AFGHAN POPULATION MOVEMENT SNAPSHOT

August 2020

Since the 1979 Soviet invasion and the subsequent waves of violence that have rocked Afghanistan, millions of Afghans have fled the country, seeking safety elsewhere. The Islamic Republic of Iran boasts 5,894 km of borders. Most of it, including the 921 km that are shared with Afghanistan, are porous and located in remote areas. According to the Government of Iran, some 2000-2500 Afghans arrive in Iran every day. UNHCR Iran does not have access to border points and thus is unable to independently monitor arrivals or returns of Afghans. Afghans who currently reside in Afghanistan have different statuses: some are refugees (Amayesh card holders), other are Afghans who posses a national passport, while other are undocumented. These populations move across borders in various ways.

951,000

Amayesh Card Holders (Afghan refugees[1])

In 2001, the Government of Iran issues Amayesh cards to regularize the stay of Afghan Refugees in the country as refugees. Each year, refugees have to renew their Amayesh cards. However, more recently arrived Afghans do not receive an Amayesh card. The Government of Iran is in charge of refugee status determination and UNHCR can advocate for a handful of refugees to receive amayesh cards each year.

1,5-2 M

undocumented Afghans

Undocumented is an umbrella term used to describe various groups of foreign nationals residing in Iran including: those with an invalid passport and invalid Iranian visa; those who lost their Amayesh status for different reasons; those who hold a type of document, for example Tazkara, but no legal residence for Iran; and those who are not in possession of any type of document.

450,000

passport holders

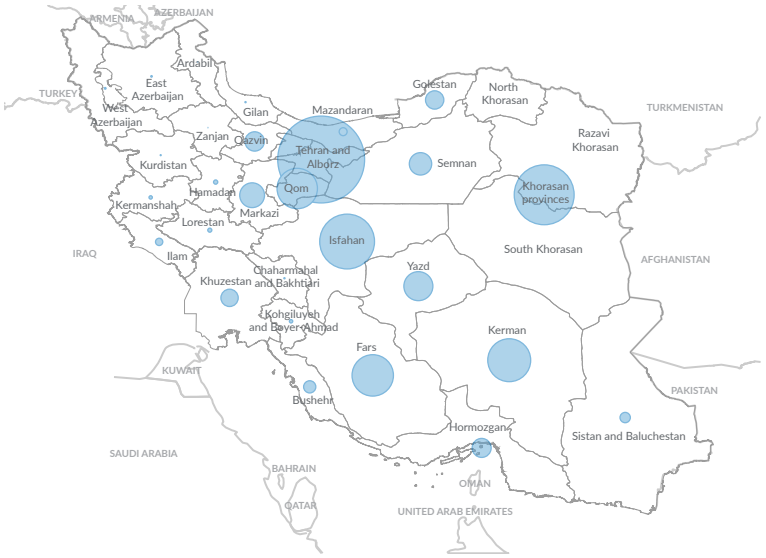
The Comprehensive Regularisation Plan (CRP) introduced in 2010 allowed undocumented Afghans to register with the government of Iran, and receive an Afghan passport and a visa ("family passport"). The visas of those participating in the CRP have been extended at different intervals since 2012, often following high level visits by the government of Afghanistan.

570

voluntarily repatriated in 2020

In March 2020, UNHCR suspended its VolRep activities as a preventive measure to reduce exposure of refugees, host communities and staff to COVID-19. In May, UNHCR partially resumed VolRep activities from its Field Unit in Dogharoun, in keeping with health and security measures, to assist refugees who have opted to return to Afghanistan.

