

# Understanding Assyrian Refugees

## FACT SHEET



Hundreds of thousands of Assyrians have been externally displaced from their ancestral lands in Syria since the start of the conflict in 2011 and Iraq since the rise of ISIS in 2014. The majority of Assyrian refugees sought refuge in neighboring countries, namely Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. These countries are being used as transit countries, where Assyrians remain on a temporary basis with concrete plans to emigrate to a third country such as the U.S. or Australia.



The wait for a humanitarian visa can take several years. Visa processing times vary widely; many Assyrians have been living in a state of perpetual limbo for upwards of 5 years with no developments in their case.

Assyrian refugees face specific vulnerabilities and unique challenges in displacement, as they do not seek shelter in refugee camps due to religious discrimination and fear of targeted attacks.

Instead, Assyrian refugees are compelled to rent private homes in urban neighborhoods, which limits their access to humanitarian services and often leads to increased feelings of isolation.



This photo depicts an entire apartment inhabited by an Assyrian refugee family in Beirut, Lebanon.

### *In their displacement, Assyrian refugees:*

- Struggle to meet day-to-day needs due to the high cost of living
- Live in isolation with few or no cultural support networks
- Are unable to seek authorized employment due to threats of deportation
- Are forced to ration food; some are unable to afford meat products
- Lack access to health care and are sometimes denied entry to hospitals even in emergencies
- Have limited access to humanitarian assistance and support
- Suffer from depression and other mental health issues

Barred from seeking formal employment, most Assyrian refugees are not working and are often confined to their small homes. For the large majority, their days are spent doing household chores, watching television, browsing social media, or on phone calls with family and friends living elsewhere. Social interactions are limited.

Their wait for resettlement is characterized by limited information, uncertainty about their futures, and a growing sense of hopelessness. For many Assyrian refugees, the prolonged state of limbo has made the future difficult to imagine. Protracted displacement and monotonous lifestyles have had a negative impact on the mental health of Assyrian refugees and may have long-term consequences.

**“The rest of the world has moved on, but we are still stuck in 2014.”**

Assyrian refugee from Bakhdida, Nineveh Plain, Iraq



Access to education for Assyrian refugee children in Jordan is limited; many parents fear their children will become part of a lost generation.

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[www.assyrianpolicy.org](http://www.assyrianpolicy.org)