

# IRAN

August-October 2022

The Islamic Republic of Iran is host to one of the largest and most protracted urban refugee situations in the world and has provided asylum to refugees for over four decades. In addition to the hundreds of thousands who crossed the border in 2021 and 2022 using both regular and irregular means, the country has been **host to millions of Afghans**.

In January, UNHCR launched the **2022 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**, to support host governments to address humanitarian needs. It aims to ensure that no one is left behind and that the needs of Afghans and their host communities can be met. For Iran, the RRP targets **2.2 million**

Afghans of varying status (both refugees and asylum-seekers) and the host community.

Meanwhile, Iranian borders remain officially closed, but Afghans continued making their way to Iran informally through unofficial border crossing points. According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, some **1,000,000** Afghans fled to Iran since January 2021.

**Sustained international humanitarian support** remains needed to help the Government of Iran maintain its inclusive refugee policies.


## KEY POPULATION FIGURES


**800,000** Registered Refugees

**Afghan** 780,000

**Iraqi** 20,000

Based on the data received from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2020.

 **96%** of registered refugees live in urban areas side by side with the local community.

 **4%** of registered refugees live in **20** refugee settlements in **12** provinces of Iran.

**586,000** Afghan Passport Holders  
**2.2** Headcounted Afghans

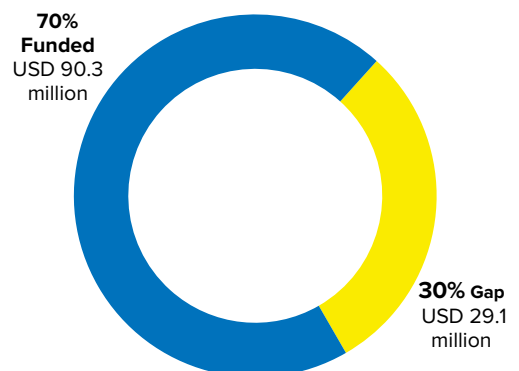
\*Please see the paragraph on the headcount exercise below.

## Registration and documentation

The Government of Iran is responsible for the asylum process, and annually renews refugee identification cards - **Amayesh** cards for Afghans and **Hoviat** cards for Iraqis. These cards give refugees conditional freedom of movement, access to basic services and eligibility for temporary work permits. The asylum space in Iran is shaped by documentation status. Whilst documented asylum seekers and refugees have larger access to rights and services in Iran, undocumented asylum seekers and refugees are at heightened risk of deportation. Therefore, advocating for regularization of undocumented Afghans through different documentation schemes is priority for UNHCR.

**USD 119.4 MILLION**  
NEEDED FOR IRAN IN 2022

As of 25 October 2022



- According to data received from the Government in October 2020, some **800,000 refugee cardholders** reside in Iran, of which it is estimated that **780,000** are Afghans and **20,000** are Iraqis. In addition, some **586,000 Afghan passport-holders** with Iranian visas reside in the country, including former *Amayesh* cardholders, as well as considerable number of **undocumented Afghans**.
- In April 2022, the Government of Iran initiated a **headcount exercise** for the undocumented and newly arrived Afghans in the country. The exercise was concluded on 30 June 2022, and according to the preliminary information of Ministry of Interior, some **2.2** million Afghan nationals have been registered through this exercise. Valid until 20 January 2023, the headcount slip provides its holders with temporary protection against *refoulement* during its validity period. While this is a positive step, the headcount exercise does not replace a functioning asylum system. UNHCR is aware that not all of those eligible to participate, registered in the headcount exercise.
- The 17th round of *Amayesh* renewal exercise was officially launched on 11 July 2022 and continued for four months<sup>1</sup>. In this round of renewal, in addition to holders of valid *Amayesh* 16 (for Afghans) and *Hoviat* 15 (for Iraqis), those who missed the past five rounds (*Amayesh* 10 -15 and *Hoviat* 9 – 14) were also eligible and encouraged to participate. Afghan *Amayesh* card holders have access to certain rights and services in Iran and it is important for all eligible groups to renew their *Amayesh* cards as losing their status can result in being at heightened risk of arrest, detention, and deportation.
- It is estimated that some **2,000** individuals continue to make their way to Iran daily. Based on UNHCR estimates, a large number of all new arrivals are returned by the government through border areas. Smaller percentages include people who will continue moving to Turkey and the EU and those who chose to come to Iran for economic or family reasons before returning to Afghanistan on their own. UNHCR estimates that by the end of 2022, **274,000** new arrivals will remain in Iran and will need protection and assistance. Since January 2021, some **52,344** newly arrived Afghans have approached UNHCR's receptions directly for support.

