

Webinar

Land and Conflict in the Arab Region: Advancing Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights of Displaced Persons

Online [[click here to register](#)] - 9 September 2025 at 2pm CET/ 3pm EAT

Background

The Arab region¹ remains one of the most fragile in the world, shaped by over a decade of profound political and social upheaval. Revolutions, large-scale protests, major governmental transitions and armed conflicts have had devastating effects on civilian life, infrastructure, land and housing. As a result, the region currently hosts over 30 million displaced persons (IDPs), including over 11 million refugees under UNHCR and UNRWA mandates.

Among some of the most pressing crises, in Gaza, nearly 90 per cent of the population, approximately 1.9 million people – according to UNRWA, have been displaced, many of them multiple times, and over 92 per cent of Gaza's housing stock has reportedly been damaged or destroyed according to OCHA, severely limiting any prospect of safe return or reconstruction in the near term. In Syria, displacement remains among the most protracted and complex crises globally. As of early 2025, 13.4 million Syrians were forcibly displaced, according to UNHCR. This figure includes 6.2 million refugees and asylum seekers, primarily hosted in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and in Europe. An additional 7.2 million people remain internally displaced within Syria. The destruction of housing due to conflict has been staggering, with an estimated 30 per cent of Syria's housing stock damaged or destroyed. In Iraq, significant challenges persist in achieving durable solutions for displaced populations. As of 2025, the country still hosts over one million IDPs, many of whom face protracted displacement due to unresolved housing, land, and property (HLP) issues, including widespread housing destruction, lack of documentation, and disputes over land ownership continue to hinder return and reintegration. Meanwhile, countries such as Lebanon and Jordan are under growing strain as host countries for large refugee populations, while also facing their own internal socio-economic challenges.

These crises are unfolding in a region increasingly challenged by the growing impacts of climate change, the depletion of natural resources, rapid urbanization, and persistent inequalities. Displaced populations across the region often endure extremely precarious living conditions, marked by limited access to essential services, inadequate housing, and significant legal and socio-economic barriers. Many are forced to live in overcrowded camps or informal settlements, where access to clean water, sanitation,

¹ The Arab region comprises the 22 countries part of the League of Arab States.

healthcare, and education is severely lacking. These conditions are further exacerbated by high levels of social exclusion, which undermine their dignity, rights, and prospects for recovery.

These interlinked crises highlight the urgent need for coordinated conflict-sensitive approaches to land governance across the Arab region. The protection of HLP rights is a critical area of concern. Violations of HLP rights are widespread among displaced and conflict-affected communities, undermining the right to adequate housing and a dignified standard of living, among others. These violations are both a symptom and a driver of conflict. Securing HLP rights is therefore essential not only for physical safety and resilience to conflict and environmental shocks but also as a foundation for recovery, reconstruction, and sustainable peace.

Achieving durable solutions for displaced populations in the Arab region is complex and context specific. It requires integrated efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. As outlined in the UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note on *The United Nations and Land and Conflict*, addressing the land-conflict nexus is vital to fostering peace, stability, and equitable reconstruction. Improved land management will also enable Arab countries to respond effectively to rapid urbanization, environmental challenges, and social transformations, while enhancing access to affordable housing and empowering women and youth.

For women, access to and control over housing, land, and property is particularly transformative and empowering. It reduces vulnerability, promotes autonomy, enhances participation in decision-making, and supports engagement in peacebuilding processes. Strengthening women's HLP rights is thus essential to addressing power imbalances and promoting inclusive recovery and development.

In this context, the [Arab Land Initiative](#), in collaboration with regional and national partners, and with the financial support of BMZ and RVO, has been working to address both the land-related causes and consequences of conflict. The Initiative aims to empower regional land champions through coordination, research, capacity development, knowledge sharing, and technical support. [Land and conflict, including the HLP rights of displaced people](#), is one of the [Initiative's key areas of focus](#). Efforts are directed toward identifying and addressing land-related root causes of conflict, safeguarding the HLP rights of displaced populations, facilitating sustainable return and reconstruction, and promoting durable solutions to displacement.

About the Webinar

This one-hour webinar, organized by the Arab Land Initiative and UN-Habitat, in partnership with the Netherlands Enterprise and Development Agency (RVO), will present approaches and key achievements in addressing land, conflict, and HLP rights in the Arab region. The session aims to share lessons learned from recent projects and foster dialogue and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Two projects will be presented and discussed, a summary of which is included below.

Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights

Launched in September 2023 and running through September 2026, this project is funded by LAND-at-Scale through the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development and managed by RVO. It aims to improve

land governance and secure tenure rights for IDPs and returnees in Ninewa Governorate, with a focus on Sinjar.

Implemented in collaboration with the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL) and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), the project adopts a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that includes policy reform through structured dialogues with public and private stakeholders; capacity building based on a needs assessment of both sectors, with tailored training modules; legal assistance for individuals needing to reconstruct ownership documentation or submit compensation claims; and community engagement to ensure inclusive participation and local ownership. The project supports both legal and institutional reforms to strengthen the national land framework and builds the capacity of local actors to effectively address HLP issues.

As of July 2025, key achievements include the provision of legal assistance for 800 occupancy certificates, which has resulted in the issuance of 500 official title deeds. In addition, support was provided for the preparation and filing of 500 compensation claims. Efforts to raise community awareness have reached over 2,000 beneficiaries through 19 dedicated sessions. Furthermore, six training sessions were conducted to strengthen the capacity of local authorities and NGOs in promoting tenure security and legal protection. This integrated approach contributes to long-term stability and justice by ensuring that displaced populations can reclaim their rights and rebuild their lives on a foundation of secure land tenure.

Safeguarding Evidence of Housing, Land and Property Rights of Syrian Refugees

Implemented from May 2020 to June 2025 and funded by BMZ through GIZ, the [project aimed to document and safeguard the HLP rights and claims of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Iraq](#).

Implemented in collaboration with a diverse network of partners including GLTN, SAWA, UTOPIA, PARD, LOST, Basmeh and Zeitooneh, IOM, NRC, and UNHCR, the project uses the [Social Tenure Domain Model \(STDM\)](#) and KoboToolbox to document refugee claims to residential and non-residential properties in Syria. The project used a participatory, voluntary, and free of charge, approach recognizing various tenure types, including full and joint ownership, and short- and long-term use rights. Supporting HLP evidence, including personal documentation, was collected and securely stored together with the claims. While the HLP claims registered were not verified under this project, UN-Habitat issued and distributed *Certificates of Collection and Safeguarding of Tenure Relationship Documents* as proof of the documented rights.

By the end of the implementation, the project had reached nearly half a million Syrians, and collected over 33,000 HLP claims, benefitting approximately 72,000 individuals, half of whom are women and girls. This data collection is expected to support future restitution or compensation processes inside Syria, especially where properties have been illegally occupied, transacted, or destroyed.

Objectives

This webinar, organized in partnership with RVO, aims to present UN-Habitat and the Arab Land Initiative's partners' work on land, conflict, and housing, land and property rights in the Arab region. It will highlight key findings and achievements from ongoing and past projects in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and provide a platform to discuss the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned related to

land and HLP programming in crisis-affected settings. The session will also foster dialogue among regional and international stakeholders on ways to strengthen land governance as a means to promote peace, stability, and inclusive development in the Arab region.

Target Audience

The target audience for the webinar includes a diverse group of professionals and institutions engaged in crisis response, recovery, land governance, and conflict-related issues in the Arab region and beyond. Specifically, the audience includes representatives from UN Agencies, members of Humanitarian Clusters and Working Groups, development and humanitarian donors, NGOs, land governance professionals, and civil society organizations, academic institutions, and think tanks contributing to land and conflict research, advocacy, and innovation.

Logistics

The webinar will be held online on Zoom.

Interested participants must **register online** through the following link: [\[click here to register\]](#)

English/Arabic interpretation will be provided for the duration of the webinar.

Agenda

Time (GMT +3)	Session
Moderator: Ombretta Tempa, <i>Chief, Land, Housing and Shelter section, UN-Habitat</i>	
15:00–15:05	Welcoming remarks (<i>Gemma Betsema, RVO</i>)
15:05–15:15	Setting the scene: Land and Conflict in the Arab Region (<i>Mariam Jaajaa, General Manager, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature</i>)
15:15–15:28	Case study I: Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights in Iraq (<i>Javier Prieto, Programme Manager, UN-Habitat Iraq</i>)
15:28-15:40	Case study II: Safeguarding HLP Rights of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Iraq (<i>Eleonora Serpi, Associate Programme Manager, UN-Habitat</i>)
15:40-15:57	Moderated discussion & Q&A
15:57-16:00	Closing: Ombretta Tempa, <i>Chief, Land, Housing and Shelter section, UN-Habitat</i>