

IRAN SITUATIONAL UPDATE N° 3

31 March 2025



UNHCR

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CONTEXT

On 30 March, UNHCR Representative in Iran discussed with the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (CAFIA) of the Ministry of Interior about the Headcount Slip holders' regularization process. Thanks to UNHCR and partners' advocacy efforts, in addition to the six categories exempted from the return scheme, CAFIA confirmed the commitment to provide protection to profiles at risk. Furthermore, gradual and dignified return of the undocumented was discussed with government counterparts confirming that this has been their approach. UNHCR continues to advocate for establishing of a predictable and accessible asylum procedure in Iran for persons in need of international protection.

On 10 March, Iran's Ambassador to the [UN addressed the UN Security Council](#) on Afghanistan's ongoing crisis and urged donors to strengthen commitments and called on Afghanistan's de facto authorities (DFA) to allow unrestricted humanitarian assistance. Regarding Iran's policy, he stated that the policy on Afghan refugees and migrants remains unchanged and rooted in humanitarian principles. He clarified that "legal Afghan migrants in Iran face no restrictions" and Iranian consulates issue 5,000 visas daily.

On 18 March, the Budget bill for the 1404 Persian year (March 2025 to March 2026) was released, [showing increased tariffs for refugees](#). ID card issuance, movement LP issuance, and work permit issuance/renewal have risen by 40 per cent to 100 per cent, reflecting high inflation in the country. However, overstay fines and visa extension fees remain unchanged. This information will inform policy documents and reports on refugees' cost of living. The bill awaits final promulgation by the President.

On 28 March, Mr. Yar Ahmadi, the Head of CAFIA, announced the Government's plan to extend the tax collection initiative for foreign nationals nationwide, following a trial phase in Kerman province. He confirmed the discontinuation of the financial scheme, urging affected individuals to reclaim their funds. He referred to 6.1 million, as the estimated figure of foreign nationals in the country, including refugees. He further estimated that 1,260,000 irregular foreign nationals returned from Iran in the Persian year 1402 (March 2023 to March 2024) with a similar figure expected in 1403 (March 2024 to March 2025).

FUNDING UPDATE

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

as of 31 March 2025

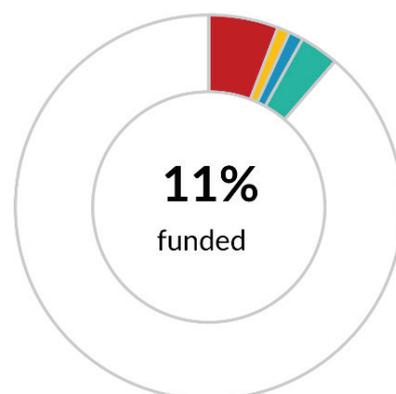
USD 140 million

UNHCR Iran financial requirements for 2025

USD 124.2 million

Funding gap for 2025

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)



UNHCR RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTION

● Reception, Enrolment & Communication with Communities

Since the beginning of 2025, UNHCR has provided **in-person counselling to 20,565** in five UNHCR sub-offices countrywide. To share information and provide counselling remotely, the UNHCR helpline responded to **26,080 phone calls** from forcibly displaced persons. In the same period, UNHCR has received and processed **9,104 emails and 2,154 letters** via mailboxes. Top three reasons for contacting UNHCR were requests for resettlement, financial assistance and enrolment.

As of March 2025, out of the total of **46,374 individuals** who have reached out to UNHCR through the Helpline and reception gates, **13,203 individuals were enrolled** in the UNHCR database for potential support and assistance.

UNHCR [Iran website](#) and [help page](#) are also a common source of consultation. These two registered 154,379 visits. A total of **55,115 responses** were provided to forms submitted online in the first quarter of 2025. Resettlement and financial assistance being the main asks.

● Legal identity and Documentation

UNHCR Hired Lawyers supported 2,067 individuals referred by UNHCR in 2025, including 337 who were represented or assisted in Dispute Settlement Committees services. The legal services are key for the forcibly displaced persons to accessing rights and services in line with the national legislation.

● Child and Women Protection & Psychosocial Counselling

Since the beginning of 2025, UNHCR has identified **2,047 children with specific protection needs** the majority of them (1,262) not attending school or at risk of dropping out. While all cases were provided counselling, UNHCR has conducted a thorough assessment for 140 cases, prioritized based on their vulnerability. The protection team also carried out best interest assessments for 76 children and provided psychosocial support, legal aid and other available services. UNHCR identified **1,422 refugee women at risk** who were provided psychosocial support, legal aid, cash assistance, and access to health care services.

