

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

15 December 2021

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

676,431 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan in 2021, of which 59% are children.

Afghans continue to make their way to Iran informally through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of **25,466 Afghans who arrived in Iran** from 1 January to 12 December, though the numbers are much higher.

Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. More than 60% of new arrivals interviewed by UNHCR reported using smugglers during their crossing. 85% stated that they had crossed from Afghanistan to Iran while 13% crossed from Pakistan.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- On 10 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, and the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, **stated** in an op-ed that **“Afghanistan is in free fall”**. The economic contraction triggered by the Taliban takeover is unprecedented, with a projected 30 per cent loss of the country’s gross domestic product that could occur within a year. “We can clearly see the limits of our humanitarian mandate and the need for more systemic, sustainable support. Without both, chaos ensues.”
- On 9 December, OCHA **reported** that during the period of September through November 2021, its **humanitarian partners reached 8 million people with food assistance in Afghanistan**; nearly 150,000 people with relief items; and 130,000 children with community-based education activities. In addition, more than 1.1 million people received primary and secondary health-care services; more than 200,000 children were treated for acute malnutrition; 45,000 people received protection assistance, including cash; and 488,000 people received water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance. **With the worsening situation in the country, the humanitarian requirement is expected to triple in 2022.**
- On 14 December, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, **Nada Al-Nashif, said that the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is threatening basic rights**, with women, girls and civil society among those most affected. Al-Nashif stated that her office has received “credible allegations” of more than 100 killings

of former Afghan national security forces and others associated with the former government. Al-Nashif also expressed deep concern about the continued risk of child recruitment, particularly boys, by both ISIL-KP and the de facto authorities.

- **On 6 December, Amnesty reported that essential services for women and girl survivors of gender-based violence in Afghanistan have been decimated.** In 26 new interviews, survivors and service providers told Amnesty International that the Taliban closed shelters and released detainees from prison, including many convicted of gender-based violence offences. "It defies belief that the Taliban threw open prison doors across the country, with no thought of the risks that convicted perpetrators pose to the women and girls they victimized, and to those who worked on survivors' behalf", said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary-General.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified **25,466 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran** (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,362 heads of households). As of 13 December, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 1,950 families (consisting of 7,406 individuals), have been interviewed for protection concerns.
 - **40% of new arrivals who were interviewed were Hazara**, 37% Tajik and 7% Pashtun.
 - 23% were female heads of households. In total, the largest group of new arrivals interviewed by UNHCR comprised of women (30%), followed by children (44%) and men (27%).
 - 22% of those interviewed had previous records of voluntary repatriation, while 8% had previous records of deportation from Iran to Afghanistan.
 - **68% of the population crossed into Iran irregularly**, with 66% reporting using smugglers. While 75% of new arrived families had documentation such as Tazkira or passport, only 23% have valid visas to enter Iran. Another 25% have no documentation of any kind.
- **UNHCR's sub-office in Kerman (SoK) delivered 1,000 blankets to provincial BAFIA in Sistan and Baluchistan, based on BAFIA's request for support last week due to a reported outbreak of scabies in the government managed Alghadir transit/deportation centre.** UNHCR opposes detention and the forced return of individuals to territories where their lives are at risk, though we provide life-saving assistance on exceptional basis to alleviate the dire conditions our persons of concern experience in such facilities, particularly during the harsh winter season.
- **Different government officials, at various times and events, have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals to Iran may range between 100,000-300,000.** UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralized registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. The operation is using available indications from various sources to estimate the Afghan new arrivals in Iran for 2021/2022. Bearing in mind that a large number will likely be deported, that others are individuals moving to Iran for livelihoods or familial reasons and that a small number may move onwards towards Turkey. UNHCR estimates that 274,000 Afghan new arrivals will remain in Iran – 166,000 in 2021 and 108,000 in 2022.

RETURNS TO AFGHANISTAN

- Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran continue to be returned to Afghanistan, despite UNHCR's non-return advisory and advocacy to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. Through its analysis of available data and information, **UNHCR estimates 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the government.**
- Based on information collected by UNHCR in Afghanistan, a total of 60,532 Afghan individuals have been deported during the first three weeks of November this year, which is a daily average of 2,900 deportations, with a peak of 5,200 in one day on 2 November.

