UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

FACTSHEET: Representation to Central Asia

Farhad and his family were forced to flee Afghanistan eight years ago, seeking asylum in Kazakhstan where they were granted refugee status. With the help of UNHCR, Farhad received a direct scholarship from Al-Farabi National University to complete a degree in International Relations.

Protecting forcibly displaced and stateless people in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Promoting fair and effective asylum procedures, and refugees' access to rights, services, and local integration

Supporting Governments to end and prevent statelessness and advocating for accession to the statelessness conventions

Key Figures (as of 30 June 2025)

24,367*

Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (573), Kyrgyz Republic (2,186), Tajikistan (13,591), Turkmenistan (12) and Uzbekistan (5)

32,403

known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (7,383), Kyrgyz Republic (945), Tajikistan (4,075), and Uzbekistan (20,000)

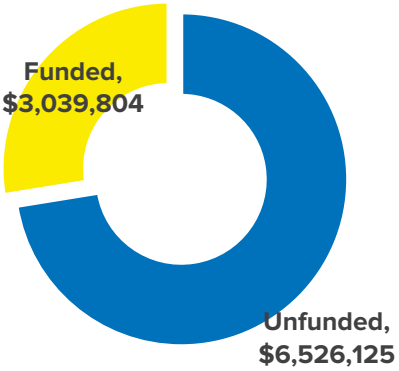
* Based on government reports in mass media, UNHCR estimates there are as many as 100,399 people in Central Asia in a refugee-like situation, including 8,000 forcibly displaced Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan.

Central Asia is situated at the crossroads of continents – with the Russian Federation to the north, Afghanistan, and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the south and China to the east. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan share borders with Afghanistan, and **most refugees in Central Asia are from Afghanistan**.

Across Central Asia, **UNHCR focuses on strengthening local ownership and quality of asylum systems, preventing refoulement, promoting local integration of refugees, eradicating statelessness, and collaborating with partners to prepare and respond to forced displacement emergencies.**

The UNHCR Representation to Central Asia is based in **Almaty**, managing UNHCR activities across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. UNHCR has National Offices in **Bishkek**, the Kyrgyz Republic; and **Dushanbe**, Tajikistan. As a non-resident agency, UNHCR has a small presence in Uzbekistan – including its Global Stockpile **Termez**, on the Afghan border – and Turkmenistan.

In 2025, UNHCR requires $9.6 million to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As of 31 July 2025, the operations are 32% funded.



CONTACTS

UNHCR Representation to Central Asia, kazal@unhcr.org
Dumitru Lipcanu, acting Representative for Central Asia, lipcanu@unhcr.org
Aiya Siyaz, External Relations Associate, siyaz@unhcr.org

instagram.com/unhcrcentralasia | facebook.com/unhcr.ca | twitter.com/UNHCR_Cent_Asia
reporting.unhcr.org/kazakhstan | data.unhcr.org/en/situations/central_asia

UNHCR maintains email and phone 'hotlines' for anyone in need of information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee can find key contacts and updated information on help.unhcr.org/centralasia.

Protecting and Securing Solutions for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are State Parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, with national refugee laws and asylum procedures. UNHCR supports Uzbekistan to implement its Universal Periodic Review recommendations, including accession to the Refugee Convention and Protocol and development of a national asylum system.

UNHCR works with governments to strengthen local ownership of and investment in fair, efficient and transparent asylum systems, fulfilling international obligations as well as pledges made to the Global Compact on Refugees. With partners and authorities across the region, UNHCR advocates for safe and efficient access to asylum and prevention of refoulement.

Most refugees in Central Asia have been living there for years – some even decades. They are fluent in local languages and have family ties with nationals of host countries. Despite this, they still have limited access to due rights and services, including healthcare, legal employment, social protection and naturalization. UNHCR advocates local integration and long-lasting solutions that empower refugees to rebuild their lives and contribute to the sustainable development of their host communities.

Working with Partners

Government partners include Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour, Internal Affairs, Emergency Situations, and Justice; Migration and Registration Services; Committees on Statistics and National Security; Border Guards; and Ombudspersons.

UNHCR partners with academia and the judiciary, building technical capacity of those involved in the asylum system, and implements most of its projects through civil society partners that assist and guide people seeking protection and without a nationality.

As a member of all five UN Country Teams and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNHCR engages with UN and development partners, international financial institutions and others to ensure refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are not left behind in States' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Reducing and Preventing Statelessness

Most stateless people in Central Asia are ex-citizens of the former Soviet Union, or their descendants, who have not yet acquired or confirmed their new citizenship. Without a nationality, they often have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, and freedom of movement.

Through community outreach, legal counselling, and assistance to confirm or acquire nationality, UNHCR and partners support governments in identifying and protecting people without a nationality, and preventing and reducing statelessness.

With UNHCR support, Central Asia has made significant progress in recent years – one in every three cases of statelessness resolved globally is in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Republic and Turkmenistan are the only countries in the world to resolve all their known cases of statelessness.

UNHCR promotes alignment of national citizenship and other legislation with international standards, and advocates for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to join Turkmenistan as State parties to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions. In 2024, all five countries adopted the Ashgabat Declaration on Ending Statelessness in Central Asia.

Responding to Emergencies

UNHCR supports government, UN, and other humanitarian partners to be well prepared to respond to forced internal displacement or refugee emergencies.

As the eighth hub in its network, the UNHCR Global Stockpile Termez, Uzbekistan enables UNHCR to rapidly replenish local stockpiles and be more agile in its response, responding to emergencies anywhere in the world by delivering essential relief items to up to one million forcibly displaced people.

Engaging in Climate Action

With three quarters of the world's forcibly displaced people living in countries worst affected by climate change, UNHCR and partners explore and pursue opportunities to engage in climate action initiatives. In Uzbekistan, UNHCR and UNDP engaged forcibly displaced people and vulnerable members of the host community in tree-planting activities through cash-for-work, contributing to the government's Yashil Makon (Green Nation) initiative.

With thanks to our donors

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to Central Asia, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including from: Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Kingdom of the Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America