

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

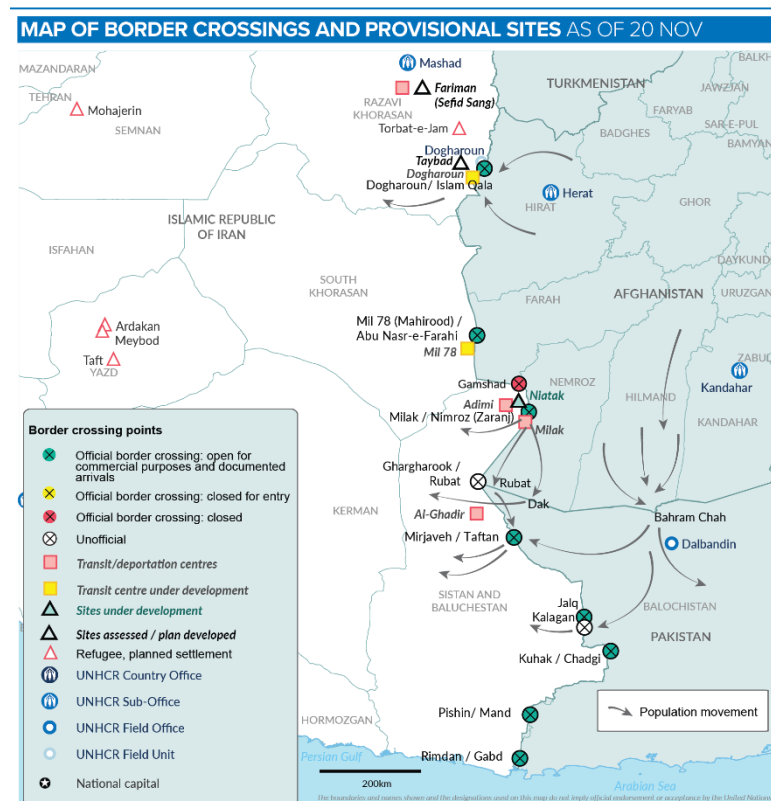
8 December 2021

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

676,431 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan in 2021, of which 15% are families, 21% are women and 59% are children.

Afghans continue to make their way to Iran informally through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of **24,691 Afghans who arrived in Iran** from 1 January to 5 December, though the numbers are much higher.

Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. **UNHCR estimates 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the government.**



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- On 8 December, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, warned of a surge of Afghan refugees amid fears of economic collapse in Afghanistan. The High Commissioner called for urgent economic aid as these factors may be a source of an "implosion that will cause an inflow of people inside the country for sure but at that point also outside of the country in quest of better conditions of life", Grandi said. He also stated that he will be conducting a visit to Iran this month to undertake discussions with the Iranian authorities regarding the current Afghan situation.
- The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate affecting millions of Afghans, including women and children. On 3 December, UNHCR **appealed** for support amid acute and rising humanitarian needs for 3.5 million displaced Afghans inside the country. UNHCR warned that the crisis is escalating daily in Afghanistan, with hunger in the country reaching unprecedented levels. Nearly 23 million people – 55 per cent of the population – are facing extreme levels of hunger, and nearly 9 million are at risk of famine. UNHCR has **launched** a global fundraising winter campaign to help ease the burden for forcibly displaced families amid the most life-threatening months of the year, in Afghanistan and other countries across the world.

