IRAN SITUATIONAL UPDATE N° 1

31 January 2025

UNHCR
آژانس پناهندگان سازمان ملل متحد

CONTEXT

On 26 January, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Kabul to discuss Afghan refugees. Both nations agreed on a “dignified” and “gradual” return of undocumented migrants. Afghan officials thanked Iran for decades of hosting refugees, while Iran emphasized closer cooperation. MFA Spokesman Baghaei expressed hopes for effective solutions to the refugee crisis.

On 28 January, the Political Deputy of the Minister of Interior stated during the 48th Meeting of the Universal Periodic Review session under the UN Human Rights Council, that the country has maintained its inclusive policies towards foreign nationals. He said the services provided by GIRI go beyond its obligation under the 1951 refugee convention, while hosting around 6 million or more individuals. GIRI has provided education and health services, engaged in vocational training, and issued and extended 900,000 temporary work permits over the past 4 years.

By 31 January 2025, the Minister of the Interior reported that 1.1M foreign nationals returned to their home countries during the Iranian Year – (20 March 2024 to 1 March 2025). This figure includes the forced and “spontaneous” returns, although the data does not differentiate between the two categories.

Iran's latest provided figure for Amayesh and Hoviat card holders stands at 593,775 according to CAFIA Head Mr. Yar Ahmadi, marking a decrease from the previous 773,049 (760,874 Amayesh, 12,175 Hoviat). However, the card renewal exercise, known as Amayesh 18, has been extended until 18 February 2025.CAFIA continues to maintain uncertainty about the 2.6 million headcount Slip holders. Mr. Yar Ahmadi classified them as individuals with temporary status pending further determination. UNHCR continues advocating jointly with RRP partners for the extension of the validity of the headcount slips and the protection of their holders from deportation.

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USD 140 million
UNHCR Iran financial requirements for 2025

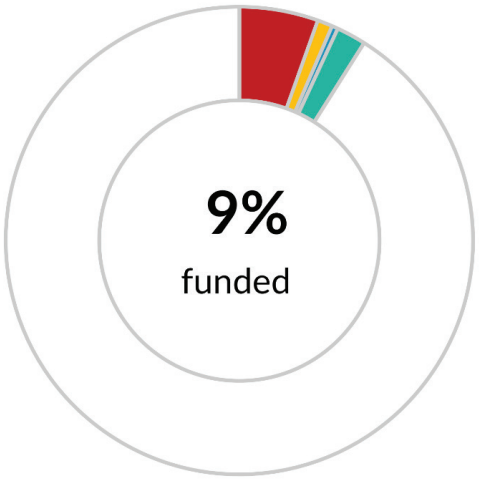
USD 127.5 million
Funding gap for 2025

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

FUNDING UPDATE

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

as of 31 January 2025



UNHCR RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

PROTECTION

- **Reception & Communication with Communities**

  UNHCR has provided **counselling to 38,800** in person in the five UNHCR offices or remotely by phone. To offer information and counselling , the hotline answered 8,876 phone calls, over 4,400 emails were received, and 778 letters via the different physical mailboxes.

  UNHCR Iran website and help page are also a common source of consultation. These two have cumulated about 55,585 visits in January. Out of the 12,535 submitted online forms, 50% asked for resettlement and 28,4% requested assistance.

- **Legal Assistance**

  In January 2025, **798 people have been supported by UNHCR Hired Lawyers**, including representations or assistance in Dispute Settlement Committees services. This counselling is key to accessing rights and services in line with the national legislation.

  UNHCR's Legal Services across the country have focused mainly on family disputes, employment and financial disputes, criminal cases, and access to documentation.

- **Child and Women Protection & Psychosocial Counselling**

  UNHCR has identified a total of **542 Afghan children with specific protection needs**. Among them, 82 were at risk of dropping out of school and 73 were engaged in child labour. The protection team conducted Best interest Assessments and provided psychosocial support and legal aid in response.

  To support women at risk, UNHCR has identified 335 cases and carried out 44 interventions, mostly legal aid and psychosocial support, as well as the provision of cash assistance, support with health services, and documentation, among others.

