


Middle East and North Africa

Algeria (Sahrawi refugees) | Iraq (IDPs and returnees) | Jordan (Syrian refugees) | Lebanon (Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees) | Libya | Palestine | Syrian Arab Republic | Yemen

Continued conflict in Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic and deepening economic crises across the region drove high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022

 **34.1M** people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 2022 in 8 countries/territories

19.35M of them are in two countries* with IPC analyses



* Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees.
Source: IPC TWGs (Lebanon and Yemen), 2022.

14.74M of them are in six countries/territories without IPC analyses

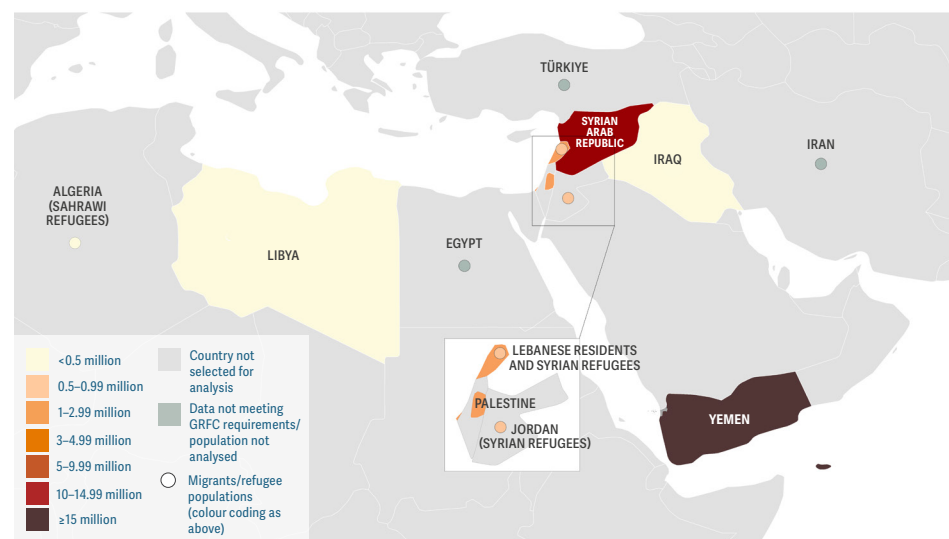
Source: HNO 2023 (Libya, Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic); HTO 2023 (Iraq); WFP CARI (Algeria and Jordan).

11 countries in this region were selected. Three countries had data gaps/data not meeting GRFC requirements: Egypt, Iran and Türkiye. Four of the eight remaining countries/territories included in the GRFC 2023 are major food crises: Lebanon (host and refugee populations), Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

About 34.1 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity in eight countries/territories in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2022, up from 31.9 million in 2021. When considering only the countries/territories with data available in both years, there were an additional 1 million people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity.

Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic hosted around 86 percent of the region's population facing high levels of acute food insecurity and continued to be among the world's largest protracted food crises in 2022. In these

Numbers of people in IPC Phase 3 or above or equivalent, 2022



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Source: IPC TWGs, 2022; HNO 2023 (Libya, Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic); HTO 2023 (Iraq); WFP (Algeria and Jordan).

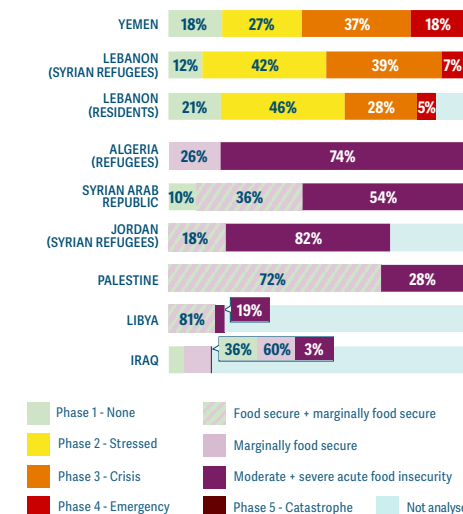
two countries, the number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity increased from 28.15 million in 2021 to 29.43 million in 2022.

