

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

8 February 2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

702,724 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan since the start of 2021, of which 21% are women and 59% are children.

According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. **500,000** Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.

Borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. **32,198 Afghans who arrived in Iran** from 1 January 2021 to 4 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

UNHCR border monitoring reports indicate a meaningful decline in the number of undocumented inflows into Iran through the unofficial crossing points near Islam Qala since the Iranian Consulate in Herat restarted issuing tourist visas.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- OHCHR, the UN Human Rights Office, has said it is very alarmed over the disappearance of six people who were abducted in Kabul, in connection with recent women's rights protests. "We are gravely concerned for their well-being and safety", said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Despite the de facto authorities' announcement on Saturday of an investigation into the disappearance two weeks ago of these individuals, "there is still no confirmed information on their whereabouts", she added. In the early evening of 19 January, Parwana Ibrahim Khil and her brother-in-law were abducted while travelling in Kabul. Later that same evening, Tamana Paryani and her three sisters were taken from a house in the city. On 16 January, both Ms. Khil and Ms. Paryani had taken part in peaceful demonstrations calling for the rights of women to be respected by the Taliban, who swept back into power last August. Since then, there have been reports coming in of house searches of other women who participated in protests.
- On 3 February 2022, the 29th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team of the United Nations Security Council was made public. The report states that Afghanistan has the potential to become a safe haven and a potential magnet for Al-Qaida and a number of terror groups with ties to the Central Asia region and beyond (UNdocs). While the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K) controls limited territory, it has demonstrated a continuing ability to mount sophisticated attacks, adding to the complexity of the security situation in Afghanistan. The Taliban views ISIL-K as its primary threat, as the group aims to

position itself as the chief rejectionist force in Afghanistan. Despite this and the Doha agreement of February 2020, in which the Taliban committed itself to preventing any international terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan, there are no recent signs that they have taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country. However, there has been no reports of significant new movements of foreign terrorist fighters to Afghanistan despite reports that Bin Laden's son, Abdallah, visited Afghanistan in October for meetings with the Taliban.

- **On 28 January 2022, in a recent phone call with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, stressed the need for paying special attention to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the situation of refugees (IRNA).** Two days before, on 26 January 2022, Mr. Guterres had praised Iran's generosity in hosting millions of Afghans in need for decades ([TehranTimes](#)). He noted that the global community needs to put their hands on the "wheel of progress," provide resources, and prevent Afghanistan from spiralling any further.
- **On 5 February 2022, Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Abdul Salam Hanafi, met with UN officials in Kabul.** The spokesperson of the IEA Inamullah Samangani said in a series of Twitter posts that Abdul Salaam Hanafi also met with the UN Deputy Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance and his delegation in the office of the Prime Minister. Abdul Salaam Hanafi has added that the IEA is obliged to provide facilities to the UN personnel across Afghanistan and provide them with security.
- **UNHCR border monitoring reports indicate a meaningful decline in the number of undocumented inflows into Iran through the unofficial crossing points near Islam Qala since the Iranian Consulate in Herat restarted issuing tourist visas.** Moreover, reports indicate that the number of Afghan students going from Iran to Afghanistan for status change has declined during the past two weeks. UNHCR is following up to better understand this trend.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approximately 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring new arrivals and verifying figures. This is due to the absence of a centralized registration system in Iran and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. Instead, UNHCR is using available indications from various sources to estimate the number for 2021-22. Bearing in mind that a large number will likely be deported, other individuals moving to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and 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.**
- **UNHCR Sub-Office Kerman has received unofficial reports of an increase in the number of Afghan new arrivals being arrested by the authorities and handed over to provincial Government counterparts in Sistan & Baluchestan.** While this might indicate an increase in unofficial crossings, it does not necessarily reflect a complete picture, as many of those who cross the border go unnoticed and also a large number are arrested by border police in the northern part of Sistan & Baluchestan province which borders Afghanistan and are not referred to the Government.
- **The Governor of Tehran, Mr. Mohsen Mansouri, said there are no exact statistics but estimated 1.5 to 2 million foreign nationals are in Tehran (IRIB).** He noted that identifying foreign nationals is crucial to providing good services to them. On 11 February 2022, in the introduction ceremony of Sadegh Rezaoust as the new DG BAFIA, the Deputy Interior Minister, Majid Mirahmadi, said that organizing a population of 4 million foreign nationals requires the right strategy and stressed the continuation of providing services to foreign nationals with stronger motivation and energy ([IRIB](#)).
- **Since the start of 2021 and so far in 2022, UNHCR has identified 32,198 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 7,981 heads of households).** As of 8 February 2022, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had **interviewed 2,888 families** (which consist of **11,172 individuals**) for protection concerns. Of these, the following was reported:
 - 55% are women and 45% are men.
 - The average family size is 3.9.

