have been trapped inside Syria due to border restrictions, and at the border with Turkey this has led to the establishment of several IDP camps.

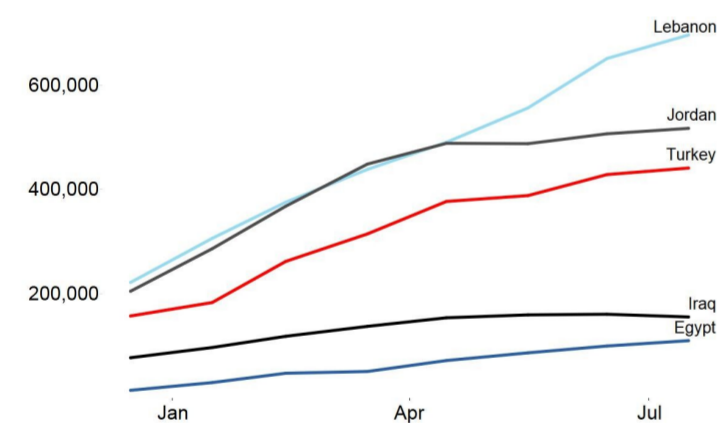
Given the various restrictions imposed by the governments of neighbouring countries, irregular and unregulated movement of refugees across borders is reported to be widespread. The legal status and rights of individuals exiting Syria may be compromised when they enter a country via an unofficial crossing.

Movements across borders also involve the smuggling of goods (food, fuel, medicines etc.), weapons and the movement of armed personnel.

Widespread information gaps persist in relation to border areas. The limited access of humanitarian organisations to border areas and scarcity of information hampers understanding of the situation on the ground and the scale of population movements. The proliferation of armed groups in Syria and the fluid nature of territorial control lead to further ambiguity of the situation and challenges for movement of population into safer areas.

Some border crossing points are in remote, hard to reach and insecure areas making it more difficult for those forced to flee by foot to reach a host country.

Refugee movement 2013
(registered & awaiting)



Lebanon

Lebanon has maintained open borders with Syria for the duration of the conflict. Close historical ties and short distances between the major population centres of both countries have resulted in a fluid transfer of people and goods. The Masnaa border crossing (20) lies on the shortest route between Damascus and Beirut and is thus a major conduit for the movement of goods both to and from Syria.

While there are 4 official border crossings between Syria and Lebanon, large sections of the border are known to be used unofficially by refugees and for the transfer of goods and weapons. The Anti-Lebanon mountain range forms a natural barrier with Syria; the border following the ridgeline. The remote character of some rugged sections of the range is advantageous for groups involved in smuggling.

Turkey

Of the 8 official crossing points into Turkey, the one controlled by the GoS (1) is closed and the 4 controlled by Syrian Kurdish Forces (8-11) are closed or frequently subject to rigid controls. There are unofficial crossing points, of which at least 3 are known and monitored by the GoT, that facilitate humanitarian access or provide a 'last resort' for desperate IDPs.

Syrians with passports can cross the border freely without an entry visa, as visa requirements between Turkey and Syria were mutually lifted in August 2009. Although Turkey has an open border policy for all Syrians, the GoT has in practice limited the number of Syrians entering without papers since the summer of 2012.

With some exceptions, in the eastern and western extremities, the Turkish-Syrian border is generally characterised by plains gradually turning into rolling hills farther into Turkish territory and is hence extremely porous, enabling unmonitored passage.

Country overview

Iraq

The northern provinces host the 3 official border crossings: Al Qa'im (15) and Al Waleed (16), both in Anbar, and Rabia'a (14) in Ninewah. Given Iraq's perilous security situation and political upheaval, the central GoI closed all 3 crossings in August 2012, preventing refugees entering through official routes.

Kurdish Syrians fleeing to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) have mostly entered through the semi-official Peshakapor crossing (12) in Dohuk province and through Sahela unofficial crossing (13) just to its south. Both crossings were closed in May, though entry was allowed in medical emergencies and for family reunifications. On 15 August the crossings were re-opened allowing 47,000 people to cross in 2 weeks. The authorities have stated they will continue to allow entry into KR-I.

The border between KR-I and Syria follows the course of the river Tigris while the border between Iraq and Syria passes through vast stretches of sparsely populated desert.

Jordan

The western region hosts the 2 official border crossings, Dar'a/Ramtha (18) and Naseeb/Jaber (17), both under GoS control. In addition, there are numerous other unofficial border crossings in close proximity, all of which are monitored by GoJ. The Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) man several unofficial border crossings in the eastern region as refugees from Syria are increasingly using eastern routes to enter Jordan due to restrictions in the west.

The Jordanian side of the Jordan-Syria border is heavily militarised, particularly in the western areas bordering Dar'a governorate, while the eastern border, which is predominantly desert, is secured by regular patrols rather than large military positions.

