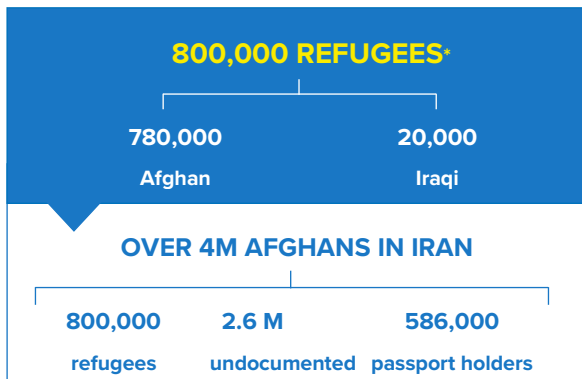


IRAN- OPERATIONAL UPDATE

October– December 2021

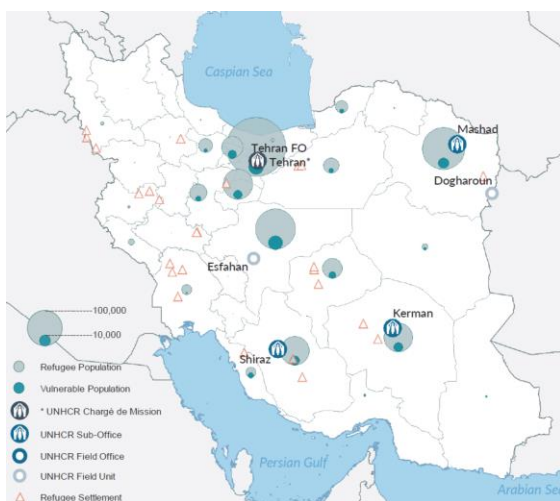
OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

According to preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran, up to **500,000 Afghans** arrived in Iran in 2021. Despite advocacy by UNHCR to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict, Iran’s Government continued to return Afghans who were apprehended while trying to enter Iran. Borders remained officially closed for asylum-seekers, but Afghans continued making their way to Iran informally through unofficial border crossing points. The **UNHCR High Commissioner** undertook a mission to Iran in December, where he visited the border province of Sistan and Baluchestan where Niatak site is being constructed by UNHCR and partners to accommodate the new arrivals from Afghanistan.



* Based on the data received from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2020, on which consultations are ongoing. The Afghan/Iraqi breakdown is based on UNHCR’s estimations.

-  **96%** of refugees live in urban areas side by side with the local community
-  **4%** of refugees live in 20 refugee settlements in Iran



POPULATION MOVEMENTS

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

In 2021, **876 individuals** had returned from Iran to their country of origin by the end December, as part of UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation programme. Of these, 865 were Afghans and 11 were Iraqis.

RESETTLEMENT

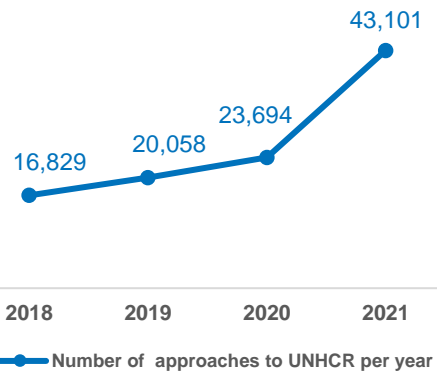
During the fourth quarter of 2021, **24** individuals were submitted to France (5), Norway (4), Sweden (14) and the UK (1) to be considered for Resettlement underunallocated quota with support from UNHCR headquarters. In the last quarter of 2021, **40** individuals departed for resettlement to Australia (6), Finland (5), Iceland (18), New Zealand (4), Norway (3) and Sweden (4), bringing the total departures in 2021 to **96 individuals**. The resettlement quota for UNHCR Iran in 2021 remained **zero** (down from the minimal 53 for 2020), however, out of the 800,000 refugees in Iran, 22% are considered vulnerable and around 10% are estimated to have resettlement needs.