## Durable solutions

- In February 2022, UNHCR issued a [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan](#). As such, UNHCR does not promote returns to Afghanistan and only facilitates **voluntary repatriation** of Afghan and Iraqi refugees who chose to return to their countries of origin. By the end of October 2022, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of **335** returnees to Afghanistan and **one** returnee to Iraq. This represents a substantial decrease- **59%** - compared to the **827** returns facilitated in the same period in 2021. Moreover, **56** of the returnees (**17%** of the total number of returnees) were students who went back to Afghanistan to apply for a student visa and return to Iran.
- While in 2021 UNHCR Iran received no quota for **resettlement** of Afghan refugees, in 2022 it is working with Member States providing resettlement quotas and the Government of Iran to resettle **3,000** refugees, given the increasing protection needs of refugees in Iran combined with the security situation in Afghanistan. As of the end of October 2022, **2,189** individuals (591 cases) were submitted to resettlement countries.

## Legal support and community-based protection

UNHCR, jointly with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA), operates a legal services project to provide free legal assistance to refugees in Iran to resolve disagreements through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. In Iran, community-based projects, awareness-raising sessions, focus group discussions and participatory data collection exercises are key activities that facilitate community engagement.

- By end of October 2022, **16** Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) and **17** UNHCR Hired Lawyers (UHLs) were operational across the country. from January to end October 2022, UHLs provided assistance to **4,146** individuals and DSCs provided assistance to **1,088** individuals.
- As of the end of October 2022, UNHCR Iran reached **36,439** refugees through awareness-raising and information dissemination activities, virtually and in person.
- UNHCR continues to support all vulnerable groups, specifically children and women at risk. Having internal case management services in place, UNHCR provides legal, psychological and cash services to children at risk and survivors of gender-based violence. Children not attending school and child labourers remain among the main risk groups identified by UNHCR. Since the beginning of 2022, UNHCR identified **1,358** children at risk of not attending school.

## Education

<sup>1</sup> The exercise was concluded on 21 November 2022.

Since May 2015, all children in Iran have had access to primary and secondary education, regardless of their documentation status. Refugee, undocumented and foreign national children study side by side with Iranian school children and follow the same national curriculum.

- According to the Ministry of Education (MoE), the number of Afghan and Iraqi children enrolled in primary and secondary schools in 2022 is **800,080** including **385,000** undocumented children. Worsening economic conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers, combined with a lack of enrolment capacity in schools, has hampered many Afghan children's access to education, resulting in school dropouts. In 2022, UNHCR is supporting the government by co-funding the construction of **20** schools for refugee and host community children in refugee-hosting provinces.
- Moreover, UNHCR continues to support the Government of Iran in providing access to literacy classes. In 2022, a total of **7,000** refugees will benefit from accelerated education programmes through classes conducted by the **Literacy Movement Organisation** of Iran (LMO).
- UNHCR also supports tertiary education for refugees through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme. In 2022, under the **DAFI scholarship programme**, some **646** refugee students will benefit from support with tuition fees and living allowances.

## Health

UNHCR works with Iran's and its Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), to ensure that all refugees have access to these vital and lifesaving services. These joint interventions include medical referrals, prevention and harm reduction services through individual and group counselling. In 2021, UNHCR procured key medical equipment and supplies, including ambulances, mobile labs, CT scans and X-ray machines, for health facilities across the country. **32** key medical equipment and supplies (**674,867** pieces of equipment, worth USD 10M) were internationally procured by UNHCR, and **47** types of essential medical equipment and supplies (**1,447,730** pieces) were nationally procured by the MoHME through **32** medical universities in **20** provinces countrywide.

- **Primary healthcare:** Primary healthcare, which includes vaccinations, antenatal care, maternal and child health, essential medicines and family planning, is available for free for refugees and undocumented Afghans in health posts located in settlements and refugee-populated urban areas. In 2022, UNHCR is supporting (including through procuring medicine) **134** health posts. For **27** of these health posts, which are in refugee-hosting urban areas, UNHCR is also covering personnel costs of essential health staff. Every month, on average, some **16,200** refugees visit the health posts inside settlements and **15,090** refugees visit the health posts in urban areas.
- **Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI):** As part of the agreement between UNHCR, BAFIA and the Iranian Health Insurance Organisation (IHIO), and in cooperation with MoHME, all registered refugees have access to the national health insurance scheme, similar to Iranians, covering both hospitalization and para-clinical services at a subsidized rate. For the 8<sup>th</sup> cycle (25 Feb 2022 to 24 Feb 2023), UNHCR assists the insurance premium for up to **120,000** of the most vulnerable refugees, including their families who suffer from special diseases<sup>2</sup>. The remaining refugee population can enrol in the health insurance by paying the premium fee. UNHCR's support to UPHI is in line with key principles of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). While innovative and part of the inclusive policies of government of Iran, affordability of the health insurance has become an issue for many refugees in recent years. UNHCR continues to advocate for enhanced and diversified international support to make the insurance scheme as affordable as possible for all refugees.