This increase was attributable to an additional 1 million people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in Yemen between the first five months of 2021 and the same period in 2022, bringing the total to over 17 million people or 55 percent of the population, the highest share since 2017 (60 percent) (GRFC 2018). Around 31 000 people were in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Hajjah governorate (IPC, March 2022). In the Syrian Arab Republic, the

number of acutely food-insecure people in need of urgent assistance remained persistently high at around 12 million, representing 55 percent of the population, due to macroeconomic instability, the continuing hostilities and the compounding effects of adverse weather.

The two other major food crises in the region, each with at least 1 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity, were Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Palestine. After these, the highest numbers were among Syrian refugees in Jordan, forcibly displaced populations in Libya and Iraq, and

Share of analysed population by phase of acute food insecurity, 2022



Source: IPC TWGs, 2022; HNO 2023 (Libya, Palestine and Syrian Arab Republic); HTO 2023 (Iraq); WFP (Algeria and Jordan).

Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. The region saw changes in the analysis coverage between 2021 and 2022, with only the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen using the same methodology and coverage. In Lebanon, only refugees were covered in 2021 while the resident population was analysed for the first time in 2022. In Libya and Iraq, where the economies are benefiting from increasing oil prices, the analyses only focused on the displaced populations for whom the host governments sought external assistance.

Out of 11 countries/territories selected for inclusion in

the region, data were either unavailable or did not meet GRFC requirements for Syrian refugees in Egypt and Türkiye, and Afghan refugees in Iran.

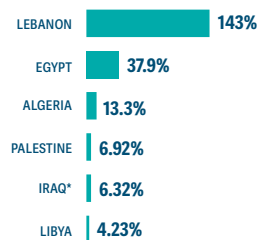
Acute food insecurity projection 2023

A projection for 2023 was only available for Lebanese residents and Syrian refugees in **Lebanon**, where food insecurity is expected to worsen.

The IPC acute food insecurity analysis conducted in September 2022 projected that, between January and April 2023, about 2.26 million people (1.46 million Lebanese residents and 0.8 million Syrian refugees), corresponding to 42 percent of the analysed population, would be in IPC Phase 3 or above, driven by further deterioration of the economic situation and rampant inflation. The number of people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) was expected to increase from 306 000 to 354 000 (IPC, December 2022).

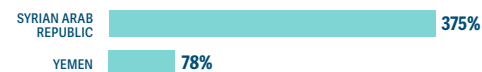
Even before the earthquakes struck on 6 February 2023,

Annual food price inflation rates, December 2022



*Figure for Iraq as of November 2022.
Source: WFP Economic Explorer, accessed 14 March 2023.

Increase in cost of food basket, December 2022



Food price inflation data were unavailable for Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In this chart WFP food basket data compares the three months to December 2022 with the five-year average for this time period.
Source: WFP Global Market Monitor, accessed 9 March 2023.

the food security outlook for the **Syrian Arab Republic** was precarious with an additional 2.9 million people estimated to be at risk of acute food insecurity (HNO, December 2022).

Prices of imported foods and fuels are expected to continue to be volatile through 2023, which will weigh heavily on households' purchasing power (HNO, December 2022). In the northeast, the low level of the Euphrates River is restricting the power supply for water pumps, exacerbating water shortages. Some 500 000 people in Al-Hasakeh and surrounding areas face critical drinking water shortages (ECHO, March 2023).

In **Yemen**, despite the slight scale-up in food assistance in recent months, millions of households are likely facing food consumption gaps due to significantly above-average prices of food and essential non-food commodities alongside sharing of assistance benefits. Poor households are expected to be affected by further food and fuel price increases, and rural households in highland areas to experience seasonally declining access to income during the local agricultural off-season in February and March. Overall, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to remain widespread and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes were expected to persist in Marib and emerge in Hajjah in February/March due to gradually re-escalating conflict and large populations of displaced households who are highly dependent on assistance (FEWS NET, January 2023).