NEW ARRIVALS

The situation in Afghanistan remains highly volatile. Over half a million of Afghans have been displaced in their country due to conflict and violence this year alone. UNHCR in Iran experienced an increase in the number of approaches by newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection. As of end December, UNHCR had identified **27,816 Afghans who newly arrived** in Iran and approached UNHCR directly at our receptions. However, the total number of new arrivals in Iran is said to be **significantly higher (up to 500,000, according to various government estimates)**. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralized registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas.

DEPORTATIONS

Amid the new arrivals to Iran, UNHCR observes mounting fears of deportation amongst Afghans – especially those whose visa is about to expire or who are undocumented. Typically, **Amayesh** cardholders, who are considered de facto refugees by the Government of Iran, have been protected from deportation, and there is no indication that this has changed. UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum-seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.



PROTECTION

REGISTRATION/DOCUMENTATION

The amended Nationality Law was promulgated for implementation on 2 June 2020 by the Cabinet of Ministers and started being implemented in October 2020. As of 18 of October, more than **5,000** Iranian identity booklets (*Shenasnameh*) have been issued to children born to Iranian mothers and non-Iranian fathers, out of the 29,737 applications that had been submitted and are now undergoing security screening, which is being reported as the main reason for the delay in issuing more identity booklets. More up-to-date countrywide figures are not available.

CASE MANAGEMENT

As of end of December 2021, **21,123** individuals contacted UNHCR more than one time (**43,101** approaches), out of which **4,092** were newly registered in proGres. 86% of the entire contacts made, were through hotline receptions and the remaining 14%, approached UNHCR offices in person. The large majority of them were refugees (Amayesh card holders 84%, asylum-seekers 11% and other of concern 5%) and the main reasons for the approaches were to receive **assistance, resettlement, health, and protection.**

By the end of 2021, about **82,000** individuals (18,500 households) in total received cash assistance from UNHCR. Due to different vulnerabilities, some households received cash assistance more than one time. Furthermore, from April to December, **320** individuals were provided with psychosocial support through counselling sessions.

UNHCR renovated its refugee reception areas in 2021 to make them COVID-19 compliant, so that offices could gradually resume **partial in-person reception** of refugees.

Due to the increased number of new arrivals approaching offices since mid-August, several offices have also been conducting in-person awareness raising sessions for new arrivals, with a focus on clarifying UNHCR's role in **resettlement, RSD, and documentation.**

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

In 2021, **1,105** individuals had their cases examined by **16** Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs), as part of a joint UNHCR-BAFIA initiative to provide legal assistance to refugees in Iran to resolve disagreements through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. "Family disputes", followed by "Financial disputes" and "Wage-related disputes" were the three most frequent areas that DSCs intervened on.

A total of **4,005** individuals were also assisted by **17** UNHCR hired lawyer (UHLs) in 2021 (1,007 during the last quarter of the year). Due to the COVID-19 situation, UHLs mostly provided legal counselling remotely and the majority of the cases that received support, concerned "Family law matters", "Criminal matters" and "Civil and financial matters".

EDUCATION

Some **500,080 students** (out of which, 470,000 are Afghans) have been enrolled in the 2021-2022 academic year in Iran, including some **185,000 undocumented** Afghans.

Between October and December 2021, implementation of all the 7 schools under 2021 Partnership Agreement continued and it is expected that by the end of the extended period (30th April 2022), schools will be either completed or very near to completion.

In 2021, a total of **1,380 children** and adolescents received literacy training provided by the UNHCR's governmental partner, the Literacy Movement Organization.

In 2021, At tertiary level, **578 students (361 ongoing and 217 new students)** were supported through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship. The DAFI program is being implemented in Iran through the Pars Development Actors Institute (PDA) and in coordination with the Government of Iran.

HEALTH

For more information on UNHCR's COVID-19 response in Iran, please consult the UNHCR Iran COVID-19 Update.