REFUGEE POPULATION PER PROVINCE

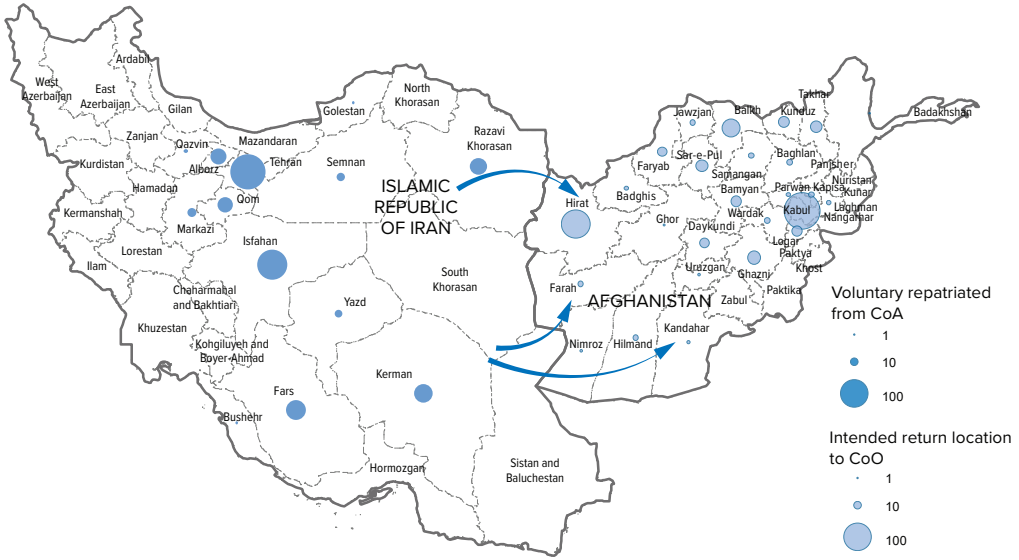


Circle size is proportional to the number of refugees by province

*The map reflects Afghan refugees as of 2015 and Iraqi refugees as of 2013

Disclaimer: the boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATED BY COUNTRY OF ASYLUM & INTENDED DESTINATION



[1] (Afghan "prima facie" refugees. There has not been a prima facie decision or statement by the GIRI on prima facie recognition fro this group. Technically Amayesh is a "temporary residency permit" and it does not specifically afford refugee status.

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

In 2020, displacement due to ongoing conflict and natural disasters is continuing to drive humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. Almost 96,000 people have left their homes this year due to fighting. Many of these people remain displaced across the country, as conflict and poverty prevent them from returning to their areas of origin.

2,553,000

Overall internally displaced Afghans

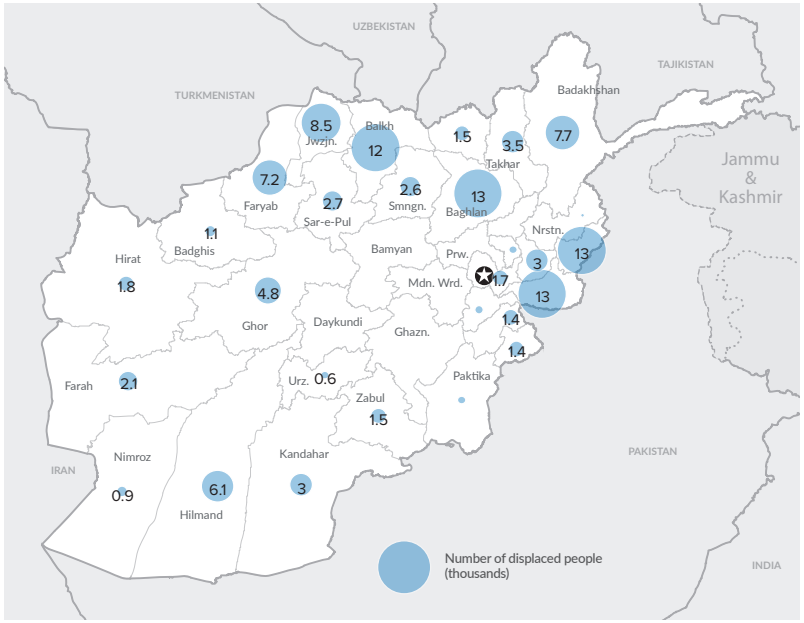
The 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview estimates that close to a million people on the move will need humanitarian assistance by the end of the year.