Drivers of the crisis, 2022–23

Conflict/insecurity remained the primary driver of acute food insecurity in Yemen and Palestine, and for forcibly displaced populations in Jordan, Libya and Algeria, accounting for almost 20 million people in IPC Phase 3 or above or equivalent.

Nine years of conflict in Yemen have led to the collapse of economic activities, erosion of livelihood opportunities and incomes, and extremely high levels of forced displacement, depriving people of the resources to cope with or to withstand additional shocks. Despite some easing in the security situation after parties agreed on a truce from April–October 2022, violence continued to constrain humanitarian access in the most

Regional impact of the war in Ukraine



The economic effects of the war in Ukraine significantly impacted food security in the MENA region. Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen were reliant on imports of wheat and wheat flour, the main staple cereal in the region, and other foodstuffs including sunflower oil, and were among the global top importers of these commodities from the Russian Federation and Ukraine in 2020 and 2021. This exposed them to the disruptions of trade flows from that region in early 2022 (UNCTAD, April 2022; FAO, June 2022).

Factors such as high international grain and transport prices, logistical bottlenecks, more expensive alternative import sources, and reduced production or export bans implemented by some major exporting

countries, increased import bills. This negatively affected the balance of trade in MENA countries/territories, dwindling their foreign exchange reserves and driving further currency depreciation. In Palestine, Libya and Yemen, over 85 percent of staple grains are imported (FAOSTAT, 2023). The high regional dependency on food imports due to low agricultural production was exacerbated by persistent conflict in many countries and dryness in 2022, increasing their vulnerability to global market fluctuations.

Although oil-producing Iraq benefited from rising oil revenues due to increased global prices, which substantially contributed to the expansion of the government's fiscal space, the socioeconomic situation remained fragile (WFP, 2022).

affected areas.

In Palestine, recurrent hostilities – higher than in 2021 – continued to restrict agricultural activities and access to resources, reducing national food production and increasing reliance on food imports. The cumulative effects of a 15-year economic blockade in the Gaza Strip and expansion of settlements and settler activities in the West Bank contributed to extremely high unemployment rates and high debt levels, mainly to access food (MSNA, September 2022).

For the first time in the history of the report, conflict was considered the secondary rather than primary driver of acute food insecurity in the Syrian Arab Republic where security improved across most areas. However, intensifying violence in October–December 2022 in the northwest and northeast, especially Idlib and Aleppo governorates, continued to destroy livelihoods, cause displacement and hinder humanitarian assistance (HNO, December 2022).



Economic shocks were the primary driver in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, where over 14 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity. Many countries/territories in the MENA region continued to battle economic collapse driven by political instability, and declining exports because of a sluggish global economy. Lebanon has faced a multifaceted political and economic crisis since 2019, while 11 years of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has led to the collapse of many economic activities. Currency depreciation, notably in these two countries, has resulted in rampant headline inflation. As a result, soaring food and fuel prices, amid falling incomes, rising unemployment and high levels of debt, severely constrained households' ability to meet basic needs.



Weather extremes were not considered a primary driver of acute food insecurity in the region in 2022, but they were a contributor in all countries/territories. Persistent dryness in the main rainfed producing areas of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq reduced domestic cereal production in 2022, pushing up regional cereal import requirements in 2022/23.

In Yemen, where agriculture is a crucial source of rural income, moderate to severe drought conditions with unprecedented temperature rises during the first half of the year followed by heavy rainfalls in August 2022 that triggered floods, had a widespread negative impact on cropped areas (IPC, October 2022).

Acute food insecurity since 2016

The Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have consistently been among the seven crises with the highest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in all seven editions of the GRFC, while Palestine has been included as a major food crisis in all editions except the GRFC 2017.

Yemen has faced a constant increase in the numbers of people in IPC Phase 3 or above since 2020 and has had populations in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) every year since 2018, with the highest figure being reported in December 2018–January 2019 (64 000 people). The population in IPC Phase 3 or above has exceeded half of the country's population in all years but 2020 (45 percent).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of highly acutely food-insecure people in need of urgent assistance increased from 6.5 million in 2018 to 12.4 million (60 percent of the population) by November 2020. This was due to a change in assessment methodology, as well as protracted conflict leading to further displacement and macroeconomic challenges including high unemployment and increasing food prices.