Additionally, **388 persons have participated in psychosocial counselling sessions** conducted by the UNHCR-hired psychological counsellors since the beginning of 2025. The counselling sessions were conducted both in-person and remotely.

● Cash Assistance

The cash instalments provide crucial support to vulnerable refugees, including those with special protection needs and disabilities, helping them meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life. As of end of March 2025, **6,846 most vulnerable persons had received instalments of cash assistance** for a total of IRR 195 billion (USD 356,000). Out of these, 55% are women.

● Deportation and Returns

Since the beginning of 2025, **332,400 Afghans have returned to their country from Iran**, including 194,000 reportedly deported according to the [Returns Emergency Response](#). The dashboard provides updated information about the current displacement trend and cross-border movement.

HIGHLIGHT

A Lifeline for Mikaeel: How Advocacy and Health Insurance Saved a Child's Life

Eight-year-old Afghan boy Mikaeel was born with a severe congenital heart defect. His condition worsened over time leading to serious respiratory problems as his parents watched helplessly as he struggled for air. For a family living under immense financial strain, the USD 3,000 surgery he urgently needed was simply out of reach. The pain of watching their child suffer was compounded by the fact that, as Headcount Slip holders, they were not eligible for health insurance in Iran.

Upon learning about Mikaeel's case through its partner, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNHCR launched intensive advocacy with government counterparts to ensure Mikaeel could access the health coverage that would save his life. Thanks to these efforts, laissez-passer documents were exceptionally issued to Mikaeel and his parents, enabling their enrolment in Iran's Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI). The insurance covered 90% of the surgery costs.

"With this insurance, my son's life was saved," his mother said, eyes full of gratitude. "We could never afford the treatments. We might have lost our dear boy."

Thanks to the European Union– EU DG INTPA, UNHCR is covering the insurance costs of 95,000 vulnerable refugees for 2025, including those with specific or chronic medical conditions. Increased support for UPHI funding could offer thousands more children with lifesaving healthcare.

UNHCR RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

SOLUTIONS

Education

UNHCR supports Iran’s education system, particularly in refugee-hosting areas where classroom sizes reach up to 50 students—far exceeding the national standard. To accommodate all school-age children and reduce overcrowding, the **Government estimates a need for at least 2,000 new schools**.

Constructing a 12-classroom school costs on average USD 570,000, benefiting 720 students in two shifts, while equipping it with essential materials like smart boards and stationery requires an additional USD 100,000.

Health

UNHCR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (CAFIA), has launched in February the 11th cycle of the Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) scheme to ensure refugees have access to essential medical services. This includes primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare.

As in previous cycles, **up to 95,000 vulnerable refugees** holding a valid Amayesh card, identity card, or travel document—including those with specific medical conditions such as hemophilia, thalassemia, kidney failure, kidney transplant, and multiple sclerosis—can register for free medical coverage at designated government counters nationwide.

Additionally, thanks to Iran’s inclusive policies, primary healthcare remains available to all, regardless of status or documentation, across the country.

Livelihoods

Under the Iranian labour law, refugees holding *Hoviat* or *Amayesh* cards can obtain temporary work permits allowing them to work legally in specific job categories—primarily in the construction and agriculture sectors. UNHCR works in partnership with the government institutions and NGOs to support vulnerable members and the host community to support skill-building opportunities, aiming to improve prospects for employment and self-reliance. In 2025, **UNHCR aims to support some 1,000 refugees** and vulnerable host communities with vocational and technical training.

Resettlement

UNHCR has advanced resettlement efforts, conducting case **identification interviews for 3,764 individuals** and prioritized 1,783 for resettlement interviews in 2025. 1,146 individuals underwent resettlement interviews with 651 individuals cleared for submission.

Since January, **258 individuals departed Iran** for resettlement in 2025, with Australia receiving the largest part followed by the UK, New Zealand, and Finland. Furthermore, 810 refugees received post-submission counselling on exit procedures and other critical issues.

