UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | Yemen

Refugee Registration

A refugee being registered in Aden. ©UNHCR

Context in Yemen

Yemen is among the worst humanitarian crises globally, marked by conflict, economic collapse, and the breakdown of public institutions and services. Moreover, Yemen is home to an estimated 4.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs).

Despite its challenges, Yemen also hosts over 60,000 refugees and asylum seekers, with over 6,500 new arrivals to the country in 2024.

A large proportion have specific needs, placing them at increased risk, requiring protection assistance and services. For example, in 2024, 1,055 had a serious medical condition, 709 were unaccompanied or separated children, and 1,390 were women at risk.

Why is registration and documentation important?

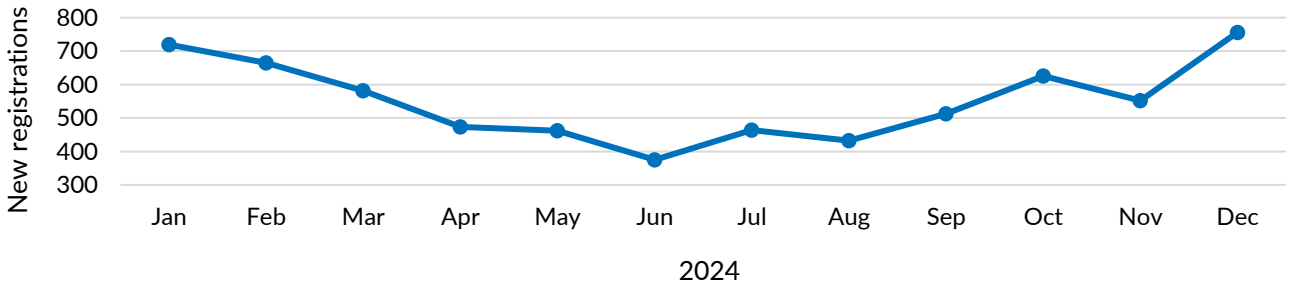
Registration is a critical protection tool for individuals fleeing war, persecution, or violence. It involves recording the details of refugees and asylum seekers and issuing documents (ID cards, refugee certificates, asylum-seeker certificates) that serve as proof of their identity and status.

This process ensures that those in need of international protection are properly identified, can prove their identity, and can access essential rights, assistance, and services. Being registered safeguards against forced return (refoulement), and arbitrary arrest and detention, and thus enhances freedom of movement. It also helps keep families together and enables UNHCR to reunite separated children with their families.

Moreover, registration allows for the early identification of individuals with specific needs (e.g., survivors of violence, unaccompanied minors, elderly persons, or those with disabilities). This ensures that vulnerable refugees are promptly referred to specialized protection services and receive the support they need, such as medical care, legal assistance, or family reunification services.

Registration also provides up-to-date data on the refugee population and their needs, supporting effective planning, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts. Registration is not a one-time process, and refugees and asylum seekers are encouraged to update their records when there are changes in their circumstances, such as family reunification, the birth of a child, marriage, change of address, or shifts in their protection status.

New refugee and asylum seeker registrations by month in Yemen in 2024

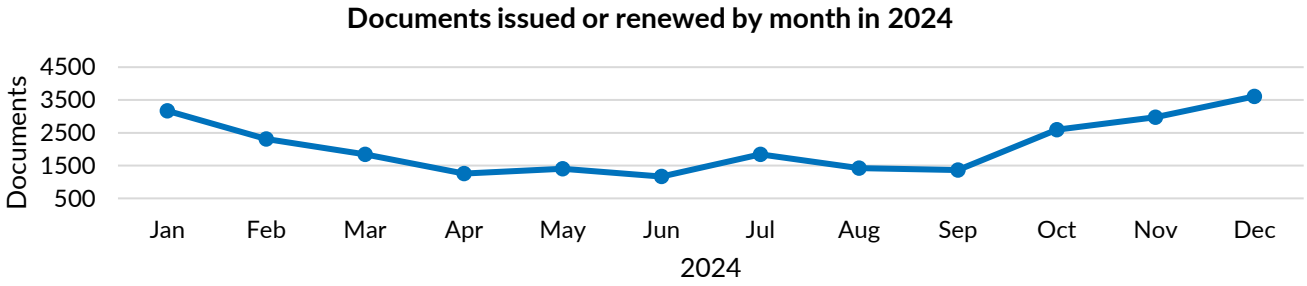


How are refugees and asylum seekers registered in Yemen?

