UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

OPERATIONAL UPDATE
September — November 2023

UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Matnazor was born Turkmenistan when it was part of the Soviet Union. When he lost his USSR passport soon after the country's independence, he had no documentation to prove his identity or legal status — he was stateless. With the help of UNHCR's partner, Matnazor now has a stateless person's certificate and will soon be eligible to apply for Turkmen citizenship. (Photo: UNHCR/ Mariko Hall)

Key figures as of 30 June 2023

15,047*

Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (979), the Kyrgyz Republic (1,030), Turkmenistan (13) and Uzbekistan (5)*.

37,257

known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (8,266), the Kyrgyz Republic (227), Turkmenistan (3,351) and Uzbekistan (25,413).

* In November 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan reported via mass media that 13,020 Afghan citizens were in the country on short-term visas, of whom around 2,000 had valid visas as of mid- 2022. Given the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR considers that they may be in a refugee-like situation.

In 2023, UNHCR requires $6.4 million to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Funded	Unfunded
50%	50%

As of 30 November 2023

SUB-REGIONAL

- Ahead of the **2023 Global Refugee Forum**, to be held 13-15 December in Geneva, UNHCR is supporting the governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to finalise and submit proposed country-specific pledges to advance protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people and contribute to the achievement of Global Compact on Refugee objectives.

  Affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. The Global Compact on Refugees aims to:

  - Ease pressures on host countries
  - Enhance refugee self-reliance
  - Expand access to third-country solutions
  - Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

  Possible pledges by the four countries range from acceding to the statelessness conventions, to facilitating local integration and naturalization of refugees. UNHCR has also shared with the governments information and directions for contributing to various Multi-Stakeholder Pledges.

- As part of UNHCR's efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) across the sub-region, the 2023 session of the nine-week **RSD Distance Learning Programme** kicked off on 2 October 2023. The last week of the course comprised a residential workshop, held 2 to 5 October in Astana, bringing together 28 participants from Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic – including State officials, members of the national RSD Commissions, judges, and staff of organizations providing legal assistance and support to asylum-seekers and refugees – to exercise theory and exchange experience from their organizations and countries.

- UNHCR spoke on the protection of stateless persons at the **29th Online Course on International Refugee Law** – held in Russian language, 18 September to 13 October – at the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo, Italy. Drawing on the principles established in the Statelessness Conventions, the session explored the definition, causes, and repercussions of statelessness, and highlighted the latest data, trends, and preventive measures. UNHCR partner, Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), presented on the protection of refugees, exploring detention and alternatives to detention within the context of international protection.

- On 18 September, UNHCR delivered **comprehensive online training on 'proGres v4'** – UNHCR's corporate, centralized, web-based case management software application – for 15 staff of UNHCR partners BHR and Red Crescent Society in Kazakhstan, and Public Foundation "Legal Clinic Adilet" in the Kyrgyz Republic. The training aimed to equip partners with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize the latest version of proGres.

- UNHCR participated in the **Regional Conference in the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Early Warning Network for Central Asia** – held 9 to 13 October by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) – delivering remarks in sessions on Border Security and Management, and Humanitarian Issues, emphasising access to territory and the principle of non-refoulement as two fundamental aspects of binding customary international law that need to be adhered to, to effectively combat terrorism.

- UNHCR attended the **8th Senior Officials' Meeting of the Almaty Process**, hosted by the State Migration Service of Azerbaijan on 12 October in Baku, presenting the implementation status of 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledges, and preparations for new pledges for the upcoming 2023 event. Established in 2013, the Almaty Process is a regional inter-state consultation mechanism on the protection of refugees and international migration to, from and within Central Asia.

- At the 16 October **Central Asia Women's Dialogue "Women, Peace and Security" conference** in Almaty, UNHCR spoke about the women, peace and security dimensions of ending stateless, and the situation of Afghan women refugees in Central Asia. The conference was organized by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the National Commission for Women Affairs, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan, with the support of UN Women and UNRCCA.

