Working visit to Lebanon and Syria focuses on security and migration discussions

Representatives of Austria's Interior and Foreign Ministries visited Lebanon and Syria in late January for discussions on security and migration, focusing on the return of Syrian refugees following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024.

During the visit, the delegation met with local authorities, international organizations such as UNHCR, IOM, and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as well as diplomatic missions. Discussions focused on regional stability, reconstruction efforts, and conditions for returns in Syria.

The return of Syrians has become a key priority for Austria's Interior Ministry, as well as for neighboring countries and the Syrian government. Lebanon, which hosts a large number of Syrian refugees, is also seeking support from European states and international organizations for return efforts. The Syrian authorities are prioritizing improved security and nationwide reconstruction, aiming to create conditions for a stable and orderly return through better security and living conditions, including housing, infrastructure, and education.

Austria is the first EU member state to have resumed deportations to Syria in over 15 years. Since the fall of the Assad regime, three individuals have been forcibly returned, while many others have been supported in voluntary return. Deportations primarily target individuals with criminal convictions or no legal right to stay.

According to the Interior Ministry, more than 860 Syrians have voluntarily returned to Syria with Austrian support following the regime change, alongside a small number of forced returns. Austria also emphasized that security, infrastructure, and international cooperation are key factors for sustainable returns, and said it aims to further expand its cooperation with Syria in this area.

Source(s)

- Federal Ministry of the Interior | Bundesministerium für Inneres (31 January, 2026), Gemeinsame Reise von Innen- und Außenministerium in den Libanon und nach Syrien [Joint Visit by Interior and Foreign Ministries to Lebanon and Syria], https://www.bmi.gv.at/news8eff.html?id=5333723170554661517a593d

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