Registration takes place in person at a registration centre and involves the collection of personal and biometric data. The registration process is highly technical, requiring trained staff and specialist equipment.

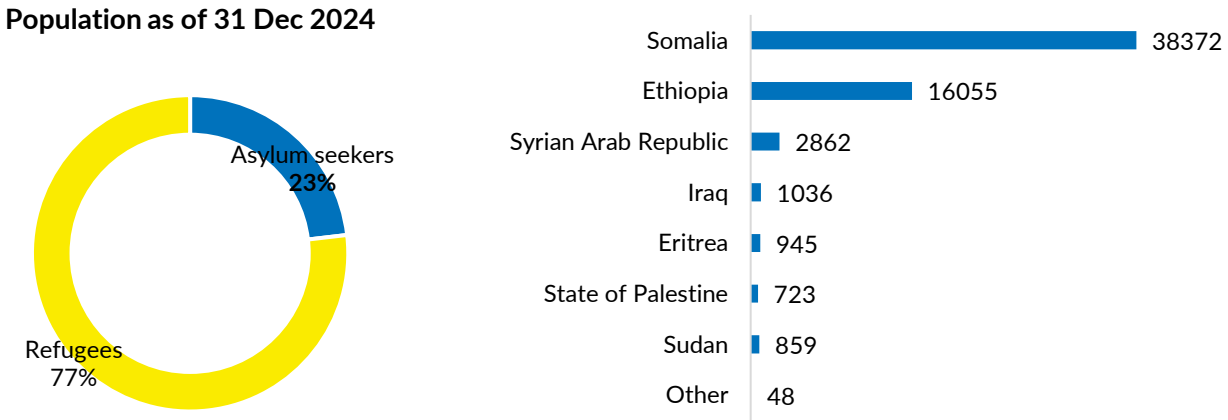
There are five registration centres in Yemen. In the de facto authority (DFA) controlled areas the Bureau of Refugee Affairs (BRA) operates a centre in Sana'a. In Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) controlled areas, the Immigration, Passport and Naturalization Authority (IPNA) operates three centres, in Aden, Kharaz Yemen's only refugee camp), and Mukalla. UNHCR also operates a registration centre in Aden.

UNHCR also coordinates and facilitates joint registration missions with the authorities to ensure that refugees living in remote or underserved areas can access registration and documentation.



Who is responsible for registration in Yemen?

In the IRG areas of Yemen, the registration process is conducted by either IPNA or UNHCR. In DFA controlled areas BRA conducts registration. In IRG areas, Somali nationals are prima facie recognized as refugees and are registered by IPNA, granting them refugee status and a refugee certificate with a validity of two-years, after which renewal is needed. Other nationalities in IRG areas are registered and documented by UNHCR and receive an asylum-seeker certificate with a validity of one-year. In DFA areas, all individuals are initially registered as asylum seekers (including Somalis in DFA areas) pending refugee status determination.



Refugee status determination—the process through which an assessment is made to determine whether an individual meets the criteria to obtain the status of refugee—is primarily applied in cases where there are evident resettlement needs. This is a strategic approach owing to the time and resources required to determine refugee status and the limited number of resettlement opportunities.

How does UNHCR support?

UNHCR supports the authorities, including IPNA and BRA, with operational and capacity building support to ensure the continuity of all registration activities. This includes technical support and training to ensure that registration and documentation are conducted to the required standards and that data is accurate and complete. UNHCR also provides training on refugee status determination, durable solutions, and more broadly on data management. In IRG areas, UNHCR also supports directly through the registration and documentation of non-Somali refugees.

UNHCR and its partners also provide legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers as needed. For example, registering births can be challenging to due complex procedures, missing supporting documentation (such as birth certificates), and language barriers.

Key 2024 achievements:

Newly registered refugees and asylum seekers	6,619
Documents issued or renewed for refugees and asylum seekers	24,957
Refugee and asylum-seeking children registered and issued documentation under regular birth registration procedure	766

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