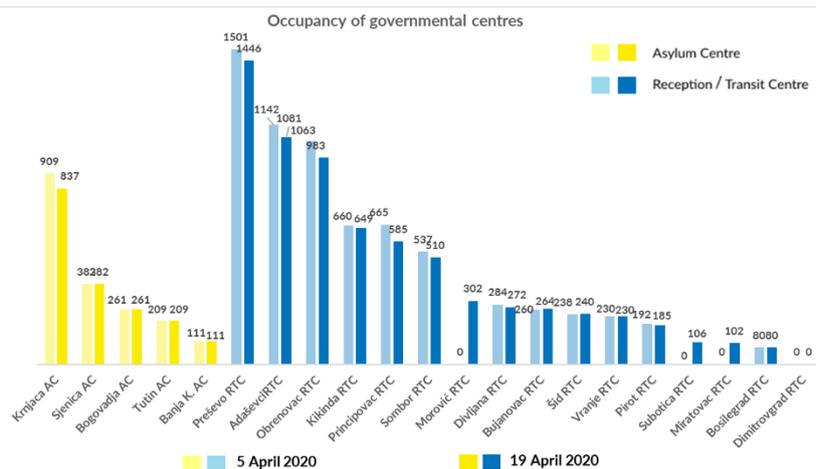


SERBIA SPECIAL FORTNIGHTLY UPDATE

- No refugee, asylum-seeker or migrant tested positive for COVID-19 infection.
- In a **tragic incident** during the night of 16-17 April, a boat with 16 foreign men and two Serbian smugglers trying to cross from Serbia into Romania on the Danube **capsized**, leaving eight persons who attempted to swim back to Serbia missing, one young man from Syria drowned, while nine, mainly Arab-speaking single men and a national of Serbia, were rescued by the Romanian coast guard. The search for the missing continues.
- The UNHCR office and programme stayed open and its programme fully functioning as did those of our ten civil society partner organizations, who delivered legal, psycho-social and other counselling services, [Serbian language](#) and other education classes, cultural mediation and interpretation as well as emergency humanitarian aid to close to 2,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), internally displaced or stateless persons.
- UNHCR donated another 5,000 litres of soap, 8,000 masks, 8,000 gloves, and 20,000 bottles of hand sanitizer to the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM), as well as 2,300 masks and 2,300 gloves to the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs (MOLEVSA). The value of COVID-19 related donations to front-line institutions, which protect persons UNHCR cares for now exceeds 85,000 USD.
- UNHCR recorded 413 **new arrivals** (including 8 UASC), 98% from North Macedonia and 2% from Albania (up from 81 arrivals recorded during the preceding fortnight).
- Accommodating 8,835 asylum seekers and migrants, more than half of twenty Asylum (AC) and Reception/Transit Centres (RTC) remain overcrowded. Residents comprise 3,815 citizens of Afghanistan, 1,650 of Syria, 1,006 of Pakistan, 630 of Bangladesh, 359 of Iraq, 332 of Iran, 251 of Morocco, 180 of Palestine, and 576 from 46 other countries. 7,259 are adult men, 408 adult women and 1,168 children, including 617 UASC.



- The SCRM continued decongesting and expanding collective accommodation capacities: on 6 April, it reopened Miratovac RTC, at the southern border with North Macedonia, with a capacity of 100 beds, which had been closed four years ago, as well as Subotica RTC in the North of Serbia with 130 beds. As of 10 April, authorities started moving new arrivals as well as alleged “trouble-makers” from other centres to Morović (max. capacity of 500 beds) near the border with Croatia. Conditions in this new tent camp, which is tightly controlled by the Army and yet lacks heating or warm water remain of concern, also because child welfare services already identified over 40 children amongst its residents, who may have been transferred there mistakenly.
- Residents of several AC/RTC protested their confinement, quality of food, or other services in their centres. Law-enforcement authorities entered four centres to quell these protests and transfer alleged instigators. Allegations of excessive use of force are being investigated *inter alia* by the Ombudsperson.
- UNHCR and partners kept regular contact with 106 **asylum seekers and refugees in private accommodation**. UNHCR approved new applications for cash based interventions (CBI) by six asylum seekers or refugees who lost their sources of income due to the pandemic situation, raising the total number of CBI beneficiaries to 73. Partner Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) obtained work permits for six asylum seekers and partner Crisis Response and Policy Centre (CRPC) supported six asylum seekers to access formal and informal education and livelihood support.
- Guardians kept regular contact with **UASC**. MOLEVSA concluded an MOU with partner IDEAS to collaborate in the development of public policies, instructions and practices for the temporary protection and integration of UASC. Partners Psychological Innovation Network (PIN) and CRPC provided online education to 46 UASC accommodated in five specialised MOLEVSA and NGO-run UASC homes. IDEAS delivered hygiene items to UASC in two homes in Belgrade and Loznica. Partner Indigo continued to support authorities with cultural mediation, identifying UASC,

providing psychological aid and support, organizing outdoor activities and workshops in the RTCs of Bujanovac, Preševo, Pirot and Vranje and the UASC home in Niš.

- Most UNHCR partners networked existing sites, expertise and resources into a [joint fb page](#) offering a wealth of information and services in six languages to asylum-seekers and refugees. Partner Sigma Plus expanded counselling, information and interpretation services to residents of Pirot, Bosilgrad and Tutin centres through a new FB Group [Protect Yourself and Others](#). BCHR opened a website and distributed leaflets [Let's Stop the Pandemic Together](#) of user-friendly WHO/CDC information on COVID-19 prevention in English, Serbian, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Pashtu to refugees and asylum seekers in private accommodation. BCHR's Youth Project launched a [Newsletter](#) on human rights in the time of emergency, practical information related to the pandemic, tips for wellbeing and stories of solidarity.
- Partner Praxis [appealed to the Government of Serbia](#) to include persons who do not possess personal documents or residence as beneficiaries of soup kitchens, humanitarian aid and welfare by local authorities, and referred discriminatory practice of local self-governments to the Ombudsperson and/or the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality. Praxis also advised the Red Cross to not rely solely on lists of local authorities but include stateless persons or *sans papiers* in its planned distribution of food packages in Roma settlements.



Humanitarian aid being prepared for delivery to vulnerable residents of informal settlement, ©A11 Initiative, April 2020

- 9-15 April, partner A11 Initiative delivered packages of food, water and hygiene products to 230 most vulnerable internally displaced/Roma families in nine informal settlements [or unofficial collective centres in Belgrade](#) municipalities. A11 Initiative also initiated interim measures based on Rule 39 of the ECfHR on an increased risk to health and right to life due to authorities failure to provide water to the residents of informal settlement Čukarička šuma in Belgrade and launched a [human rights blog at the time of the COVID-19](#) to exchange information among organizations working with vulnerable groups under the state of emergency.
- Partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) continued identifying, counselling and referring survivors of SGBV and, supported by CRPC, trained UASC Peer Educators on COVID-19 protective measures.
- The joint UNHCR-UNDP-UNV project trained 30 new young Roma volunteers online, who will thus be ready to start supporting local communities in May.
- On 17 April, BCHR [called on the Serbian Government](#) to inform the Serbian public about a secret agreement between the Ministers of Interior of Serbia and Austria on the transfer of rejected asylum seekers from Austria to Serbia, which had become public due to a parliamentary enquiry in Vienna.

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¹ Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contribution \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

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