96,000

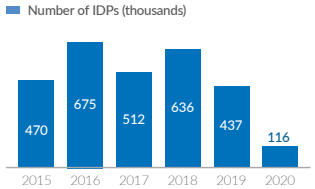
Afghans displaced internally in 2020

59% of newly displaced Afghans are children under 18

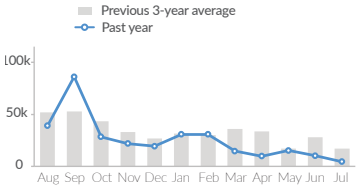
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE BY PROVINCE OF ARRIVAL



Past six years



Monthly trends



*2018 number also includes people displaced due to drought and other factors

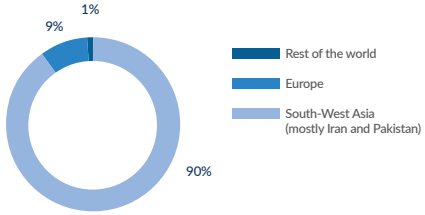
ONWARD MOVEMENT OF AFGHANS

From January to June 2020, Afghans were the second most common nationality to claim asylum in Europe (16,925 first-time claims), after Syrians (23,860 first-time claims). In the past 8 months, roughly one in two Afghan asylum claimants were granted international protection. Germany received the most claims.

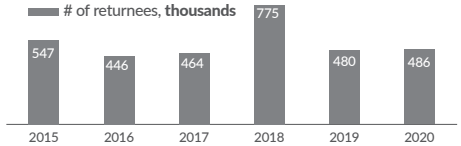
3,000,000

Afghans outside of Afghanistan

This number includes only Afghan refugees and asylum seekers



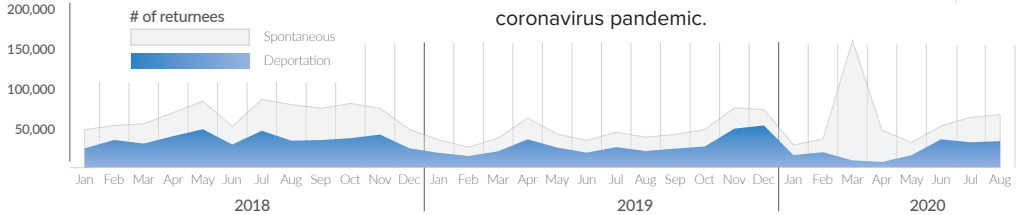
RETURN OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS FROM IRAN



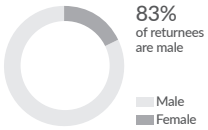
486,000

Undocumented returnees in 2020

The number of Afghans who have returned to Afghanistan spontaneously, without UNHCR support (approx. 320,000) increased by 130% compared to the same period in 2019 (approx. 140,000), presumably due to the deteriorating financial situation in Iran and the coronavirus pandemic.

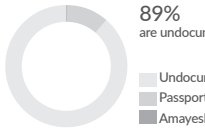


RETURNEES BORDER MONITORING UNHCR AFGHANISTAN



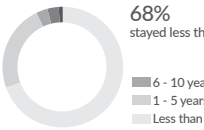
83% of returnees are male

Male
Female



89% are undocumented

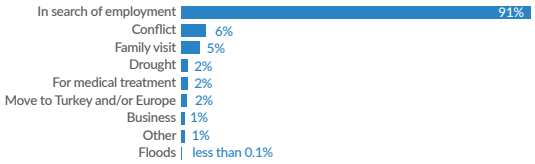
Undocumented
Passport holder
Amayesh card holder



68% stayed less than a year

6 - 10 years
1 - 5 years
Less than 1 year
Born in Iran
More than 10 years

Reasons of entry to Iran



Top reasons of return to Afghanistan

Sources: Refugees in Iran - BAFIA; Voluntary Repatriation - UNHCR Iran (Sep 2020); Afghans outside of Afghanistan - UNHCR Refugee Data Finder as of 17 Aug, UNHCR Factsheet "Onward Movements of Afghan Refugees and Migrants toward Europe" (Jul 2020); undocumented returnees from Iran from 2018 to Aug 2020 - IOM Afghanistan Return of Undocumented Afghans reports (29 Aug); UNHCR Afghanistan returnee border monitoring - UNHCR Afghanistan (covers the period from 5 April to 18 Aug 2020); internally displaced people in Afghanistan - OCHA Aghanistan "Snapshot of Population Movements (January to July 2020)". The numbers are subject to change as more information becomes available. Updated: 9 September 2020. Contact: Farha Bhoyroo, Communications Officer, bhoyroo@unhcr.org.