  Additionally, **214 persons have participated in psychosocial counselling sessions** conducted by the UNHCR hired psychological counsellors in January. The counselling sessions were conducted either in-person or through phone.

- **Cash Assistance**

  The bi-monthly cash instalments provide crucial support to vulnerable refugees, including those with special protection needs and disabilities, helping them meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life. In January 2025, **1,918 most vulnerable persons received their instalments** of cash assistance for a total of IRR 54.6 billion (USD 54,400). Out of these, 54% are women.

HIGHLIGHT

AHC Raoud Mazou (right) meeting wit Mr. Sherafati, DG of CAFIA Khorashan-Razavi, during his visit to Mashhad.

ASSIST. HIGHT COMMISSIONER MISSION TO IRAN: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY FOR REFUGEES

In January 2025, the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner (AHC) for Operations visited Iran, meeting with senior government officials, donors, and UN partners to strengthen international support for refugee response. Discussions with the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and BAFIA focused on Iran's inclusive policies and the need for global responsibility-sharing, particularly as Headcount Slips expire. The AHC visited UNHCR-supported education and livelihoods projects, engaged with refugees, and addressed the diplomatic community, emphasizing the importance of increased funding and flexible support mechanisms to sustain Iran's refugee response efforts.

UNHCR RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Education

Around 610,000 Afghan and Iraqi children are enrolled in schools for the 2024-2025 year. UNHCR supports the government of Iran by co-funding school construction and providing scholarships through the **DAFI programme, benefiting 298 refugee students**. This is especially crucial for Afghan women abroad, who lack educational opportunities in Afghanistan but can pursue their studies in Iran en par with Iranian nationals.

UNHCR has constructed 106 educational facilities since 2010. The Iranian government estimates a need for 25,000 additional schools with support to teachers' personnel cost, teacher's refresher trainings and school equipment.

Health

UNHCR works with the Ministry of Health to ensure refugees have access to medical services, including primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare. This includes support for health posts, procurement of essential medicines, and emergency response to disease outbreaks and covering the costs of premium health insurance for some **95,000 individuals**. Inclusive Primary Health Care is available to all regardless of status or documentation countrywide.

Livelihoods

Under the Iranian labour law, refugees holding Hoviat or Amayesh cards can obtain temporary work permits allowing them to work legally in specific job categories–primarily in the construction and agriculture sectors. UNHCR works in partnership with NGOs to support vulnerable members and the host community to support **skill-building opportunities**, aiming to improve economic prospects and economic stability.

Resettlement

Between 2022 and 2024, over 10,100 refugees were submitted for resettlement to countries, notably Australia, Finland, the UK, New Zealand and Italy. Of these, **over 2,700 have departed Iran**, with 63% being women and girls at risk. Other categories included individuals with legal and physical protection needs, survivors of violence and torture and children and adolescents.