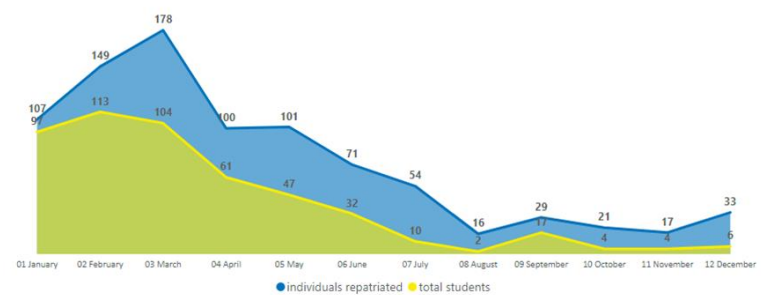
- 38% are Hazara and 37% are Tajiks.
- 90% fled Afghanistan due to the general security situation, 43% because of specific security threats, and 30% because of discrimination.
- A further 8% fled because of loss of livelihoods and 6% fled due to loss of property or land.
- Regarding province of origin in Afghanistan - 23% came from Herat, 16% came from Kabul, 9% came from Ghazni and 9% came from Balkh.

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 for those fleeing conflict to be provided asylum. Through the analysis of available data and information, **UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.**

- **During the course of 2021, 865 individuals voluntarily returned to Afghanistan.** This represents a slight decrease from the previous year, where 947 individuals returned in 2020. However, the key difference was that 57% of those returning in 2021 were students who had to change their status by leaving the country in order to enrol in tertiary education and therefore re-entering shortly afterwards, as compared to 29% in 2020. There was also a sharp decrease in voluntary returns after August, explained by developments in Afghanistan.

2021 monthly trend



- **In January 2022, only 30 individuals voluntarily returned to Afghanistan from Iran.** For comparison, in January 2021, 107 individuals voluntary repatriated, of which 97 were students.
- **Reports indicate that the number of Afghan students going from Iran to Afghanistan for status change has declined during the past two weeks.** One possible reason for this decline, based on information obtained from UNHCR Afghanistan, is the reports of extreme crowds around the Iranian Consulate in Herat and that the Taliban resorted to using force to control the crowd. In addition, this may be linked to UNHCR support for Afghan students traveling to Kish Island to change their status.

THE REGIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) AND HUMANITARIAN REPORTS PLAN (HRP) 2022

- **On 11 January 2022, UNHCR and OCHA launched the HRP and RRP.** The HRP aims to assist 22.1 million people in Afghanistan, requiring **USD 4.4 billion** and the coordination of 158 dedicated humanitarian organizations operating in Afghanistan. The RRP targets 5.7 million persons of concern in the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in coordination with 40 partners and requires **USD 623 million**. **The humanitarian and refugee response plans combined require over USD 5 billion in international funding in 2022.**
- **For Iran in 2022, the RRP is targeting 2.2 million persons of concern, including Afghans of varying status and host communities, with 16 partners involved, and requiring USD 259 million.** This includes approximately USD 69 million on health and nutrition, USD 42.5 million on Shelter and NFIs, USD 35.1 million on WASH, USD 27.5 million on education, USD 27.3 million on protection, USD 27 million on livelihoods and resilience, and USD 22.2 million of food security.

FUNDING NEEDS

The total [interagency regional funding needs](#) under the RRP in 2022 are:

- **USD 623 million.**
- Including almost **USD 263.7 million for UNHCR** alone.

For Iran, under the RRP in 2022, interagency needs are:

- **USD 259 million.**
- Including **USD 119.4 million for UNHCR.**

FUNDING UPDATE

As of 18 January 2022, UNHCR's **overall programs in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **34% funded**.

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 programs 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 **USD 31.4 million**.

Germany 16.9 million | **Italy** 5.6 million | **European Union** 4.25 million | **Republic of Korea** 0.68 million | **UNAIDS** 0.009 million

SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Netherlands 4 million

Norway | Private donors

MAJOR UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions:

Sweden 77.6 million | **Netherlands** 37.2 million | **Denmark** 35.6 million | **Germany** 27.6 million | **Switzerland** 18.4 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Ireland** 11.8 million

Algeria | Armenia | Bulgaria | Canada | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco | Montenegro | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Singapore | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

For more information, please contact:

Farha Bhojroo

External Relations Officer

bhojroo@unhcr.org, +98 912 132 7183 (mobile and WhatsApp).