At the 7th annual Central Asian Network on Statelessness meeting, participants discussed and prepared potential pledges to contribute to the achievement of Global Compact on Refugee objectives. (Photo: UNHCR/ Isturgan Aldayev)

- The **Central Asian Network on Statelessness (CANS) held its 7th annual meeting** in Almaty, 25 to 27 October – with support from UNHCR – bringing together its 11 members to discuss progress on resolving statelessness and prepare potential pledges that the network can commit and present at the upcoming Global Refugee Forum. In addition to contributing to the statelessness multistakeholder general pledge, CANS will pledge commitments to:
  - Join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness
  - Collaborate with Central Asian governments to enhance legislation for preventing and reducing statelessness
  - Raise awareness about statelessness in Central Asia
  - Collaborate with Central Asian governments to improve national registration and documentation systems
  - Collaborate with civil society organizations and individuals in situations of statelessness.

- At the **7th North and Central Asia Multistakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals** – organized by UNESCAP, 1 to 2 November in Almaty – UNHCR spoke in the "*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"* session, raising protection challenges of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Central Asia, and their limited access to public services, including education, health, social services.

- On 3 November, UNHCR conducted an online **refresher training on data protection** for 30 staff of partners BHR and Red Crescent Society in Kazakhstan, and Adilet in the Kyrgyz Republic, covering key data protection principles and best practices.

- On 20 November, **UNHCR released its Global Appeal**, outlining foreseen needs in 2024 and the activities UNHCR plans in response.

In 2024:

UNHCR requires
$6.409 million

To support an expected
23,006
forcibly displaced and stateless people

In **4** countries – Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

*See **UNHCR Global Appeal** for more information about 2024 funding needs.*

KAZAKHSTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

COMMITTMENTS TO THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

As of the end of November 2023, five pledges have been submitted from Kazakhstan:

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population has committed to: *Establish border referral procedures to ensure unhindered access to territory and asylum procedures by 2024*, and to *Provide foreigners with refugee status in Kazakhstan with equal access to medical care, employment, education, and social assistance on par with citizens and permanently residing foreigners by 2024-2025*
- The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has committed to: *Introduce a refugee quota for its higher education scholarship program by 2024*
- Maqsut Narikbayev University has committed to: *Introduce a course on statelessness and refugees into its curriculum in 2024*
- The UN Country Team has committed to: *Protect, promote and respect asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons' dignity and self-reliance and enhance their integration into Kazakhstan society through a greater than ever engagement into UN programmes and projects, enhanced UNCT-wide advocacy, and adapting UN-internal analytical frameworks.*

Further pledges are being considered by the government.

- On 31 October, UNHCR, together with the UN Resident Coordinator, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (entity responsible for refugee issues), convened a **National Preparatory Roundtable** in Astana ahead of the upcoming 2023 Global Refugee Forum. The event gathered 33 representatives of the State Legal Department of the Executive Office of the President; Border Service of the National Security Committee; Office of the Human Rights Commissioner; Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labour, Science and Higher Education, Justice, Healthcare, Internal Affairs; as well as representatives of the UN and academia, to discuss and identify commitments to advance protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people to pledge at the 2023 Forum.

- UNHCR drafted and submitted its **Recommendations to the draft resolution of the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On improving the regulation of entities in the payment services market and non-cash payments".** At the end of October, the National Bank announced proposed amendments to ban the issuance of bank cards to foreigners who do not have a residence or temporary residence permit. UNHCR Recommendations contain the inclusion of asylum-seekers' and refugees' IDs for the issuance of a payment card and an exemption for foreigners and stateless persons who, in accordance with national legislation, are not required to obtain such permit in Kazakhstan, promoting access of refugees and stateless persons to financial services.

- In advance of World Children's Day, on 16 November, UN Kazakhstan, UNHCR, UNFPA, and UN Women presented "**Shugylaly Ertegiler", a joint collection of fairy tales** written by contemporary Kazakh authors on themes related to sustainable development and pressing global issues, such as gender equality, climate change, human rights and forced displacement. The compilation of stories targets children 5 to 12 years old, and tells inspiring stories about modern Kazakhstani children, in the Kazakh language, related to caring for nature, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, hospitality, equal and fair treatment of others, and family values. The book presentation was featured in Knigometr podcast about the role of literature in the modern world.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- There are currently **15 refugee students in Kazakhstan studying at tertiary level thanks to the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative** (DAFI). On 13 September, UNHCR convened a DAFI orientation event in Almaty, with participation of 12 of the 15 students, to discuss programme terms and conditions, and establish a strong foundation for their academic pursuits. The Coordinator of UN Volunteers in Kazakhstan delivered a presentation on the importance of volunteerism and related opportunities.