Iraq and Libya (two significant oil producing countries) have been identified as food crises each year. By 2022, acute food insecurity primarily affected displaced populations.

NUTRITION

In conflict-afflicted Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, acute malnutrition among children under 5 years worsened due to high levels of acute food insecurity, severely restricted access to health facilities, low immunization coverage, lack of drinking water, high levels of infectious diseases, inadequate child-feeding practices and instability of humanitarian assistance.

Number of children under 5 years old with wasting, in four* major food crises, 2022



* Lebanon (host and refugee population), Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

Source: IPC and SMART 2021 and 2022.

Most of the region's wasted children were in Yemen where the number was estimated at 2.2 million in 2022, including 0.54 million severely wasted. In addition, about 1.3 million pregnant and lactating women were experiencing acute malnutrition in 2022 (IPC, November 2022). In the Syrian Arab Republic in 2022, about 363 600 children were suffering from wasting, including 75 700 severely wasted children, representing a significant deterioration compared with estimated levels in 2021, while about 544 800 pregnant and lactating women suffered from moderate acute malnutrition in 2022, including about 460 100 suffering from anaemia (HNO 2023, December 2022).

Although the acute food insecurity crises in Lebanon and Palestine have not yet resulted in high numbers of wasted children, micronutrient deficiencies and suboptimal feeding practices were widespread. Both countries/territories have overstretched health systems and insufficient access to safe and sufficient water for drinking and domestic use with a potentially harmful impact on child nutrition. Following a cholera outbreak in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon reported its first case in October 2022 (OCHA, January 2023).

In northwestern areas of the Syrian Arab Republic, the February 2023 earthquakes were expected to further jeopardize the health, nutrition and wellbeing of an estimated 2.5 million children and their families (UNICEF, February 2023).



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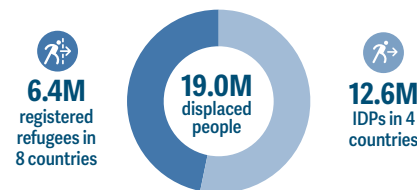
Levels of child wasting in Yemen are continuing to increase amid high levels of acute food insecurity, infectious diseases and inadequate child-feeding practices.

DISPLACEMENT

The MENA region is a complex map of internal and cross-border conflict-driven displacement. By the end of 2022, 19 million people had been forcibly displaced in eight food-crisis countries/territories across the region.

Of them, 12.6 million were internally displaced in four countries – the Syrian Arab Republic (6.8 million), Yemen (4.5 million), Iraq (1.2 million) and Libya (0.13 million) – while 6.4 million in the eight food crises of the region were living as refugees/asylum-seekers. This includes 2.4 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Libya, and over 3 million Palestine refugees in the Gaza strip, the West Bank, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Jordan. In Lebanon, by the end of 2022, about 0.81 million were registered with UNHCR. However, the Government of Lebanon estimates that the country hosts 1.5 million Syrians who have fled the conflict in

Number of forcibly displaced people, 2022

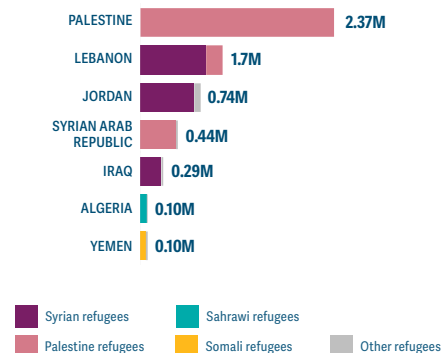


Source: UNHCR and IOM, December 2022.

the Syrian Arab Republic, along with 211 000 Palestine refugees (3RP, January 2023).

In Libya, IOM's DTM programme identified around 694 400 migrants from over 42 nationalities during November–December 2022 (IOM, December 2022).

Seven food-crisis countries/territories in MENA hosted 5.74M registered refugees by end 2022



Source: UNHCR and UNWRA, December 2022.