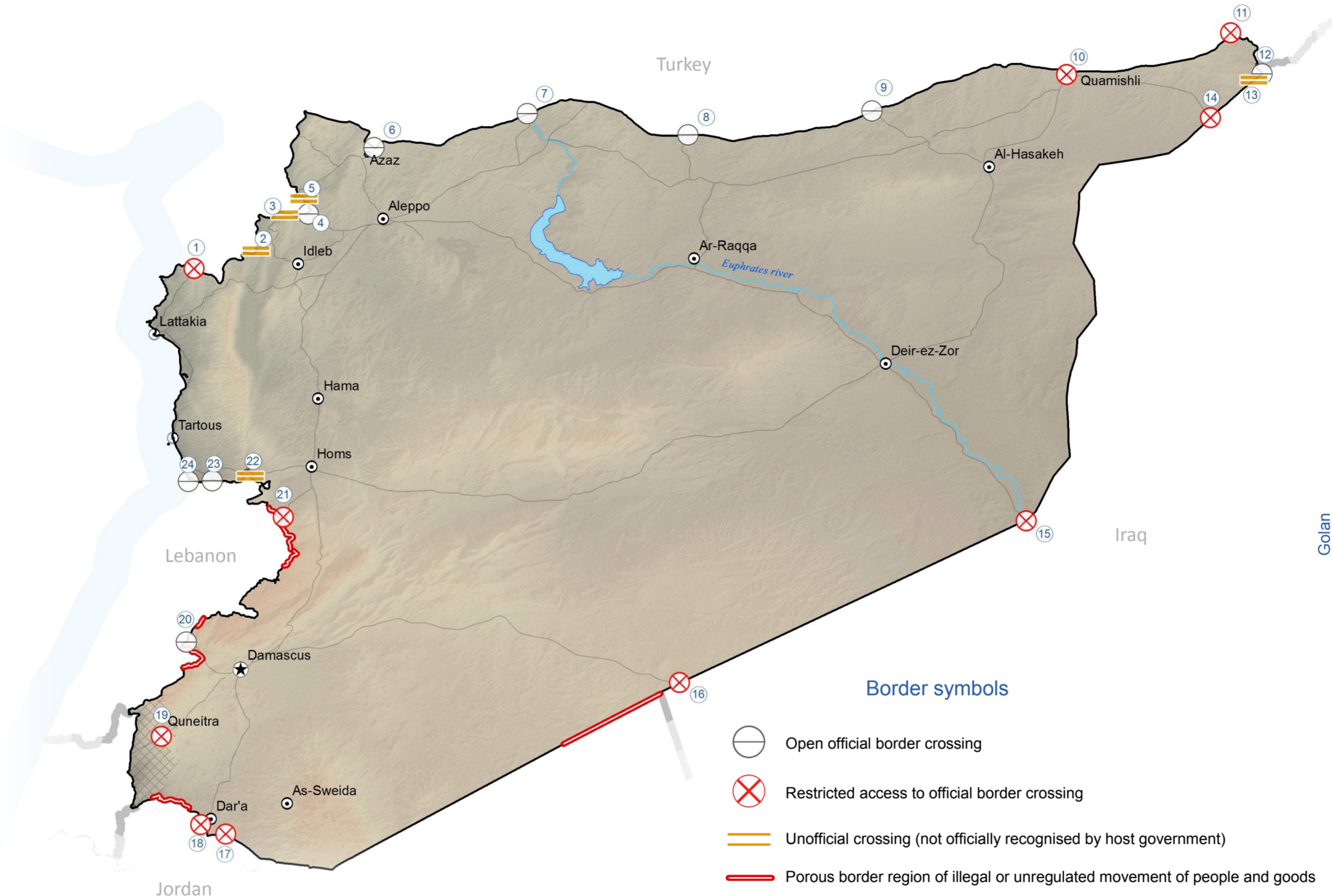
Egypt

The main entry points to Egypt for Syrians have been the international Cairo and Alexandria airports and to a lesser degree the seaports, particularly Nuweiba.

Egypt had extended an open border policy to Syrians fleeing the conflict, allowing them to obtain a visa on arrival, until July 2013 when the political and social turmoil in Egypt lead to a revision of this policy. Syrians now require an entry visa and security clearance prior to arriving in Egypt; those arriving without the necessary documents are returned to Syria. The authorities have said that these measures are temporary, but as of 1 September 2013 they remain in place.

Golan Heights

There are no known cases of refugee movement across the Quneitra border (19). There are reported isolated cases of medical evacuation and goods being transported through.



Border symbols

- Open official border crossing
- Restricted access to official border crossing
- Unofficial crossing (not officially recognised by host government)
- Porous border region of illegal or unregulated movement of people and goods

Crossing points

Official and unofficial

Name	Syrian name	Control
1 Yayladagi	Bab al-Kasab	Government of Syria
2 Harem		Opposition forces
3 Hacıpasa	Darkosh	Opposition forces
4 Reyhanlı/Cilvegözü	Bab al-Hawa	Opposition forces
5 Atmeh		Opposition forces
6 Öncüpinar	Bab al-Salam	Opposition forces
7 Karkamis	Jarablus	Islamist groups
8 Akçakale	Tell Abiad	Islamist groups
9 Ceylanpinar	Ras Al Ain	Kurdish forces
10 Nusaybin	Quamishli	Kurdish forces
11 Cizre	Ein Diwar	Kurdish forces
12 Peshakapor	Simalka	Kurdish forces
13 Sahela		Kurdish forces
14 Rabia'a	Yarobiyeh	Kurdish forces
15 Al Qa'im	Abu Kamal	Opposition forces
16 Al Waleed	Al Tanf	Unknown
17 Naseeb	Jaber	Government of Syria
18 Dar'a	Ramtha	Government of Syria
19 Quneitra		Government of Syria
20 Masnaa	Jdaidet Yabous	Government of Syria
21 Mashari' Al-Qaa	Joussieh	Government of Syria
22 Al-Amani	Tal Kalakh	Government of Syria
23 El Aaboudieh	Dabbousieh	Government of Syria
24 El Aarida	Tartous	Government of Syria



Purpose - This thematic report shows the border crossing points between Syria and neighbouring countries. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report. For additional information, comments or questions please email SNAP@ACAPS.org

Disclaimer - Information provided is provisional as it has not been possible to independently verify field reports. Border crossing points can be subject to frequent changes of regulation and to closure without notice. This report covers a highly dynamic subject; the information is current of the date of publication.

References - ACAPS and MapAction would like to thank all organisations who have provided input to this report. The information is compiled from partner organisations, key informants, reports and media sources.