- From 14 to 15 September, the Migration Committee of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population and UNHCR convened a **training course in Almaty for 19 employees of 19 local executive bodies (Akimats), on local and international legislation on refugee protection**. Delivered by national and international experts, including from the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), the course aimed to

strengthen unified implementation of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Refugees" and relevant by-laws, in line with the 1951 Refugee Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

- Afghan refugee and **DAFI scholar Armin took the stage** at the UNICEF Talks event in Astana on 23 September, sharing his personal journey and pressing challenges faced by refugees in Kazakhstan. Armin was also invited to share the same speech at Nazarbayev University, discuss challenges with a Kazakhstan-based podcast, and meet online with the Chair of the Committee on Legislation and Legal Reform of Mazhilis of Parliament of Kazakhstan. Armin highlighted key challenges, including limited access to employment, medical care, social assistance and naturalization. Armin proposed that refugee status is equated with the status of a permanent resident from the moment of recognition, thereby according to refugees the same rights as permanent residents. Currently, refugees are only granted temporary residency, renewable annually.

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population included UNHCR as a member of its recently **established Commission for the Improvement of Migration Processes** and implementation of the Migration Concept Policy for 2023-2027. UNHCR participated in the commission's first meeting on 10 October, which brought together senior representatives from various government agencies including the Ministries of Labor, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs, General Prosecutor's Office, and non-governmental organizations.

- On 17 October, UNHCR delivered a guest **Introduction to International Protection of Refugees lecture** to 25 International Law students at Maqsut Narikbayev University in Astana. Students learnt about the historical background and legal framework of international refugee protection, as well as about the role of UNHCR in safeguarding the rights of people forced to flee.

- On 31 October, UNHCR held a private **screening of Netflix film "The Swimmers"** – the story of UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador and Refugee Olympian Yusra Mardini and her sister who fled Syria in 2015 – for 80+ students at Maqsut Narikbayev University to increase awareness and understanding of forced displacement and promote solidarity with refugees.

- Together with the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan, from 15 to 16 November, UNHCR visited nine educational institutions where DAFI students study.

- On 16 November, UNHCR organized a **training session with 13 DAFI students led by Y-PEER** – an international Youth Peer Education Network created by UNFPA – on abuse and bullying prevention, aligning with the principles of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. A second training for the same students was facilitated by the Model United Nations Club of Nazarbayev University, focusing on enhancing public speaking skills.

Afghan refugee and DAFI scholar Armin spoke at the UNICEF Talks event in Astana, sharing his personal journey and pressing challenges faced by refugees in Kazakhstan. (Photo: UNICEF Kazakhstan)

- As part of **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence** activities – driven by UN Women and the Embassy of Canada – students at 20 high schools, colleges and universities participated in a competition to raise awareness about gender-based violence. On 28 November, UNHCR joined the Ambassador of Finland to Kazakhstan to present awards to winning students at the Nazarbayev Intellectual School of Physics and Mathematics in Almaty.

- As part of efforts to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the Red Crescent Society organized a series of **mini-lectures addressing domestic violence**. Attended by 11 asylum-seekers and refugees, the lectures covered various forms of domestic violence and featured discussions and film screenings. The event concluded with practical recommendations for those facing domestic violence, along with information on emergency resources available to support survivors.

Ending Statelessness

- Together with the Migration Service Office of the Pavlodar Region Police Department, on 8 September in Pavlodar city, BHR provided legal **counselling to 19 families** with undetermined nationality, expired documents, and in need of help to obtain identity documentation.

- UNHCR drafted and submitted its **Recommendations to the Rules for determining the legal status of persons** located on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, who are not citizens of Kazakhstan and do not have proof of their citizenship of another state, to bring statelessness determination procedures in accordance with international standards and best practices.

Responding to Emergencies

- From 11 to 12 September, UNHCR participated in a **state-wide emergency exercise**, led by the Ministry of Emergency Situations, which aimed to assess the readiness of the State civil protection system to respond to devastating earthquakes, following the experience of Türkiye. UNHCR displayed a Refugee Housing Unit and samples of core relief items prepositioned with partner Kazakhstan Red Crescent Society.