Algeria has hosted Sahrawi refugees for over 45 years, and UNHCR estimates that around 90 000 live in five isolated camps near Tindouf where they face limited livelihood opportunities and harsh environmental conditions (UNHCR, 2022). Due to the critical shortage of funding, minimum humanitarian standards cannot be met in most sectors, and most refugees are believed to live below the poverty line (UNHCR, 2023). Nearly 100 000 refugees residing in Yemen, mainly from Somalia, endure overcrowded spaces without access to water or sanitation, particularly in urban areas (HNO 2023, December 2022).

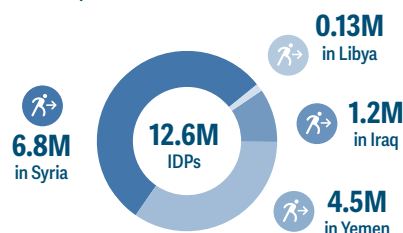
For IDPs and refugees, the consequences of protracted displacement are aggravated by worsening socioeconomic conditions in host countries, pushing these already vulnerable populations further into poverty and despair. The lingering socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, loss of livelihoods, high unemployment, inflation and increased social tensions in some countries, are all adding to a grim outlook across the region.

Legal barriers to formal employment in many countries have severely affected refugees' capacity to become self-reliant. Informal sector work has plummeted, and refugees must compete with host communities for the limited number of jobs on offer (3RP, January 2023).



Rescuers search for victims and survivors amid the rubble following the major earthquake in Jindires, Aleppo.

Number of IDPs in three countries with food crises, 2022



Source: IOM, December 2022; HNO 2023 (Yemen), December 2022..

The limited capacity or lack of access to social safety nets in some countries has resulted in more families falling below the poverty line and having to resort to harmful coping strategies including meal reduction, and child labour and marriage (3RP, January 2023).

The war in Ukraine is drawing attention away from other crises that are also affected by it, including the MENA region that is witnessing a concurrent crisis, leading to a reduction in assistance and increasing needs among refugees and their vulnerable host communities (3RP, January 2023). For instance, between January and March 2023, the level of food and basic need assistance is expected to be reduced by up to 20 percent due to overstretched aid budgets (IPC, December 2022).

The earthquakes – another displacement emergency

The earthquakes that devastated southeast Türkiye and the northwest of the Syrian Arab Republic on 6 February 2023, killing over 50 000 people, displaced an estimated 2.7 million people in Türkiye (IOM, March 2023) with over 1.9 million living in temporary accommodation shelters in early March (UN, March 2023).

The earthquakes impacted 11 provinces in the East,

Southeast and Mediterranean (ESEM) region of Türkiye, where 1.8 million Syrian refugees were living. Of the 7.1 million people living in hard-hit areas, 11 percent are Syrian refugees (IOM, March 2023).

In the northwest of the Syrian Arab Republic, prior to the earthquake, 64 percent of the population of 4.5 million people were already internally displaced and living in extremely harsh conditions in shelters that were ill-equipped for winter. Around 1.9 million of them were living in camps (OCHA, March 2023).

The earthquakes resulted in additional displacement due to destroyed, damaged or unsafe shelter. While it is difficult to accurately measure displacement at present, according to the UN, more than 500 000 people are believed to have been forced from their homes by the earthquakes in Greater Idlib and Northern Aleppo (UN, March 2023).

A REACH Rapid Needs Assessment of key informants across Greater Idlib and Northern Aleppo between 9 February and 11 February 2023 estimated that 85 percent of communities were either directly impacted by the earthquake or witnessed new IDP arrivals (REACH, February 2023).

Mercy Corps reported that acute food insecurity is deteriorating in the northwest of the Syrian Arab Republic, with people reporting they cannot afford food due to limited cash availability and increasing food prices. The lack of access to clean water from damaged water networks, storage tanks and latrines is forcing people to resort to poor hygiene practices or drinking unclean water, aggravating the pre-existing cholera outbreak with more than 50 000 cases reported in northwestern areas as of 1 March (Mercy Corps, March 2023).