

Armenia refugee response

Situation report No. 1, 5 October 2023

120 000



DIRECTLY
AFFECTED

100 632



DISPLACED

41 907



REQUIRE MEDICAL
SUPPORT

31%



CHILDREN AND
ADOLESCENTS

Situation update

Since 20 September 2023, [100 632 people](#) have entered Armenia from the Karabakh region, accounting for approximately 3.6% of the Armenia's existing population. Compounding the humanitarian impact of the population movement, on 25 September 2023, a large explosion occurred in Berkadzor, at a fuel depot near Stepanakert/Khankendi. The blast killed 170 people. Emergency responses to the explosion were reportedly activated from both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

A UN mission that entered the area on 1 October 2023, noted that community representatives reported between 50 and 1000 ethnic Armenians remain.

Current situation in Armenia

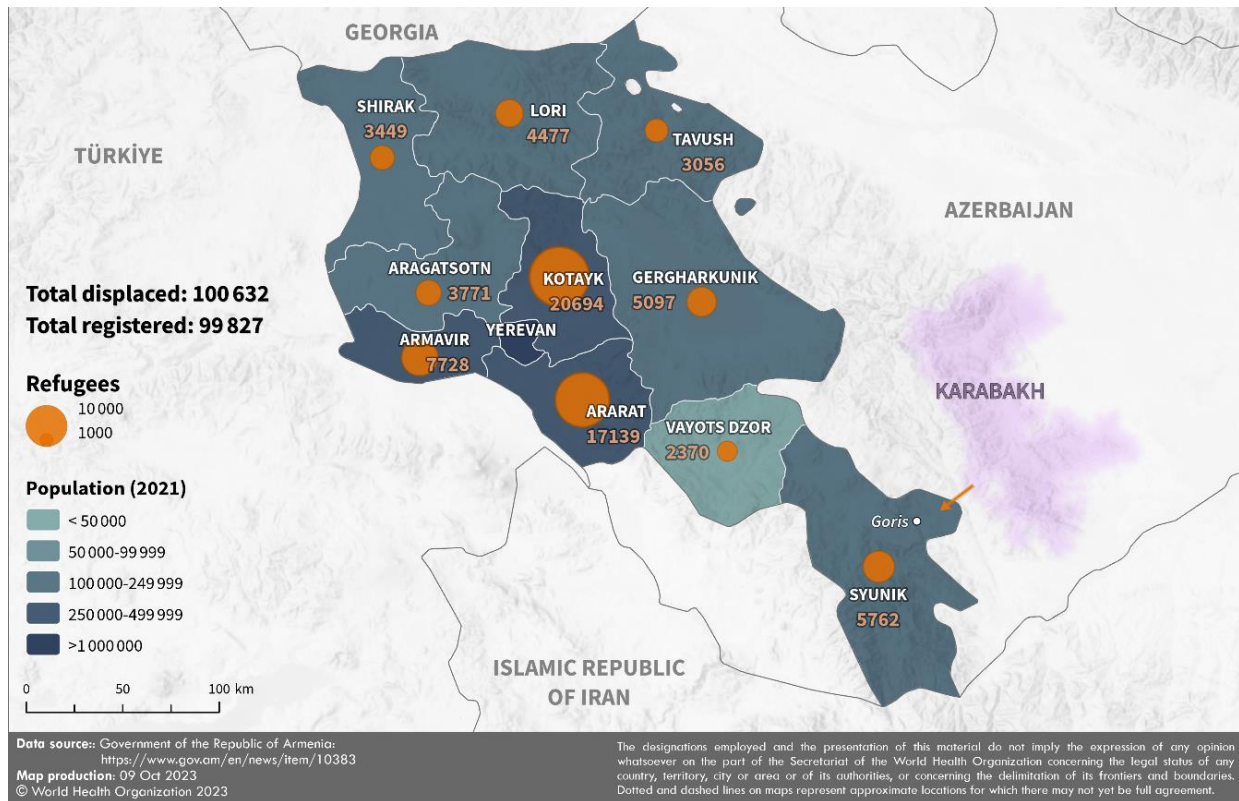
As of 4 October 2023, 100 625 (approximately 83%) people have crossed into Armenia. The main first point of arrival of the refugees in Armenia is the town of Goris, where refugees are registered and provided with initial assistance. During 25 to 28 September more than 1000 individuals per hour were registered by the government of Armenia. Since 1 October 2023, the number crossing into Armenia has reduced to only a small number of new arrivals a day. Most of the registration points have been closed since, refugees can now complete their registration online.

