

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

30 January 2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

701,849 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan since the start of 2021, of which 21% are women and 59% are children.

According to evolving **estimates by the Government of Iran**, approx. **500,000** Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.

Borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. **31,415 Afghans who arrived in Iran** from 1 January 2021 to 23 January 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

UNHCR has received unofficial reports of an increase in the number of new arrivals being arrested by the authorities and handed over to provincial government authorities in Sistan & Baluchestan.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- On 26 January 2022, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated that Afghanistan was ‘hanging by a thread’ six months after the Taliban takeover and the world cannot abandon the country now – for the sake of its people and overall global security. He urged nations to significantly boost humanitarian aid as the country’s economy is collapsing amid another brutal winter, and daily life has become “a frozen hell” for millions of Afghans ([UN News](#)). He also urged countries to suspend rules and conditions that, since the Taliban took control last August, have frozen nearly USD 9 billion in central bank assets and starved both the Afghan economy and lifesaving humanitarian operations of much-needed funds.

- On 30 January 2022, a report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to the UN Security Council alleged that the Taliban and its allies have killed more than 100 former Afghan government members, security personnel and people who worked with international forces ([Link](#)) despite previous announcements of general amnesties, with “more than two-thirds” of the victims killed extrajudicially. The report also describes severe curtailing of human rights in Afghanistan, such as temporary arrests, beatings, threats of intimidation, and the killing of journalists, and the worsening living conditions for Afghanistan’s 39 million people despite an end of combat since August.
- According to the [Hunger Hotspots Report](#) published on the 26 January 2022 by the World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Afghanistan is one of 20 hunger hotspots where parts of the population are likely to face a significant deterioration of acute food insecurity in the coming months. The report highlighted a serious risk that part of the population will face starvation and death if the crisis is not contained. There are already 22.8 million Afghans facing acute food insecurity. By March, 8.7 million of those are expected to slide into critical levels of food insecurity, a record high for the country.
- On 28 January 2022, in a media interview, the head of the UN's World Food Program David Beasley called the situation in Afghanistan 'horrific' and 'catastrophic' ([DW](#)). He described the struggle of Afghans to cover their basic needs, highlighting that 23 million people in the country "are knocking on starvation's door". He also noted a woman he met in Afghanistan who had been forced to sell her daughter to another family in the hope that they could better feed her.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approximately 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring new arrivals and verifying figures. This is due to the absence of a centralized registration system in Iran and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. Instead, UNHCR is using available indications from various sources to estimate the number for 2021-22. Bearing in mind that a large number will likely be deported, other individuals moving to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and a small number may move onwards towards Turkey, [UNHCR estimates that 274,000 Afghan new arrivals will remain in Iran – 166,000 in 2021 and 108,000 in 2022](#).
- Since the start of 2021 and so far in 2022, UNHCR has identified 31,415 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 7,793 heads of households). As of 31 January, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had interviewed 2,771 families (which consist of 11,000 individuals) for protection concerns. Of these, the following was reported:
 - 70% have extended family members already settled in Iran. Of those with extended family members in Iran, 75% were able to get support from these family members.
 - 61% primarily spend their nights temporarily hosted by friends or relatives.
 - 25% are living in rented houses, 9% are living in a place of work (non-residential) and 2% are living in a hostel or hotel.
 - 1% are living in the street/are homeless.
- UNHCR has been informed by BAFIA Sistan & Baluchestan that four families of 17 individuals in Alghadir supervisory site will be permitted to leave and have retroactively received entry stamps to Iran valid for one year. They are currently in the process of finding accommodation in Zahedan city and will receive support from the Norwegian Refugee Council. For now, they remain at the site, along with 21 other families of 112 individuals.

RETURNS TO AFGHANISTAN

- Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran continue to be returned to Afghanistan despite UNHCR's non-return advisory and advocacy for those fleeing conflict to be provided asylum. Through the

analysis of available data and information, UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.