## Livelihoods/cash-based interventions

Enhancing refugees' livelihoods remains a priority for UNHCR, as it can help refugees become more self-reliant and self-sufficient. enabling them to meet the basic needs of their families and become less dependent on humanitarian assistance, and ultimately preparing them for their return to Afghanistan, when conditions become conducive.

- **Employment/income generation:** In 2022, UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government and non-governmental partners implements a diverse portfolio of livelihoods interventions to enhance income and employment opportunities for refugees. These interventions include certified technical and vocational training in some **60** occupations which will benefit a total of **1,764** refugees and vulnerable host community members, as well as income generation projects which supported some **129** refugees as of the end of July 2022. Additionally, UNHCR will capacitate some **50** technical and vocational training centres in **13** provinces through provision of equipment.
- **Cash assistance:** UNHCR assists extremely vulnerable refugees/asylum seekers with cash to help them meet their immediate protection and basic needs. Assistance is also used to facilitate access to higher education and healthcare, support shelter and livelihoods needs, persons with disabilities, and cover

<sup>2</sup> Special Diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassaemia, Renal Failure, Kidney Transplant, and Multiple Sclerosis as defined by Iranian MoHME.

documentation and transportation needs prior to resettlement or repatriation. From 1 August to 31 October 2022, UNHCR disbursed cash assistance to **6,618** individuals.

### Shelter and infrastructure

To improve refugees' access to essential services (including shelter, water, domestic energy, sanitation, and community halls), UNHCR supports critical infrastructure needs in refugee settlements. UNHCR is building **136** shelters to provide a more dignified living environment for refugees in the settlements of Niatak and Torbat-e-Jam. So far, in Niatak, **108** shelters are completed and ready to accommodate **108** families; in Torbat-e-Jam so far 160 out of **300** shelters are renovated and new arrivals are settled inside.

### Inter-Agency Coordination

Inter-agency coordination to deliver the 2022 **Refugee Response Plan** (RRP) for the Afghanistan Situation through the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) continued to be strengthened under the framework of the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) led by UNHCR in Iran. The coordination structure has evolved strongly since 2021 with the active participation of RRP partner agencies leading to coordinated and harmonised responses and services, in collaboration with the government. The appeal for the RRP 2023 was developed and finalised by participating RRP partners. Submissions were provided under **nine** sectors, including multi-purpose cash assistance. In addition to the development of the 2023 RRP appeal, sectors developed sectoral response outlooks for 2023 and 2024 highlighting progress, gaps and priorities for each sector. Inter-agency coordination continued, including settlement focused coordination for Niatak and Torbat-e-Jam settlements. 5W's<sup>3</sup> reporting for the second quarter of the year was undertaken and completed by RRP partners.

### Working with partners

**BAFIA, of the Ministry of Interior**, is UNHCR Iran's main government counterpart.

- **Governmental:** Ministry of Education (MoE), Literacy Movement Organization (LMO), Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), Iran Health Insurance Organization (IHIO).
- **National NGOs:** Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), Rebirth Society, Society for Recovery Support (SRS), Pars Development Activists Institute (PDA), Iranian Life Quality Improvement Association (ILIA), KIYANA, Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC)
- **UN Agencies and International Organizations:** UNHCR coordinates with UN partner agencies, NGOs and international organizations under the umbrella of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). The SSAR is a quadripartite multi-year regional strategy between UNHCR and the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

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<sup>3</sup> The 5Ws maps, at geographical and sectoral levels, who is doing what where when and for whom. Partners report their responses against pre-defined indicators covering all activities which fall under the scope of the RRP on a monthly basis.



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Source: UNHCR as of July 2022.

### UNHCR presence

269 National Staff

56 International Staff

#### Offices:

1 Country Office in Tehran

1 Field Office in Tehran,

3 Sub-Offices in Mashhad, Kerman and Shiraz

2 Field Units in Esfahan and Dogharoun

### Financial information

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.

**Earmarked contributions** for the Iran operation amount to some USD **83.9 million as of the end of October 2022**:

**Germany** 16.9 million | **EU** 7.4 million | **Italy** 5.6 million | **United Kingdom** 3.4 million | **Japan** 1.5 million | **France** 1.0 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.7 million | **UN Programme on HIV/AIDS** 0.06 million | **Other Private Donors** 0.14

Donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2022 global programmes:

**Germany** | **Private donors USA** | **Austria** | **France** | **Private donors Australia** | **Denmark** | **Private donors Germany** | **Australia** | **Switzerland** | **Netherlands** | **Private donors United Kingdom** | **Private donors Italy** | **Spain** | **Private donors Republic of Korea** | **Sweden** | **Norway** | **Private donors Spain** | **Private donors Japan** | **United Kingdom** | **Japan** | **France** | **Belgium** | **Ireland** | **Private donors Canada** | **Private donors Sweden** | **Italy**

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#### Links:

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