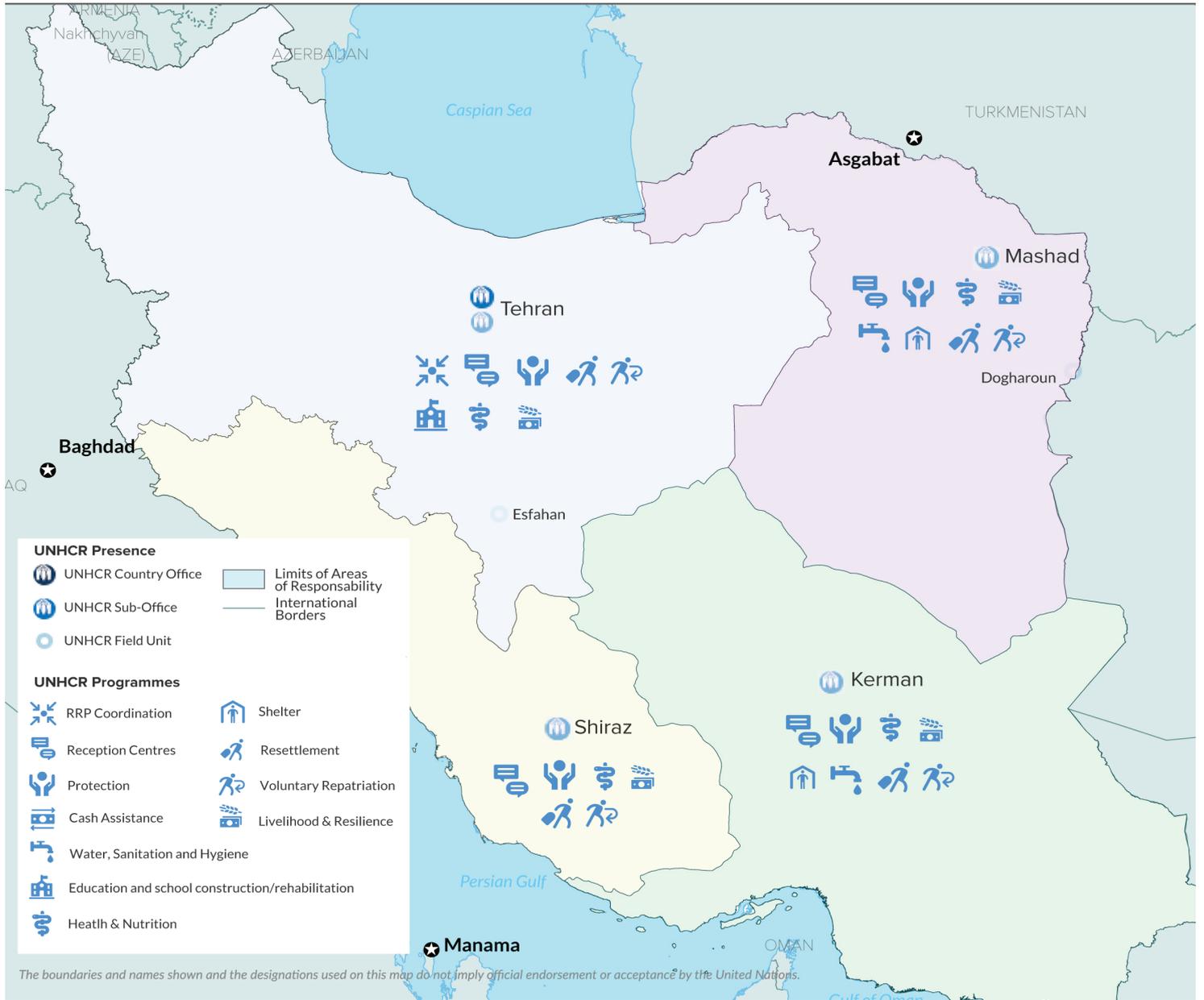
REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

In March, the **Advocacy Task Force**, chaired by the UNHCR Protection team, convened to finalize a joint advocacy note to streamline key advocacy messages across partners regarding the ongoing Headcount Slip holders regularization process. Participants, including key RRP partners, contributed feedback to align the message across the partners in Iran.

A Task Force on Information Co-Sharing was established to enhance data exchange among RRP partners. Discussions focused on setting clear parameters for information sharing, ensuring access to key documents to partner organizations in one same space, streamlining coordination mechanisms among all the partners.

14 RRP PARTNERS





KEY FIGURES

Iran hosts **3.8 million** refugees and individuals in refugee-like situations

300,000 individuals with various documentation

2.6 million headcount slip holders

773,000 refugees: *Amayesh* & *Hoviat* card holders

294 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan in 2025 through UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme

67,800 Afghans returned to their country from Iran in March, totalling **332,400 in 2025**

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