



• EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT · BRUSSELS

After Assad's fall — what does *return* actually mean?

A morning roundtable at the European Parliament on the humanitarian reality behind Syrian return — co-hosted by Tineke Strik MEP (Greens/EFA) and Umutcan Yüksel (EUI / DKH), under Chatham House Rule.

ONE YEAR AFTER THE TRANSITION

A transition under compounding crises.

Nearly three million refugees and IDPs have returned home — a sign of cautious hope. The humanitarian reality on the ground tells a more sobering story.

16.5M

SYRIANS NEED HUMANITARIAN SUPPORT
≈ 70% of the population

1 / 18

GLOBAL HUNGER HOTSPOTS FOR 2026
World Food Programme

6.7M

STILL INTERNALLY DISPLACED
Plus >1M IDP returnees

138K

NEWLY DISPLACED FROM ALEPPO
January 2026 clashes alone

POVERTY RATE INSIDE SYRIA

90%

Two-thirds of the electricity grid inoperable · housing, water, schools and health facilities damaged or overstretched. Reconstruction cost estimated > \$250B.

A GROWING ASYMMETRY

Pushed out — pulled back?

90%

LEBANON'S SYRIAN REFUGEES RELY ON AID

2.8M

SYRIANS UNDER "TEMPORARY PROTECTION" IN TÜRKIYE

25%

REFUGEES WHO INTEND TO RETURN (IRC, SEP 2025)

LEBANON

Crisis-deepened deprivation.

76% of Syrian refugees below the minimum expenditure basket. March 2025 parliamentary bloc filed legislation to regulate forced return. Funding continues to decline.

TÜRKIYE

Anti-refugee sentiment — and housing pressure.

Highest level of anti-refugee sentiment globally (UNHCR, 2024). 90% cannot cover basic monthly expenses. February 2023 earthquakes continue to strain Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep, Hatay.

EUROPEAN UNION

From asylum suspensions to return architecture.

DE, DK, SE, AT suspended Syrian asylum within days of Assad's fall. Status revocations begun across multiple Member States; pressure mounts to list Syria as a "safe country of origin".

INSIDE SYRIA

Pull factors remain weak.

Housing, safety, economic challenges and service availability cited as primary concerns. January 2026 Aleppo clashes, winter storms, and ongoing ISIL threat undercut the "new Syria" narrative.

#Syria

#Lebanon

#Türkiye

#Refugees

#Returns

#Humanitarian

— WHAT IS HAPPENING IN BRUSSELS

An environment of *constructive refoulement*.

€2.5B

EU PLEDGE FOR SYRIA
2025-2026

€620M

ADDITIONAL PACKAGE
COMMITTED BY THE
COMMISSION

\$250B+

ESTIMATED COST OF SYRIA'S
RECONSTRUCTION

01

Status review and revocation.

Multiple Member States have initiated reviews; some have begun revocation proceedings. ECRE warns the situation in Syria is far from meeting the legal threshold for revocation.

02

Safe-country-of-origin listing.

Council and Parliament agreed an EU-wide list in December 2025. Syria is not yet listed — but political pressure to include it is mounting.

03

Common European System for Returns.

The Commission's March 2025 proposal — with European Return Orders visible across SIS — creates institutional momentum that may not distinguish safe from unsafe contexts.

04

Frontex back on Syrian returns.

Frontex has resumed operational support for Syrian return operations and reintegration — framed as voluntary, but stacking with revocations and reduced reception conditions.



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Returns must be voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable — not a slogan, but the legal and ethical floor against which every EU policy instrument should be measured.

— Key message, Brussels Roundtable, 24 March 2026

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**Diakonie
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