

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

6 January 2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

690,248 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan in 2021. 33 out of 34 provinces in the country are hosting IDPs, with Kunduz and Bamyan provinces having the highest numbers.

UNHCR is aware of **27,816** Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 3 January 2022, although the total number of new arrivals in the country is understood to be much higher.

Official borders remain closed for asylum seekers. As per information received from BAFIA, **the government has tightened security measures along the border with Pakistan**, leading to a dramatic decrease in the number of irregular new arrivals.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains highly concerning, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children. On 22 December, UNICEF reported that children across Afghanistan are increasingly exposed to diseases and illnesses due to the deadly combination of rising malnutrition, an unprecedented food crisis, drought, disruptions to vital health and nutrition centres, lack of access to and poor quality of water and sanitation services, and crippling winter weather. UNICEF stated that, **as the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Afghanistan, outbreaks of life-threatening diseases are putting children's lives at risk**. More than 66,000 cases of measles have been reported in children so far in 2021. Additionally, 25-30% of deaths in children below the age of five were reportedly due to respiratory tract infections, with 90% of these deaths caused by pneumonia.
- **UNHCR continues to scale up its humanitarian assistance to respond to the needs of vulnerable internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan.** Recently, UNHCR provided insulation kits and multi-purpose cash assistance to displaced families in Afghanistan, to help them meet their immediate needs in a dignified manner, particularly in time of the harsh winter season.
- With social conditions in Afghanistan limiting the freedom of women's rights, **UNHCR and UN Women signed a letter of intent last month, committing to strengthening their partnership to protect the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.**

- The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) **appealed** for **urgent humanitarian assistance for the winter wheat season in Afghanistan as it continues to be affected by drought, threatening the livelihoods of more than 7 million people who rely on agriculture or livestock**. The FAO stated that many of the people affected are amongst the 14 million - one in three Afghans - who are already acutely food insecure and need urgent humanitarian assistance. "Farmers and livestock owners must not be forgotten in today's humanitarian crisis," said FAO Director-General, Qu Dongyu. "Urgent agricultural support now is key to counter the impact of the drought and a worsening situation in Afghanistan's vast rural areas in the weeks and months ahead."



UNHCR in Afghanistan providing insulation kits and cash assistance to IDPs. ©UNHCR

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- Since the beginning of 2021, UNHCR identified **27,816 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran** (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,581 heads of households). As of 5 January 2022, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 2,195 families (consisting of 8,326 individuals) have been interviewed for protection concerns.
 - 30% were women and 44% were children.
 - 24% were female heads of households.
 - The majority of new arrivals interviewed were from Herat (20%), Kabul (17%) and Ghazni (10%).
 - New arrivals reported that they had spent an average of 9 days travelling to Iran, with 85% crossing directly from Afghanistan, while 12% crossed via Pakistan.
- UNHCR's office in Kerman received reports on the Iranian Government's reinforcement of security measures along unofficial crossing points at the Iran-Pakistan border**, where many Afghans cross to Iran irregularly. According to BAFIA in Sistan and Baluchistan province, because of these measures, there has been a drastic decrease in the number of new arrivals crossing unofficially from Pakistan, particularly in the number of families. Over the last week, BAFIA estimated that some 500 Afghans (only singles) have managed to enter Iran from Pakistan, as compared to the previous minimum number of 1,000 individuals and families crossing daily.
- On 29 December, to contain the spread of the new COVID-19 variant, **the Iranian government introduced new restrictions for the entry of individuals with tourist visas** that will last for 15 days. This means that individuals intending to flee Afghanistan to Iran with a tourist visa will no longer be able to enter the country until the restriction is lifted. Passport holders entering for medical treatment, business, education, and individuals holding Iranian residence are exempted from the new restriction.
- According to preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran, up to 500,000 Afghans 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 the continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. Instead, UNHCR is using available indicators from various sources to estimate the number of new arrivals 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.