It is [reported](#) that 48% of the refugees are males and 52% are females.

- The largest vulnerable groups are children (31%), older people (18%) and persons with disabilities (2.5%).
- UNFPA has [reported](#) that there are 2070 women currently pregnant and an estimated 1380 will give birth in the next six months.
- As of 5 October, initial assessments [indicate](#) that 41 907 refugees are in need of medication and medical assistance.
- [According](#) to UNHCR and the Government of Armenia, as of 2 October, 48 649 refugees have taken up shelters provided by the State.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reported the city of Stepanakert/Khankendi was completely deserted, with only a few hundred people remaining. ICRC also reports that all medical staff have left.

Fig. 1: Map of the registered refugee population in Armenia as of 5 October 2023



Health needs and priorities

As of 5 October, initial assessments indicate that 41 907 refugees are in need of medication and medical assistance. [According to UNHCR](#), Yerevan is the region requiring the most assistance with 22 200 people in need of shelter, 25 600 people in need of food, 14 000 people in need of medication, and 22 500 people in need of clothing items.

Based on early field visits to the town of Goris and assessments at health facilities and national health authorities in Yerevan, initial priorities for the health response are outlined in the Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA) and highlighted below.

- The unprecedented influx of refugees, including children, older people, pregnant women and people with disabilities, and movement of the refugee population to other parts of Armenia.
- Chronic conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, mental health conditions, communicable diseases such as respiratory infections, malnutrition and burns, along with other health needs.
- Mental health and psychosocial support, for the refugee population and to support to health-care facilities treating burn victims.
- Medium- and long-term rehabilitation services.
- There is a need to scale-up outpatient care and ambulance services, particularly in remote villages receiving refugees.
- Additional concerns include sufficiency of shelter, food, clothing, water, sanitation and hygiene, (WASH) and any other essential non-food items.
- Respiratory illnesses and COVID-19 incidence are on the rise and will continue to circulate during the cold months.
- Frontline healthcare workers face significant workloads.
- Provide care for advanced burns and burn management.

- Epidemic-prone diseases and outbreaks, including vaccine-preventable diseases (such as measles, poliomyelitis and diphtheria).
- According to the Humanitarian Centre of the Government of Armenia, as of 5 October, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has recorded:
 - 324 refugees hospitalized in health-care facilities across the country.
 - Of these, 114 are severe cases and 15 are critical, with 8 children in intensive care.
 - Most of the hospitalized patients (nearly 170) are burn patients, approximately 50% of whom are classified as severe cases.

WHO actions to date

The WHO Regional Office for Europe has been monitoring the situation in Armenia and Azerbaijan and is working with country offices and partners on the ground to assess the health needs and provide support.

ARMENIA

Leadership

- The WHO Regional Director for Europe deployed a special envoy and the WHO Special Representative visited the town of Goris on 29–30 September 2023 to witness the refugee exodus on the ground, visit Goris hospital, and received initial requests for assistance and the scale up of PHC services in rural areas.
- On 2 October 2023, WHO designated the refugee influx a **Grade 2 Emergency** and activated emergency procedures.
- During his visit to Armenia on 4–5 October 2023, the WHO Regional Director for Europe met with the Minister of Health of Armenia to reaffirm WHO's strong commitment to support Armenia and the people in need and visited the national burn centre hosting the largest number of patients with severe burns.

Partnerships/emergency medical teams

- On 2 October, the WHO Country Office in Armenia led the first Health Coordination meeting, which helped to cover the 5Ws analysis with partner organizations and identify priority areas for the emergency appeal.
- An Emergency Medical Team (EMT) Coordination Cell was established by WHO under the leadership of the MoH of Armenia to support the ongoing medical activities for burn victims.
- EMT response activities are being coordinated with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.
- On 30 September, a specialized care team of burn experts from Israel arrived in Armenia and assessed 200 severely burned patients, of whom 60 are in severe and critical condition.
- On 4 October, 15 more experts from the Israeli EMT specialized care team commenced work at the Burn Hospital and the Armenian Republican Medical Centre, treating the most severe cases.
- The B-FAST team from Belgium arrived on 4 October for a medical evacuation assessment mission.
- Samaritan's Purse will deploy a team of 11 burn management experts.