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

COMMITTMENTS TO THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

As of the end of November 2023, three pledges have been submitted from the Kyrgyz Republic:

- The UN Country Team has committed to: *Aim at achieving positive impacts for refugees (including mandate refugees), asylum-seekers and stateless persons through facilitation of their better access to equal rights and opportunities with nationals; in cooperation with the host government pursue ultimate prevention of statelessness, and access to legal identity and civil registration. Provide support to the host government in advancing refugees' (including mandate refugees), asylum-seekers', stateless persons' and host communities' inclusion into national programmes and plans.*
- The American University of Central Asia has committed to: Provide *Summer language courses for the refugee community*, and *Include Refugee law course as a part of the regular curriculum.*

Further pledges are being considered by the government.

- UNHCR drafted and submitted **observations and comments to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On State Guaranteed Legal Aid"; the draft "Procedure for Determining the Status of a Stateless Person"; and for "Issuing a Certificate to a Stateless Person",** promoting access to due rights and services.
- On 3 November, UNHCR participated in the **Kyrgyz Republic National Development Forum, Poverty and Equality**, in Bishkek, intervening in plenary sessions and ensuring that the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people are included in the final recommendations.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 7 September, together with representatives of the Border Guard Service, UNHCR conducted a **monitoring visit to Manas Airport** in Bishkek, including the reception room and passport checkpoints, to assess compliance with international standards.
- On 8 September, UNHCR **delivered a guest lecture** on protection of refugees to 15 students at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek.
- On 21 September, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic **adopted a new regulation "On Compulsory Medical Insurance Policy"**, incorporating comments provided by UNHCR which enable refugees and asylum-seekers access to general State medical services on par with citizens. This development marks great progress on implementation of the Kyrgyz Republic's 2021 pledge to provide "Access to healthcare and social protection to refugees and asylum-seekers on par with citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic". Now **refugees and asylum-seekers can pay the same rate as citizens to access basic medical services**, including preventative, diagnostic, and treatment services, dental care, management of pregnant women, and care for children under 18.

READ ALSO

See also: *Dreaming big for a little asylum-seeker in the Kyrgyz Republic*

- On 16 October, an **asylum-seeker disappeared in Bishkek** and was subsequently refouled to his country of origin. UNHCR remains concerned about the shrinking asylum space for those in need of international protection in the country. UNHCR reiterates calls on the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure that no person is expelled or returned against their will to countries where their life or freedom may be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, and to ensure fair and efficient asylum procedures that recognise and protect refugees.

- In Kyrgyzstan, **seven refugee students are currently pursuing tertiary education thanks to the support of the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative** (DAFI). On 13 October, UNHCR greeted new and returning DAFI students – studying in Bishkek, Osh and Issyk-Kulon – in an online meeting.

- On 17 October, UNHCR partner Adilet held a **masterclass on art therapy** for 11 asylum-seekers and refugees in Bishkek. Given that most female forcibly displaced people in the Kyrgyz Republic are housewives, the masterclass sought to provide a creative outlet for them, supporting their psychological wellbeing. During the class, information was shared with participants on seeking advice and assistance, and related services available to them.

- From 16 to 31 October, UNHCR **visited 17 crossing points** along the borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China, monitoring admission practices and their compliance with international standards, as well as updating information on stands on accessing asylum procedures. At 14 of the checkpoints, UNHCR delivered information sessions to 150+ border guards covering access to territory, principle of non-refoulement, identification of vulnerable people in need of international protection, referral mechanisms and the role of border guards on registration of asylum claims at the border.

- On 20 October, UNHCR delivered **equipment for the reception facility at the Osh International Airport**, which was renovated and refurbished by UNHCR in collaboration with the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic. The renovated facility aims to ensure asylum-seekers and refugees have an appropriate and decent space in which to wait while their asylum applications are referred to relevant asylum authorities.

- On 1 November, UNHCR participated in a **roundtable discussion – convened by the Office of the Ombudsperson of the Kyrgyz Republic** – analysing legislation related to protection of asylum-seekers. The event was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Social Security and Migration; Interior; Health; and Justice; General Prosecutor's Office; State Committee for National Security; and National Centre to Prevent Torture. Recommendations discussed at the roundtable will be included in the annual report of the Ombudsperson.