Since the start of the 7th cycle of the Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) in February 2021, enrolments have continued countrywide, and refugees have been informed by UNHCR and our governmental counterpart to approach enrolment centers (Pishkan centers) to collect their insurance booklets. The insurance allows refugees to access secondary and tertiary healthcare at affordable cost through more than **1,000 public hospitals** countrywide, similar to Iranian nationals. Refugees enrolled in UPHI only have to pay 10% of franchise fee for their COVID-19 treatment and hospitalization and 30% franchise fee for para-clinical services in all Ministry of Health affiliated hospitals and those contracted with Iran's Health Insurance Organization. By end December 2021, a total of **108,069 refugees** had enrolled in the UPHI, out of which **95,741** (80% out of 120,000) refugees were vulnerable and special disease cases for which UNHCR pays the fee (and thus enrolled in the scheme free of charge). A total of **12,328** refugees also paid the UPHI premium fee and enrolled without assistance from UNHCR. In Iran, refugees have access to free of charge primary health care.

LIVELIHOODS

UNHCR commenced the implementation of livelihood programmes in July 2021 by providing technical and vocational training to **1,968** refugees through a partnership with the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO) in 18 provinces. UNHCR also supported refugees' access to **189 income-generating** opportunities through partnership agreements with three national NGOs, Pars Development Activists Institute (PDA), Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association (ILIA) and Kiyana.

In addition to the above, during 2021 UNHCR implemented 13 **livelihood projects** through direct implementation to provide wage-earning opportunities to 79 refugees by establishing / expanding small businesses or capacitating vocational schools benefitting 237 refugee students.

From October to December 2021, **3,909** individuals had received **multi-purpose cash** support from UNHCR, out of a total of **14,198** individuals who benefited from this assistance in 2021. Further, some **5,000** vulnerable refugee Amayesh cardholders were provided gift cards jointly by UNHCR and the BAFIA provincials in five provinces of Tehran, Esfahan, Shiraz, Kerman, and Khorasan Razavi where UNHCR has a presence. The above cash assistance helps vulnerable families to meet their basic needs with choice and dignity.

In order to help vulnerable refugees meet their basic needs during the winter period, UNHCR has disbursed unrestricted multipurpose cash to **30,566** individuals in 20 settlements in collaboration with WFP in December. Also, **18,007** individuals in the urban area were supported with top-up cash assistance. Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC), a refugee based organization, also provided multi-purpose cash assistance to 120 vulnerable Iraqi households residing in four provinces of Tehran, Qom, Khuzestan and Ilam.

SHELTER

Paying for rent has been one of the major difficulties faced by refugees in Iran. Given losses of income linked to the pandemic and the absence of job opportunities, many refugees are in debt, with several months of unpaid rent putting them at risk of eviction. The high rate of inflation inside Iran remains a challenge for local sourcing, while current economic sanctions pose a bigger challenge in regard to international sourcing strategies.

Construction work at the Niatak site in Sistan and Baluchistan province is ongoing. Once operational, the Niatak site will host up to **6,500 new arrivals**. In light of newly arrived persons moving towards urban centres, UNHCR is strongly advocating with BAFIA for a complementary urban response. This is also to avoid an encampment policy at the border and to have a

hybrid response, in line with UNHCR global policy. Activities being proposed for an urban response include cash-based assistance, as well as reinforcing UNHCR's regular activities like education and health support.

For more information on the Afghanistan Situation, please consult the UNHCR Iran Afghanistan Situation Update.

SOLUTIONS STRATEGY FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES (SSAR)

Within the framework of the SSAR, UNHCR supports the Government of Iran in implementing inclusive refugee policies. The SSAR also facilitates coordinated protection approaches among partners, consensus-building on international protection priorities, dialogue and partnerships in support of the Afghan refugee situation.