Health information

- As of 2 October, WHO has been supporting the interagency multisectoral needs assessment to better understand the health needs of refugees.
- WHO [published](#) a PHSA highlighting the main health threats.



Specialized Israeli EMTs providing treatment to burn patients in Yerevan

Health operations

- WHO has deployed 18 surge staff to Armenia, with plans to add eight more.
- WHO has deployed a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) expert to develop a plan covering the emergency phase for nine months and the next biennium. Priorities include:
 - supporting the coordination of the MHPSS activities across the country;
 - organizing refresher workshops on the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) and providing cascade trainings for primary health care (PHC) doctors;
 - establishing mobile mental health teams with psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers for remote communities;
 - supporting the self-care of medical professionals and the Help the Helpers initiative;
 - introducing a WHO Problem Management Plus (PM+) tool to be integrated into PHC; and
 - promoting youth mental health and school mental health into the curricula.
- A scale-up of the response to the ongoing measles outbreak in the country is under way.
- WHO is supporting Armenia to submit a request for vaccine dose sharing from European Region countries through the EU Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HERA) mechanism.
- WHO shared guidance with the MoH on vaccination for refugees in a humanitarian emergency context.

Risk communication, community engagement and infodemic management (RCCE-IM)

- WHO has finalized the initial phase of the RCCE-IM plan. The plan aims to support refugees in navigating Armenia's health system based on perceptions and needs through the engagement of community actors, and to sustain social cohesion.
- WHO has established a social listening mechanism to inform the response, with reports released twice a week.
- An immediate priority is to target information to address refugees' health concerns and needs, and to support them in navigating the health system.
- A mapping of civil society organizations (CSOs) approved by the Armenian health authorities and community actors continues, with an opportunity to engage with faith-based organizations and refugee health workers.

External communications

- WHO published a statement on the urgency of health needs of refugees entering Armenia. The full article is available [here](#).



Supplies in the WHO warehouse in Dubai being packaged for delivery to Armenia

Supplies and logistics

- WHO had prepositioned trauma supplies for over 200 patients at the end of August 2023.
- On 5 October, WHO delivered 10 burn modules from TESK kits to support advanced care needs for 500 burn patients, in addition to 10 noncommunicable disease (NCD) modules comprising medicines and insulin. Additional supplies for NCDs will be delivered later in the week.
- Overall, the medicines for NCDs will cover three months of treatment for up to 50 000 people.
- Since mid-September, WHO has dispatched 1672 kilograms of supplies valued at over US\$ 71 300.

Resource mobilization

- WHO has released more than US\$ 1 million from the Contingency Fund for Emergencies to support the response in Armenia.
- The WHO Regional Office for Europe has established an Emergency Donor Appeal for Armenia for a total of US\$ 2.9 million for the next six months.

AZERBAIJAN

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reported that the city of Stepanakert/Khankendi only had a few hundred population remaining. UN OCHA have reported that Azerbaijan health authorities have partially re-opened the hospital to serve remaining population health needs. The Government of Azerbaijan has also reported that they intended to peacefully reintegrate the civilian population. However, uncertainty remains regards any intention to return among the displaced population.

- A United Nations mission to Karabakh took place on 20 September–2 October. Led by UNRC, the mission marks the United Nations’s first access to the region in about 30 years.
 - The mission included OCHA, UNRC, UNHCR, FAO, UNICEF, UNDSS and WHO.
 - The mission team met with the Special Representative of the President to Karabakh on reintegration, visited health-care facilities, schools, and the Lachin corridor.
 - A mission [report](#) was provided during the Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

Next steps

- Strengthen health sector coordination and WHO leadership.
- Increase EMTs on the ground, to provide continuous specialized care for burn victims and assess their rehabilitation needs.
- Extend the existing MHPSS programme to affected refugee and host populations.
- Commence social listening and immediate risk communication to refugee and host populations, infodemic management, mapping of CSOs and initial engagement with communities.
- Enhance surveillance and response for disease outbreaks (such as measles in Armenia).
- Increase immunization activities for measles, poliomyelitis and COVID-19.
- Support the scale-up of PHC services and referrals to host provinces.
- Carry out a rapid risk assessment on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.