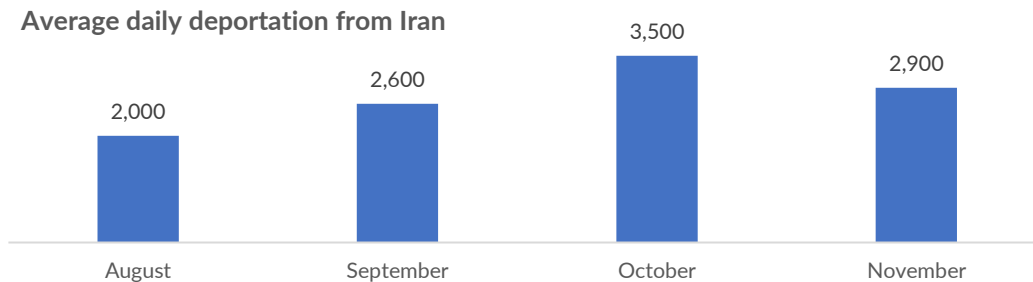
- **On 26 November, OCHA reported that more than 9,800 households and 7,100 key informants were interviewed in Afghanistan, in coordination with REACH, to shed light on the rising needs in Afghanistan.** Assessment findings confirmed that the country now faces a rapidly worsening humanitarian crisis affecting ever-greater numbers in the population. OCHA stated that the widespread loss of income, cash shortages, exhausted coping strategies, and rising food costs, coupled with a halt to development assistance, and public services on the brink of collapse, has further exacerbated existing socio-economic vulnerability, manifesting in critical levels of sectoral humanitarian needs.
- **On 3 December, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) reported that Afghans submitted more than 17,000 asylum applications in the European Union (EU+), including 27 Member States, in addition to Norway and Switzerland.** EASO stated that the trend in Afghan applications “not only continued but accelerated”, with applications by Afghans increasing by a considerable 72% - from about 10,000 in August to 17,300 in September 2021. This increase partly reflected the evacuations that followed the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August.
- **On 30 November, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that the Taliban in Afghanistan have “summarily executed or forcibly disappeared” more than 100 former police and intelligence officers in four provinces since their takeover, despite their promise of amnesty for former governmental personnel.**
- **Following HRW’s reports, a joint statement by the Governments of the United States, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Ukraine expressed deep concern on the summary killings and enforced disappearances of former members of the Afghan security forces.** The statement underlined that the alleged actions constitute serious human rights abuses and contradict the Taliban’s announced amnesty. The governments called for the reported cases to be investigated, with those responsible to be held accountable. The statement concluded, “We will continue to measure the Taliban by their actions”.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified **24,691 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran** (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,171 heads of households). As of 5 December, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 1,819 families (consisting of 7,028 individuals), were interviewed by UNHCR.
 - Those interviewed comprised **30% women, 27% men and 44% children.**
 - The majority were originally from **Kabul and Herat provinces** (both 19%), followed by Ghazni (11%) and Balkh (9%).
 - **Individuals spent an average of 9 days travelling to Iran**, with 80% travelling by cars and 70% by foot. The percentages represent many who used both means of transportation, with the first leg of their journey by cars and the second by foot or vice versa.
 - The large majority of new arrivals are **temporarily being hosted by relatives/friends in Iran (64%)**, while 21% are living in rental accommodation. Paying rent can add strain on Afghans who recently arrived in Iran, as many are expected to have limited financial support/income.
 - **66% reported having extended family members already settled in Iran**, with 74% stating they are able to get support from their family members. While this can be temporarily sustained, if extended for longer periods, it may cause increased burdens on the family members providing support to new arrivals and who may need to be assisted at a later stage.
- **UNHCR’s sub-office in Kerman received information from provincial BAFIA that there has been a considerable decrease in the numbers of Afghans crossing to Iran through Sistan and Baluchistan province, last week.** BAFIA attributed the decrease to the cold winter weather. UNHCR foresees that Afghans will continue to cross the borders if the situation in Afghanistan remains unstable. With the harsh winter season, Afghans crossing – including women, children/infants- may not be able to bear below freezing temperatures during their journeys, which may result in catastrophic outcomes such as loss of lives.
- **Different government officials, at various times and events, have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals to Iran may range between 100,000-300,000.** UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralized registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas.
- **As it is challenging to verify the scale of cross-border population movements from Afghanistan, and UNHCR has not received one overall estimation of the new arrivals from the Government of Iran.** The operation is using available indications from various sources to estimate the Afghan new arrivals in Iran for 2021/2022. Bearing in mind that a large number will likely be deported, that others are individuals moving to Iran for livelihoods or familial reasons, and that 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.**
- Based on information collected by UNHCR in Afghanistan, a total of 60,532 Afghan individuals have been deported during the first three weeks of November this year, which is a daily average of 2,900 deportations, with a peak of 5,200 in one day on 2 November.



REGIONAL REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (RRPRP)

- On 25 August, UNHCR launched the **Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP)**, an inter-agency plan with 10 partners, focusing on preparedness, limited emergency response, and expanded support to regular programmes. UNHCR is currently leading the development of the 2022 RRP, with planning assumptions of a steady and ongoing flow of new arrivals into Iran from Afghanistan (with an expectation that, although the situation in Afghanistan is likely to further deteriorate, there will not be an observable mass influx into neighbouring countries), with borders likely to continue to be tightly managed. The 2022 RRP development is advancing, with a total budget of US\$258.7 million having been agreed with 15 partners, covering 8 sectors.
- In light of newly arrived persons moving towards urban centres, UNHCR is strongly advocating with BAFIA for a **complementary urban response**. This is also to avoid an encampment policy at the border and have 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

The Government of Iran informed UNHCR that, under a worst-case scenario, they anticipate that up to **500,000 new arrivals from Afghanistan could enter Iran over 6-months**. In case of an influx, new arrivals would reportedly be granted access to Iranian territory and settled in locations along the border. Shelter, health and food would be the priorities to cope with the Government's scenario.

Such contingency planning is a Government-led process. UNHCR continues to seek additional guidance and clarity on various issues, including the status that will be conferred to new arrivals and the process for receiving them.

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

For 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 RRRP have reported receiving a combined USD 28 million, indicating that the RRRP is 19% funded. This analysis is based on partners reporting new funding; however, 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 7 December 2021, UNHCR's **overall programmes in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **56% 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 **21.4 million**

European Union 9.2 million | **Japan** 3.85 million | **United Kingdom** 2.69 million | **Denmark** 2 million | **Finland** 1.79 | **Italy** 1.77 | **Germany** 1.1 million | **Norway** 0.36 million | **Spain** 0.36 million | **Qatar Airways** 0.17 million | **Russian Federation** 0.1 million | **UNAIDS** 0.03 million

Major softly earmarked contributions | USD

Germany 95.9 million | **Private donors Australia** 15.9 million | **Austria** 11.8 million | **France** 11.5 million | **Private donors Spain** 5.6 million | **Private donors Germany** 5.5 million | **Private donors Denmark** 5.1 million | **Denmark** 4.8 million | **Norway** 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

Algeria | Armenia | Australia | Austria | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Cyprus | Estonia | Finland | Holy See | Iceland | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | Morocco | New Zealand | Peru | Philippines | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | South Africa | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

For more information, please contact:

Farha Bhoyroo

External Relations Officer

bhoyroo@unhcr.org, +98 912 132 7183 (mobile and WhatsApp)