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 to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. Through its analysis

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

REGIONAL REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (RRPRP)

- On 25 August 2021, UNHCR launched the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP). For Iran, the plan involved 10 partners, whose focus of intervention includes emergency preparedness and response as well as expanded support to regular programmes. **The RRP for 2022 will be launched on 11 January 2022, along with the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).** The plan articulates the shared vision between UN agencies of how to respond to the assessed and expressed needs of the affected population. In Iran, UNHCR is leading its development and so far, the budget requirements proposed by 16 partners, covering 8 sectors, is **USD 258.7 million.**
- UNHCR is currently undertaking the rehabilitation of two sites – Dogharoun and Mil-78 – in Khorasan Razavi province in north-eastern Iran. In coordination with BAFIA contractors, the design phase for both sites have commenced. UNHCR is discussing design details with BAFIA for the construction process, which include considerations of protection concerns based on assessments by UNHCR’s technical teams.
- In light of newly arrived persons moving towards urban centres, UNHCR is strongly advocating with BAFIA for a **complementary urban response**. This is to avoid an encampment policy at the border and create 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.

NATIONAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING

According to the preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran (GIRI), up to 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. The number follows what GIRI has anticipated as a **worst-case scenario** planning figure in their Contingency Plan. In line with central aspects of GIRI’s contingency plan, UNHCR and partners are providing support for the establishment of a new site in the border area of Niatak in Sistan and Baluchestan province, with possibly another site that is yet to be identified in Khorasan Razavi province. UNHCR and partners are responding to new arrivals in terms of health, food and other needs that are considered as priorities with the authorities. GIRI has previously confirmed that it will grant access to its territory to Afghans seeking safety and protection. UNHCR is seeking guidance and clarity on various issues, including the status that will be conferred to new arrivals and the process of receiving them, and continues to advocate for registration and documentation.

UNHCR coordinates the Refugee Response among international actors in Iran, with 18 participating UN agencies and international NGOs under its leadership, in line with the globally-agreed **Refugee Coordination Model**. UNHCR and BAFIA convene on a regular basis, through an agreed-upon biweekly/bilateral meeting. Discussions are ongoing around options for more inclusive coordination.

FUNDING NEEDS

In 2021, the **interagency regional funding needs** are USD 299 million, including almost **USD 131 million for UNHCR alone**.

For Iran, interagency needs are **USD 135.8 million, including USD 58.9 million for UNHCR**. As of 28 November, 3 of the 10 agencies participating under the RRPRP have reported receiving a combined USD 28 million, indicating that the RRPRP is 19% funded. This analysis is based on partners self-reporting new funding and the actual funding is likely higher, as many partners have not yet reported on the funding they have most recently received.

UNHCR Iran's funding needs for both its regular and emergency programmes in 2021 are USD 112.1 million. As of 29 December 2021, UNHCR's **overall programmes in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **59% funded**.

FUNDING UPDATE

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. 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 **24.3 million**

European Union 9.2 million | **Italy** 7.7 million | **Japan** 3.85 million | **United Kingdom** 2.69 million | **Fast Retailing Co., Ltd. (UNIQLO)** 2.6 million | **Denmark** 2 million | **Finland** 1.79 | **Germany** 1.1 million | **Norway** 0.36 million | **Spain** 0.36 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.32 million | **Qatar Airways** 0.17 million | **Russian Federation** 0.1 million | **UNAIDS** 0.02 million

Major softly earmarked contributions | USD

Germany 95.9 million | **Private donors Australia** 17.2 million | **France** 12.4 million | **Austria** 11.8 million | **France** 11.5 million | **Private donors Germany** 5.8 million | **Private donors Spain** 5.6 million | **Norway** 5.2 million | **Private donors Denmark** 5.1 million | **Denmark** 4.8 million | **Netherlands** 4.1 million | **Private donors United Kingdom** 3.8 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 3.1 million | **Japan** 2.9 million | **Private donors USA** 2.3 million | **Private donors Canada** 2.1 million

Canada | Czech Republic | Iceland | Ireland | Jersey | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | New Zealand | Poland | Slovakia | Slovenia | Spain | Private donors

Major unearmarked contributions | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions

Norway 80 million | **Private donors Spain** 75.9 million | **Sweden** 75.4 million | **United Kingdom** 40.4 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 38.8 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **Private donors Japan** 30.9 million | **Germany** 26 million | **Japan** 23.4 million | **France** 20.2 million | **Private donors Italy** 19.6 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors Sweden** 15.5 million | **Ireland** 12.5 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Italy** 10.7 million | **Private donors USA** 10.6 million

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