- **UNHCR Sub-Office Kerman has received unofficial reports of an increase in the number of Afghan new arrivals being arrested by the authorities and handed over to provincial government authorities in Sistan & Baluchestan.** While this might be an indicator of an increase in unofficial crossings, it does not necessarily reflect a complete picture, as many of those who cross the border go unnoticed and also a large number are arrested by border police in the northern part of Sistan & Baluchestan Province which borders Afghanistan and are not referred to BAFIA.
- **On 30 January 2022, a bill which increased the punishments for human trafficking and the illegal crossings of the country's borders was sent to the Iranian Parliament for final revision ([Link](#)).** According to the bill, any foreign national who enters the country illegally or resides illegally in the country could now be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine or detention in a camp for a maximum of three months and shall be deported.

WHAT ARE THE MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS FOR AFGHAN NATIONALS IN IRAN?

- **Afghan and Iraqi nationals are not allowed to travel or reside in specified 'No-go Areas' in Iran.** Amayesh or Hoviat card holders who wish to travel outside of the province in which they are registered must approach their provincial BAFIA office to obtain a temporary Laissez-passer (LP). Below is a map showing the 'No-go Areas' for Afghan and Iraqi nationals:



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: Government of Islamic Republic of Iran.

THE REGIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) AND HUMANITARIAN REPORTS PLAN (HRP) 2022

- **On 11 January 2022, UNHCR and OCHA launched the HRP and RRP.** The HRP aims to assist 22.1 million people in Afghanistan, requiring **USD 4.4 billion** and the coordination of 158 dedicated humanitarian organizations operating in Afghanistan. The RRP targets 5.7 million persons of concern in

the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in coordination with 40 partners and requires **USD 623 million**. The humanitarian and refugee response plans combined require over USD 5 billion in international funding in 2022.

- **For Iran in 2022, the RRP is targeting 2.2 million persons of concern, including Afghans of varying status and host communities, with 16 partners involved, and requiring USD 259 million.** This includes approximately USD 69 million on health and Nutrition, USD 42.5 million on Shelter and NFIs, USD 35.1 million on WASH, USD 27.5 million on education, USD 27.3 million on protection, USD 27 million on livelihoods and resilience, and USD 22.2 million of food security.
- **Construction at the Niatak site continues, with progress on the permanent brick shelters, individual WASH facilities, roads and boundary walls all underway.** Additionally, the rehabilitation of a derelict school at the site is 80% completed and the rehabilitation of a second existing school should start soon. **However, UNHCR is concerned by the delays incurred over the months with the completion of the site, which is now expected to be completed in the second half of the year (rather than the previously planned March/April).** This latest delay comes after the finalization of the WASH strategy, which will see agreed upon sewage plans taking longer than expected. An assessment of the sustainability of the water supply at the site has also been initiated. UNHCR is actively engaging with the partners to try to accelerate progress. Meanwhile, we are strongly advocating with the government to find interim solutions to better host and assist large numbers of new arrivals who are already in urban settings and whose needs are increasing, given the harsh winter conditions and ongoing economic downturn. UNHCR continues to provide limited cash assistance to new arrivals and to refer the most vulnerable to local charities, pending firmer confirmations from the government on what assistance we are able to provide.

FUNDING NEEDS

The total interagency regional funding needs under the RRP in 2022 are:

- **USD 623 million.**
- Including almost **USD 263.7 million for UNHCR** alone.

For Iran, under the RRP in 2022, interagency needs are:

- **USD 259 million.**
- Including **USD 119.4 million for UNHCR.**

FUNDING UPDATE

As of 18 January 2022, UNHCR's **overall programs in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **34% funded**.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the operation in Iran, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programs with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. Whilst interest in the current emergency is relevant and opportune, UNHCR wishes to also highlight ongoing regular programming needs which are severely underfunded.

EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Earmarked contributions for the Iran operation amount to some **USD 31.4 million**.

Germany 16.9 million | **Italy** 5.6 million | **European Union** 4.25 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.68 million | **UNAIDS** 0.009 million

SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Netherlands 4 million

Norway | Private donors

MAJOR UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions:

Sweden 77.6 million | **Netherlands** 37.2 million | **Denmark** 35.6 million | **Germany** 27.6 million | **Switzerland** 18.4 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Ireland** 11.8 million

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