- From 15 to 18 November, UNHCR – together with partner Legal Clinic "Adilet" – conducted training **for the heads of 27 border checkpoints**, delivering information on international protection of refugees

With most female asylum-seekers and refugees in the Kyrgyz Republic being housewives, the masterclass on art therapy sought to provide a creative outlet for them, supporting their psychological wellbeing. (Photo: Adilet)

and national legislative framework to support implementation of international obligations in ensuring access to the territory and referral mechanisms.

- On 23 November, UNHCR partner Legal Clinic "Adilet" held a **masterclass on needlework** and 'kurak' – a method of sewing together different fabric scraps common in Central Asia. Fifteen refugee women participated in the masterclass, which sought to provide them with a creative outlet, while fostering cultural integration.

The masterclass on 'kurak' provided refugee women with a creative outlet, while fostering cultural integration. (Photo: Adilet)

TURKMENISTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol
State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions

- In a public ceremony on 25 September, the State Migration Service of Turkmenistan handed over **Turkmen passports to 1,301 formerly stateless people** who have received citizenship of Turkmenistan, and issued residence permits to 265 persons, including two mandate refugees. UNHCR was invited to attend the ceremony, handing over passports and highlighting the need for local integration of all 13 remaining mandate refugees. Since the start of the global #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness in 2014, Turkmenistan has resolved 13,361 stateless persons' cases. Turkmenistan is on track to achieve the goal of the #IBelong campaign and end all known cases of statelessness by the end of 2024.

Ending Statelessness

- As part of activities to mark the 9th anniversary of the 10-year #IBelong Campaign, on 21 November, UNHCR delivered a **public lecture on asylum and statelessness** to 35+ Law and Public Policy students of the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.
- On 22 November, UNHCR conducted a **workshop on Statelessness Determination Procedures** for 11 participants of the State Migration Service, Ministry of Interior and partners, supporting implementation of the procedures in line with international standards.
- UNHCR, through its legal assistants and partners, provided **legal counselling to 279 individuals** on statelessness determination procedures, access to

The State Migration Service of Turkmenistan handed over Turkmen passports to 1,301 formerly stateless people who have received citizenship of Turkmenistan. (Photo: UN Turkmenistan)

public services, documentation and the naturalization process, referring relevant cases to national authorities for further assistance.

- Turkmenistan presented its report during the **4th cycle of Universal Periodic Review** on 6 November 2023, highlighting its National Action Plan on ending statelessness by 2024, referring to the regular naturalization of stateless people and refugees by President's decree, and mentioning the planned regional conference on statelessness in 2024.

Responding to Emergencies

- On 23 November, in partnership with the National Red Crescent Society and Government of Turkmenistan, UNHCR conducted a **workshop on refugee emergency response** for 15 participants from the Ministries of Interior and Defence, and NGO and UN partners, with the aim of building capacity to respond to an influx of refugees, in line with international standards.

- As a country bordering Afghanistan, Turkmenistan is part of the **2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan** (RRP), with activities seeking to support 5,000 Afghan citizens in Turkmenistan, and 2,500 members of the host community. The Afghanistan Situation RRP Mid-Year Report outlines key achievements and gaps from the first six months of 2023. RRP partners in Turkmenistan – IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF – are only 17% funded.

UZBEKISTAN

COMMITTMENTS TO THE GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES

As of the end of November 2023, one pledge has been submitted from Uzbekistan:

- The UN Country Team has committed to: *Improve access of persons in need of international protection and stateless persons to protection, legal (including right to residency and protection from non-refoulement), socio-economic rights, and social services in line with the international norms and standards through inclusion of their situation into existing UN projects and programmes and strengthened joint UN advocacy efforts, in partnership with key development actors and stakeholders at the national and community levels.*

- On 8 November, Uzbekistan presented its report during **the 44th session of the Universal Periodic Review**, highlighting achievements made to end statelessness as part of the #IBelong campaign in opening remarks. Serbia, Turkey and UK recommended that Uzbekistan accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

- On 9 November, UNHCR delivered lectures **on statelessness and asylum to 40 students** of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Academy, and 109 students at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent. Within the context of the global #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, and ahead of the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the lectures sought to promote awareness and understanding of forced displacement and statelessness.