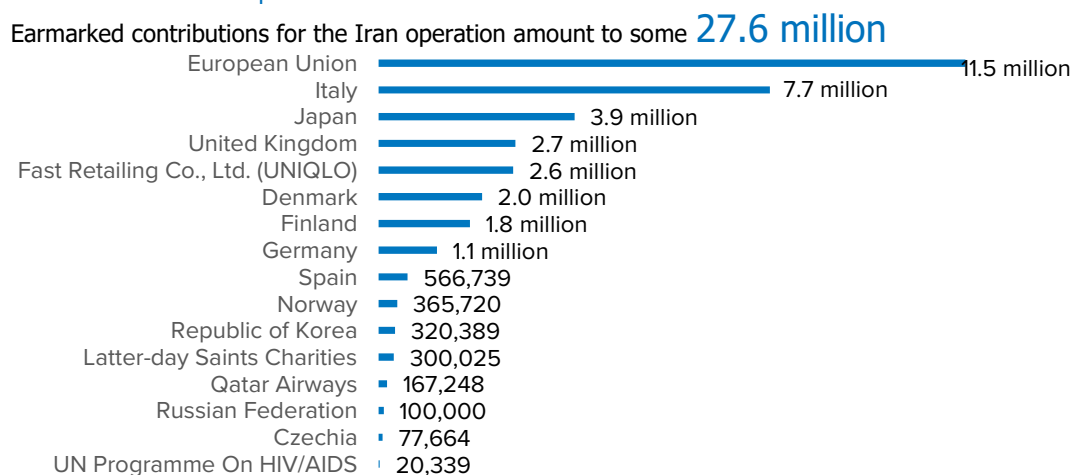
- In light of the emergency in Afghanistan, which is also affecting refugee-hosting neighbouring countries such as Iran, the SSAR Support Platform will play an increasingly crucial role in galvanizing sustained international support – not only in terms of immediate and longer-term assistance, but also in terms of advocacy and durable solutions.
- The Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform, composed of 14 states and entities, is chaired by the European Union.
- In December 2021, an SSAR meeting was organized including ministers and officials of the Government, national and international SSAR partners, and heads of UN agencies. Government counterparts requested more assistance from UNHCR and the international community to support refugees, and the High Commissioner advocated to the Government on UNHCR's asylum and protection issues in the country.

Financial information

As of 31 December 2021

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 programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

Earmarked contributions | USD



UNHCR is thankful to the Government of Germany for its support through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) Scholarship Programme, which supports 581 students in Iran.

Softly earmarked Contributions | USD

Germany 95.9 million | **Private donors Australia** 20.8 million | **France** 12.4 million | **Austria** 12.2 million | **Private donors USA** 9.4 million | **Private donors Spain** 8.4 million | **Spain** 7.1 million | **Private donors Germany** 6.1 million | **Private donors United Kingdom** 5.7 million | **Norway** 5.2 million | **Private donors Denmark** 5.1 million | **Denmark** 4.8 million | **Canada** 3.5 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 3.4 million | **Japan** 2.9 million | **Private donors Canada** 2.8 million | **Australia** 2.7 million | **Private donors Switzerland** 2.4 million | **Private donors Italy** 2 million

Czechia | Iceland | Ireland | Jersey | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Netherlands | New Zealand | Poland | Slovakia | Slovenia | Private donors

Major unearmarked contributions | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Private donors Spain 83.8 million | **Norway** 80 million | **Sweden** 75.4 million | **Private donors Japan** 43.6 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 42.4 million | **United Kingdom** 40.4 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **Germany** 26 million | **Japan** 23.4 million | **Private donors Italy** 22.5 million | **Private donors Sweden** 21.7 million | **France** 20.2 million | **Private donors USA** 17.7 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Ireland** 12.5 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Italy** 10.7 million

Algeria | Armenia | Australia | Austria | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Cyprus | Estonia | Finland | Holy See | Iceland | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Malta | Mexico | Monaco | Montenegro | Morocco | New Zealand | Peru | Philippines | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | South Africa | Spain | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

For more information, please contact:

Farha Bhoyroo

External Relations Officer

bhoyroo@unhcr.org, +98 9121327183

Links:

Data portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>
Website: <https://www.unhcr.org/ir/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unhcriran/>