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## *Sanctions harm reconstruction in Syria's Homs province*

According to Gov. Talal Barasi, about half a million people fled from Homs province, the largest in Syria, during the war. Some 2.3 million people had lived in Homs before the war, Barasi explained in an interview with Junge Welt. Of these, about 500,000 people, or 100,000 families, had left the province.

About 40 percent had returned, both internally displaced people and people who had sought protection in Lebanon. The responsibility of the provincial and central government is to create the conditions for their return and to reestablish public services. The government is repairing water reservoirs, roads and schools, but sanctions are preventing Syria from obtaining necessary building materials.



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The engineers in Homs planned the reconstruction according to the latest standards, said Barasi. They drew up a master plan for the years 2025-35. “The unfair sanctions against the Syrian people have a negative impact on the reconstruction process,” he said.

Machines and tools that are needed cannot be imported. Barasi particularly emphasized the oil embargo: “We need oil for industry, transport, heating, reconstruction, hospitals, and also to produce electricity. This is an economic war being waged against Syria.”

Whoever is from Homs and wants to return is welcome, said the Homs governor. Fourteen busloads, about 700 people, returned from Jarabulus on the border with Turkey. It was difficult for the people arriving from the north because Ankara [the seat of Turkish government] refused to cooperate with Damascus.

Barasi said: “But from Lebanon, people are returning across the border with official permission and papers. This is regulated by a Syrian-Lebanese committee. We have the names and lists of people who want to return.” The Syrian and Jordanian governments have also worked together for returnees from Jordan.

Nevertheless, there were still many reasons why people did not come back. They lacked money and transport facilities. Some of the terrorist groups would not allow people to leave, while other people were stopped by the international troops in the region.

“We strongly believe that all Syrians should return home,” said Barasi. “And I repeat that we will provide the returnees with all the services that are needed. We will ourselves send buses to pick them up from the border.”

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