- On 8 November, UNHCR delivered **two information sessions on statelessness and asylum** to 26 employees of the Center for Advanced Training of Lawyers at the Ministry of Justice and 19 employees of the Ombudsperson's office. Organized to mark the 9th anniversary of the #IBelong campaign, the sessions aimed to familiarise participants with asylum and statelessness international standards and best practices for reducing and preventing statelessness, facilitate the exchange of solutions, strengthen cooperation between the two institutions and UNHCR, and equip participants to better identify and refer stateless individuals to the relevant authorities.

The #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness directly links to target 9 of Sustainable Development Goal 16: to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 7 October, UNHCR delivered a **presentation on refugee protection and referral mechanisms** during the Advanced Train-the-Trainer Course in Tashkent, organized by OSCE and UNODC for Uzbek border guards, on addressing cross-border challenges in the identification of potential Foreign Terrorist Fighters.

- On 11 November, UNHCR delivered a **welcoming speech to over 200 students** at Cambridge International School in Tashkent participating in the Model UN Refugee Challenge. In line with the 2023 MUN Refugee Challenge global themes, the address focused on refugees' access to jobs and financial services, and the importance of social inclusion and integration.

- So far in 2023, over 150 **Afghan households (representing approximately 700 individuals) in Uzbekistan have approached UNHCR** via its emergency hotline. UNHCR provided general counselling, including information on how to request political asylum, mindful of the challenges. Most callers reported issues relating to economic hardship, and lack of access to legal employment, medical services and rights, as well as problems with renewing their visa to stay in Uzbekistan.

Ending Statelessness

- On 19 September, the National Human Rights Centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NHRC), together with UNHCR, presented a Comparative Legal Analytical Study on Statelessness in Uzbekistan, **and Uzbek translation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union-UNHCR Handbook for Parliamentarians on Citizenship and Statelessness**. The publications were presented to Members of the Legislative Chamber and the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan; representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, and Justice; the Office of the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis for Human Rights, and representatives of international organizations and development partners.

- Within the 2023 joint workplan with the NHRC, on 21 September UNHCR convened a **seminar on Statelessness Determination Procedures** and standards of the 1954 Statelessness Convention, for 20+ staff of the Ministry of Interior, NHRC, Ombudsperson's Office, academia, and civil society. The seminar aimed to increase participants' knowledge on statelessness standards, with the focus on establishing Statelessness Determination Procedures. Participants had an opportunity to compare and assess existing procedures in Uzbekistan and other former soviet republics with international standards on statelessness status determination as per UNHCR's Handbook.

Responding to Emergencies

- On 26 October, UNHCR dispatched **a 13-truck convoy from its Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub** in Termez, to Afghanistan, in support of the Herat earthquake emergency response. The trucks transported 177 metric tons of relief items – 525x family tents; 3,233x winterization kits; and 156x Refugee Housing Units – to provide temporary accommodation for families who lost their homes. A further 13 trucks were dispatched 7 November with 194x Refugee Housing Units; 25,200x blankets; 24,395x solar lamps; 2,500x plastic sheets; and three rubhalls. So far in 2023, the Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub in Termez has processed 27 trucks of relief items, with 309 metric tons of relief items, supporting emergency preparedness and response in Afghanistan and Iran.

- As a country bordering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is part of the 2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP), with activities seeking to support 11,700 Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan, and 21,750 members of the host community. The Afghanistan Situation RRP Mid-Year Report outlines key achievements and gaps from the first six months of 2023. As of the end of November 2023, RRP partners in Uzbekistan – IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF – are only 4% funded.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- As a member of all four UN Country Teams and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNHCR engages with governments, UN and development partners, international financial institutions and others across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to ensure refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are not left behind in States' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thank you for the support

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to the UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including:

UNHCR appreciates the important contributions of private donors in: Australia | Germany | Italy | Japan | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | United Kingdom | United States of America

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UNHCR maintains email and phone 'hotlines' across the four countries for anyone in need of information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee can find key contacts and updated information about asylum procedures in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on help.unhcr.org/centralasia, in English, Russian and Dari.

VISIT THE UNHCR CENTRAL ASIA WEBSITE