

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

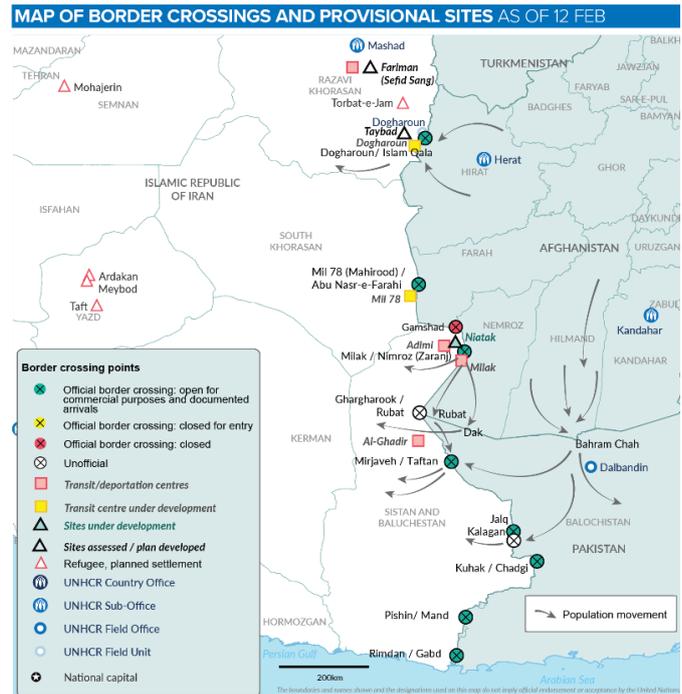
30 April 2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

UNHCR lifted the Level 2 emergency for the Afghanistan situation in Iran in April. However, new arrivals to Iran continue, increasing the need for more support.

According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans arrived in Iran in 2021. Some 37,042 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 30 April 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

Afghan families who were accommodated by the Government of Iran in Fariman are now being transferred to the Torbat-e-Jam refugee settlement. Over 200 families currently reside in the settlement shelters at Torbat-e-Jam and need immediate support. BAFIA has confirmed that all families will receive a form of document such as Laisse Passe.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATIONS IMPACTING DISPLACEMENT

- On 5 April, media reported that one Iranian cleric was stabbed to death and two others were injured in an attack at Iran's largest holy Shi'ite Muslim religious complex in the north-eastern city of Mashhad. There have been reports regarding the attacker's identity being a foreign national. [The Chair of Iran's Parliament addressed the issue](#) in the Parliament, urging the government "to be vigilant, so such events do not cause hostility among Iranian and Afghan brothers." The Taliban has also condemned the attack and rejected any relations with Afghans or Afghanistan. In a recent meeting with BAFIA, UNHCR was reassured the Mashhad incident would not negatively impact the situation of Afghans in Iran. At the same time, the case is being followed up by the highest levels of the Government.
- Following the escalation of border tensions at Dogharoun in Khorasan Razavi province observed on 23 April and recent events in Afghanistan in April, a diplomat from the *de facto* government of Afghanistan reportedly arrived in Tehran on 25 April. Iran is the fifth country, after Pakistan, Qatar, Turkmenistan, and Russia, to accept Taliban diplomats to work in Afghan embassies and consulates. [Iran, however, has maintained that this does not constitute a recognition of the de facto authorities, but a means to continue bilateral discussions.](#)

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- According to the head of the passport department of Afghanistan, the online registration for passports started on 9 April 2022 in Kabul. It is reported that the passport office in Kabul will issue some **2,000** passports per day and increase to **3,000** daily passports after Ramadan.
- UNHCR continues to rely on the Government of Iran to share figures on the total number of Afghans who arrived in Iran in 2021 and 2022. For now, UNHCR is working with the assumption that, of the approximate **500,000** new arrivals in 2021, a large number have likely been deported, others moved to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and have since returned voluntarily to Afghanistan, and a small number have moved onwards towards Turkey. For 2022 planning purposes, we estimate that 278,000 will remain in Iran.
- According to BAFIA Khorasan Razavi, **2,700** new arrivals (individuals) are now accommodated in the Fariman transit center; however, the site lacks a proper facility to accommodate a large number of arrivals.

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 for those fleeing conflict to be provided with asylum. Through the analysis of available data and information, **UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.** In February 2022, UNHCR issued a [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan](#), superseding the previously issued non-return advisory in August 2021. In the same vein, UNHCR continues to call on asylum States to ensure that Afghans whose claim for international protection was rejected prior to the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban are able to lodge a new or subsequent claim on the basis that the current situation in Afghanistan amounts to changed circumstances that may give rise to a need for international protection as refugees or otherwise.

THE REGIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) 2022

- Following the lifting of the L2 emergency, the name of the inter-agency coordination group was renamed from the Regional Emergency Coordination Group (RECG) to the Refugee Response Group (RRG). Level 2 is activated when an operation requires additional support and resources to respond in a timely and effective manner. The lifting, however, is not an indication that the emergency is entirely over; it means that UNHCR now has some sufficient resources to respond to the post-emergency situation. The PPR 2022 RRP remains a critical tool to cater to new arrivals and the existing refugee caseload.
- UNHCR and BAFIA continue to make progress in the development of shelters and site infrastructure in Niatak. The site previously hosted refugees from 1998 to 2005. On 27 April, UNHCR convened a meeting with senior representatives from UNICEF and NRC to agree on the planned way forward regarding the development of the Niatak site. The meeting confirmed a renewed commitment at a strategic level to accelerate efforts to finalize zones 1 and 4 of the sites, focusing on more sustainable response options. One health post has been renovated by Relief International, and one school has been rehabilitated by NRC. In April, the UNHCR office also visited the site to monitor the construction progress and meet with UNHCR partners and contractors on the ground. More regular monitoring visits are planned.



Monitoring visit to Niatak site by UNHCR.



UNHCR and partners visit the NRC rehabilitated school at Niatak site.

Health post renovated by Relief International at Niatak site.

FUNDING NEEDS

The total [interagency regional funding needs](#) under the RRP in 2022 are:

- **USD 623 million.**
- Including almost **USD 263.7 million for UNHCR** alone.

For Iran, under the RRP in 2022, interagency needs are:

- **USD 259 million.**
- Including **USD 119.4 million for UNHCR.**

FUNDING UPDATE

As of 30 April 2022, UNHCR's **overall programs in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **54% funded**.

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 programs 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 **USD 36.1 million**.

Germany 16.9 million | **Italy** 5.6 million | **European Union** 4.25 million | **United Kingdom** 3.40 million | **Japan** 1.5 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.68 million | **UNAIDS** 0.070 million

SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Netherlands 4 million

MAJOR UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions:

Sweden 95.22 million | **Norway** 72.5 million | **Netherlands** 37.2 million | **Denmark** 35.6 million | **Germany** 27.6 million | **Private donors Spain** 19.9 million | **Switzerland** 18.4 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Ireland** 11.8 million

For more information, please contact:

Farha Bhooyroo
External Relations Officer
bhooyroo@unhcr.org, +98 912 132 7183 (mobile and WhatsApp).