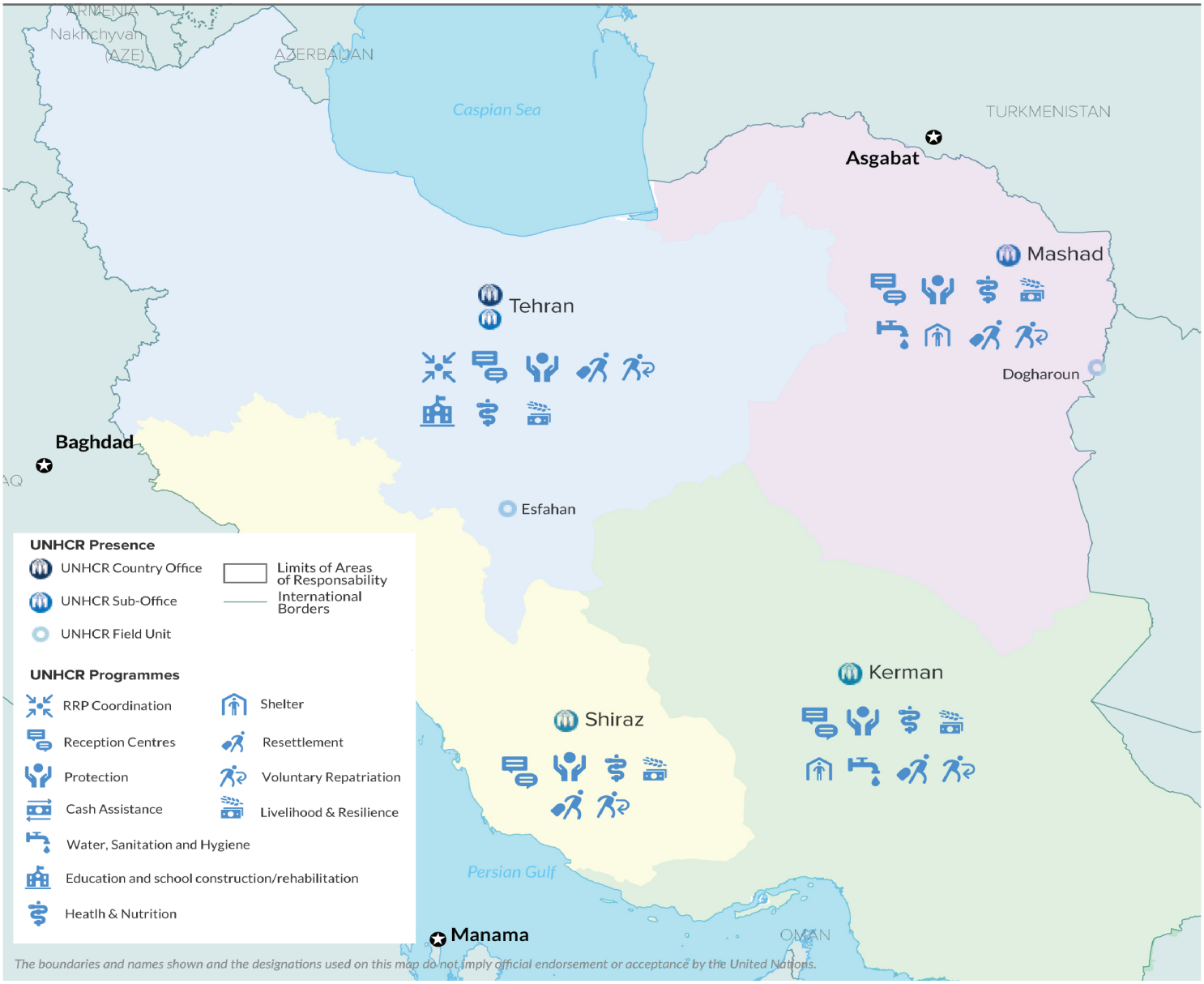
UNHCR welcomes the ongoing government and country commitment to resettlement while departures remain slow. While there is a clear funding shortfall, UNHCR continues to support these efforts by creating structures and procedures, developing partnerships, upgrading staff skills and establishing new ways of enhancing complementary pathways.

REFUGEE RESPONSE PLAN

In preparation for a high-level meeting, extensive groundwork was carried out in January to coordinate with various RRP organizations to identify key areas of improvement in 2025. Efforts will focus on enhancing reporting mechanisms, joint advocacy and fundraising strategies and improved coordination. These preparations aim to establish task forces to strengthen the impact of RRP initiatives, ensuring better source allocation and outcomes for refugees and the host communities via a targeted, joint response

14 RRP PARTNERS

IOM UN MIGRATION
UNDP
WFP World Food Programme
unicef
UNODC
International Trade Centre
RELIEF INTERNATIONAL
UNFPA
UNHCR
UNIDO
INTERSOS HUMANITARIAN AID
NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL
UNESCO



KEY FIGURES

Iran hosts **3.8 million** refugees and individuals in refugee-like situations

- **773,000** refugees: Amayesh & Hoviat card holders
- **2.6 million** headcount slip holders
- **300,000** individuals with various documentation

111 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan in 2025 through UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Programme

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UNHCR would like to wholeheartedly thank its donors

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