REGIONAL REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (RRPRP)

- On 25 August, UNHCR launched the **Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP)**, an inter-agency plan with 10 partners, focusing on preparedness, limited emergency response, and expanded support to regular programmes. UNHCR is currently leading the development of the 2022 RRP, with planning assumptions of a steady and ongoing flow of new arrivals into Iran from Afghanistan (with an expectation that, although the situation in Afghanistan is likely to further deteriorate, there will not be an observable mass influx into neighbouring countries), with borders likely to continue to be tightly managed. The 2022 RRP development is advancing, with a total budget of US\$258.7 million having been agreed with 15 partners, covering 8 sectors.

- **At the Niatak site in Sistan and Baluchistan province**, construction work continues with preparations for emergency tents to be put in place. UNHCR will conduct missions to the site next week to monitor the progress of ongoing works. The site will be able to host some 7,500 individuals, once opened.
- In light of newly arrived persons moving towards urban centres, UNHCR is strongly advocating with BAFIA for a **complementary urban response**. This is also to avoid an encampment policy at the border and have a hybrid response, in line with UNHCR global policy. Activities being proposed for an urban response include cash-based assistance, as well as reinforcing UNHCR's regular activities like education and health support.

NATIONAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The Government of Iran informed UNHCR that, under a worst-case scenario, they anticipate that up to **500,000 new arrivals from Afghanistan could enter Iran over 6-months**. In case of an influx, new arrivals would reportedly be granted access to Iranian territory and settled in locations along the border. Shelter, health and food would be the priorities to cope with the Government's scenario.

Such contingency planning is a Government-led process. UNHCR continues to seek additional guidance and clarity on various issues, including the status that will be conferred to new arrivals and the process for receiving them.

UNHCR coordinates the refugee response among international actors in Iran, with 18 participating UN agencies and international NGOs under its leadership, in line with the globally-agreed **Refugee Coordination Model**. UNHCR and BAFIA convene on a regular basis, through an agreed-upon biweekly/bilateral meeting. Discussions are ongoing around options for more inclusive coordination.

FUNDING NEEDS

For 2021, the interagency regional funding needs are USD 299 million, including almost USD 131 million for UNHCR alone.

For Iran, interagency needs are USD 135.8 million, including USD 58.9 million for UNHCR. As of 28 November, 3 of the 10 agencies participating under the RRRP have reported receiving a combined USD 28 million, indicating that the RRRP is 19% funded. This analysis is based on partners reporting new funding; however, the actual funding is likely higher, as many partners have not yet reported on the funding they have most recently received.

UNHCR Iran's funding needs for both its regular and emergency programmes in 2021 are USD 112.1 million. As of 15 December 2021, UNHCR's **overall programmes in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **58% funded**.

FUNDING UPDATE

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 programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds. Whilst interest in the current emergency is relevant and opportune, UNHCR wishes to also highlight ongoing regular programming needs which are severely underfunded.

Earmarked contributions | USD

Earmarked contributions for the Iran operation amount to some **24 million**

European Union 9.2 million | **Italy** 7.7 million | **Japan** 3.85 million | **United Kingdom** 2.69 million | **Fast Retailing Co., Ltd. (UNIQLO)** 2.6 million | **Denmark** 2 million | **Finland** 1.79 | **Germany** 1.1 million | **Norway** 0.36 million | **Spain** 0.36 million | **Qatar Airways** 0.17 million | **Russian Federation** 0.1 million | **UNAIDS** 0.03 million

Major softly earmarked contributions | USD

Germany 95.9 million | **Private donors Australia** 15.9 million | **Austria** 11.8 million | **France** 11.5 million | **Private donors Germany** 5.8 million | **Private donors Spain** 5.6 million | **Private donors Denmark** 5.1 million | **Denmark** 4.8 million | **Netherlands** 4.1 million | **Norway** 4.1 million | **Private donors United Kingdom** 3.9 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 3.1 million | **Japan** 2.9 million | **Private donors USA** 2.3 million | **Private donors Canada** 2.1 million

Canada | Czech Republic | Iceland | Ireland | Jersey | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | New Zealand | Poland | Slovakia | Slovenia | Spain | Private donors

Major unearmarked contributions | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions

Norway 80 million | **Private donors Spain** 75.9 million | **Sweden** 75.4 million | **United Kingdom** 40.4 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 38.8 million | **Netherlands** 36.1 million | **Denmark** 34.6 million | **Private donors Japan** 30.9 million | **Germany** 26 million | **Japan** 23.4 million | **France** 20.2 million | **Private donors Italy** 19.6 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Private donors Sweden** 15.5 million | **Ireland** 12.5 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Italy** 10.7 million | **Private donors USA** 10.6 million

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