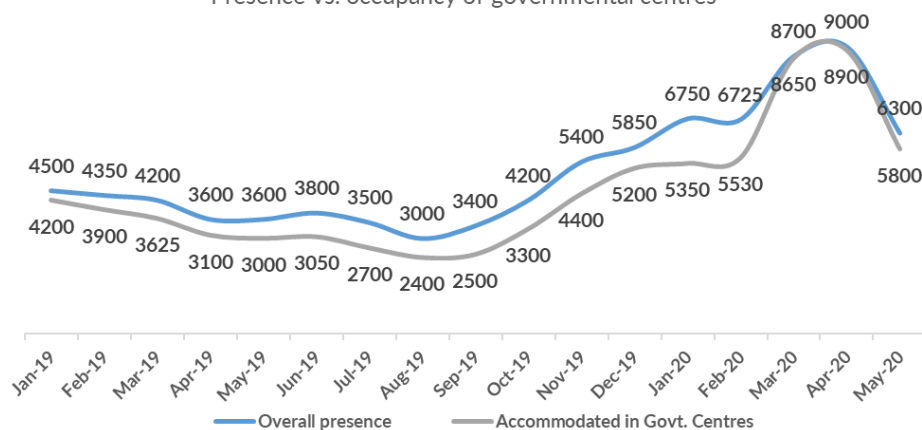


SERBIA MONTHLY UPDATE

- UNHCR and partners **informed and counselled** over 2,000 foreigners, including over 900 on **asylum** in Serbia. Five new asylum-seekers gave UNHCR project lawyers power of attorney to represent them in substantive asylum procedures. UNHCR partners supported authorities with 2,200 interpretation or **cultural mediation** services.
- Upon authorities' request, UNHCR and partners carefully resumed full field presence and activities, while maintaining channels of remote counselling that had proven invaluable during lock-down. Eight partners networked sites and expertise into a [joint fb page](#) offering a wealth of information and inter-active services to asylum-seekers and refugees in six languages.
- With the **reopening** of governmental reception/transit and asylum centres (AC) in mid-May, UNHCR [advised Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Serbia](#), in their mother tongues, to remain vigilant in preventing infection, follow health precautions and avoid all excessive movement outside of centres as well as crowds, and [continued to offer](#) assistance to Serbian authorities to swiftly resume registration and procedures for asylum-seekers.

Presence vs. occupancy of governmental centres



- The number of foreigners, who **newly arrived** in Serbia and were profiled by UNHCR, **doubled** from 279 in April to 583 in May. 529 arrived from North Macedonia and 49 from Albania.
- Occupancy of governmental centres shrank from 9,105 at the beginning to 5,802 at the end of the month. Over 70% of remaining residents originate from so-called "refugee-producing countries" and would likely be recognised as refugees if subject to fair and efficient asylum procedures. 4,629 are adult men, 333 adult women and 840 children, including 383 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). 2,592 are citizens of Afghanistan, 943 of Syria, 497 of Pakistan, 525 of Bangladesh, 283 of Iraq, 332 of Iran, and 630 from 39 other countries.
- While many unregistered irregular migrants left centres, asylum-seekers stayed, awaiting resumption of asylum procedures. The number of foreigners observed outside centres thus rose above 600, while reported **collective expulsions** from neighbouring countries – many alleging denial of access to asylum procedure or mistreatment by authorities of these countries – **quadrupled** from 198 in April to 768 in May (375 from Romania, 289 from Hungary, 78 from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 26 from Croatia).
- UNHCR kept regular contact with all refugees and asylum-seekers in private accommodation. An additional six refugee households, who lost their livelihoods due to the Covid-19 situation received **financial assistance** from UNHCR. 53 were supported with Serbian language lessons while refugee children were aided with equipment and cultural mediation to keep up **home-schooling**, as public schools remained closed. UNHCR partners organised 130 formal and non-formal educational and 700 recreational activities. Crucial during and after times of isolation, close to 200 refugees and asylum-seekers (including over 50 UASC) received professional psychosocial or psychological services from UNHCR partners.
- For more information, please read a [story on online language classes taught by refugees in Serbia](#), how [a refugee boy continues building his future and helped his Serbian peers during lockdown in Belgrade](#), or watch a [video on the UASC Peer Educators Project](#).
- On 6 May, a member of the right-wing extremist group Levijatan drove with his car into Obrenovac RTC shouting hateful messages. Luckily no one was injured, and the perpetrator was sentenced to 30 days imprisonment. Seven UNHCR partners issued a joint [press release](#) on the occasion of the World Day of Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, noting a "clear and increased" use of **hate speech and xenophobia** towards refugees and migrants in Serbia. UNHCR project lawyers submitted seven appeals to the Press Council, regarding hate speech on internet sites of local media and filed criminal charges related to three cases of alleged theft or violence by law enforcement or

private security staff against asylum-seekers or UASC, while also notifying the Ombudsman or the Internal Control Department of the MOI.

- The total value of UNHCR COVID-19 response procurements reached 159,312 USD, when another 5,250 protective masks and 240 litres of alcohol and hand sanitizer were **donated** to the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, and a two-month supply of detergent, terry cloth for 8,500 towels, trash bins and -liners, anti-scabies cream, six TV sets, as well as underwear and hygiene items for asylum-seekers in Banja Koviljača AC, were donated to the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migrants.
- 74 refugee families received keys to **Regional Housing Programme** apartments in Valjevo, Bačka Palanka, Bački Petrovac and Sevojno. Also, foundations for a building with 15 apartments were laid in Smederevska Palanka.



*Distribution of food and hygiene parcels in Kraljevo,
©Indigo, May 2020*

- UNHCR partner Praxis supported 11 persons at risk of **statelessness** to confirm their Serbian citizenship, obtained 9 personal documents and 10 ID cards, important to access state post-Covid financial assistance. The European Network on Statelessness published a Thematic Brief on [Birth Registration and the Prevention of Statelessness in Europe](#).
- UNHCR partner A11 Initiative supported 49 **internally displaced persons** (IDP) in accessing housing, social and health insurance, birth registration, and other rights. A11 also published a study on [What life looks like in informal collective centres in Serbia](#) while the Ombudsman published a Special Report on [Conditions in Roma settlements in the situation of emergency and implementation of protective measures during coronavirus epidemic \(COVID-19\)](#) including concrete recommendations to the government and authorities.
- The number of IDP families, who received targeted UNHCR-funded COVID-19 aid, reached 546, when A11 Initiative assisted eighty vulnerable families in Šabac with food parcels and partner Indigo distributed food and hygiene parcels to support the home-schooling of 236 **Roma girls and boys** in Kraljevo, Novi Pazar and Bela Palanka,
- All trainings for 30 new young Roma **United Nations Volunteers**, under the [joint UNDP-UNHCR project](#) were concluded, with almost all already being engaged by local institutions or NGOs.
- UNHCR Serbia issued [Serbia Special Fortnightly Updates 20 Apr-3 May 2020](#) and [4-17 May 2020](#), contributed to the UN County Team's Covid-19 Prevention and Response Pan and its [COVID-19 Sitreps](#).

Special thanks to major donors of unearmarked contributions- 2020¹ | USD

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¹ Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contribution \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

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