UNHCR
آژانس پناهندگان سازمان ملل متحد

FACTSHEET

IRAN

April-June 2024

The Islamic Republic of Iran is host to the largest refugee population in the world, hosting 3.8 million refugees and people in refugee-like situations. The country has generously hosted refugees for over four decades.

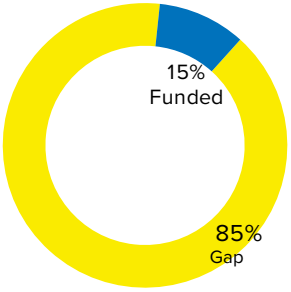
Within the framework of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), UNHCR supports the Government of Iran in implementing inclusive refugee policies. The SSAR also facilitates coordinated protection approaches among partners, consensus-building on protection priorities, as well as dialogue and partnerships in support of the Afghan refugee situation.

99% of registered refugees live in urban areas side by side with the local communities.

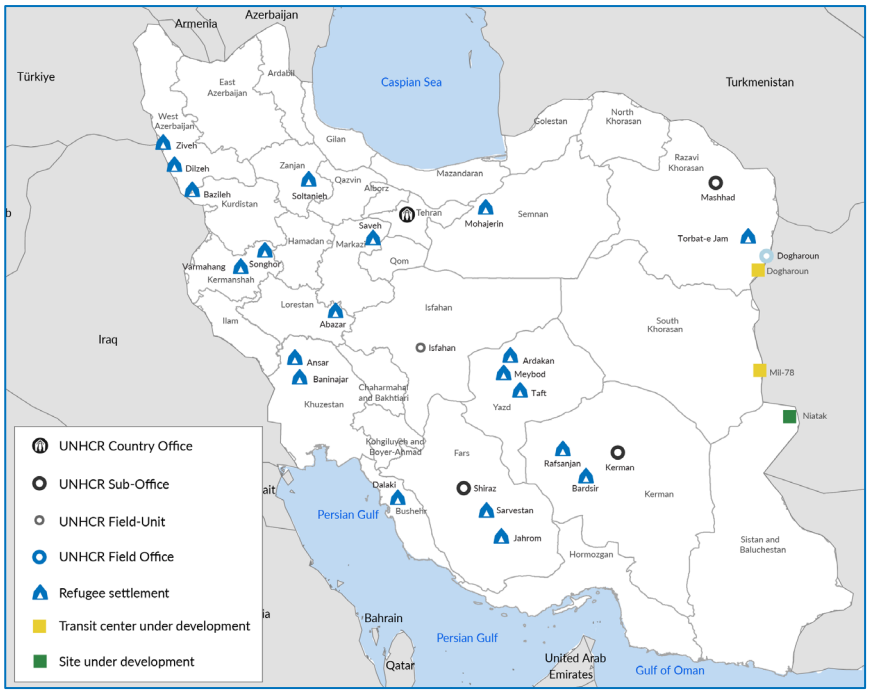
1% of registered refugees live in 21 refugee settlements in 12 provinces of Iran.

USD 140 MILLION
NEEDED FOR IRAN IN 2024

As of 30 June 2024



UNHCR Presence



273 UNHCR staff
238 National Staff
35 International Staff

Offices:

1 Country Office in Tehran
1 Field Office in Tehran,
3 Sub-Offices in Mashhad, Kerman and Shiraz
2 Field Units in Esfahan and Dogharoun

Population figures

According to the information available to UNHCR, Iran is host to some 773,000 refugees holding *Amayesh* (761,000 Afghans) and *Hoviat* cards (12,000 Iraqis). In 2022, the Government undertook a headcount of undocumented Afghan nationals in the country, including those who arrived following the events in Afghanistan of August 2021. Those Afghans who participated in the exercise, received a 'headcount slip', providing this group with a form of temporary protection. In total, UNHCR estimates that some 3.8 million forcibly displaced persons of various documentation status currently reside in Iran.

Legal identity

The Government of Iran manages registration and documentation-related processes for foreign nationals, including forcibly displaced persons. Since 2003 the Government has annually renewed refugee identification cards - ***Amayesh*** cards for Afghans and ***Hoviat*** cards for Iraqis. These cards have been providing long-staying refugees conditional freedom of movement, access to basic services and eligibility for temporary work permits for limited job categories.

In June 2023, the Government of Iran announced a new **Smart Governance Scheme for Foreign Nationals** to unify the documentation IDs issued to foreign nationals in Iran and facilitate the provision of services to them. This new scheme is expected to lead to the consolidation of all types of IDs so far issued for foreign nationals in Iran with priorities given to *Amayesh* and *Hoviat* card holders as well as students, while the access to rights and services are expected to remain linked with the previous documentation status. Headcount slip holders and family passport holders are also included in this scheme. The Government has indicated that two million smart cards had been printed and 30,000-40,000 individuals were receiving cards on a daily basis[1].

In a parallel attempt initiated by the Government to utilize the small capital of foreign nationals in the production and infrastructure of the country, in January 2024, the National Organization for Migration (NOM) announced the launch of a **"Financial Scheme"** which enables foreign nationals to invest 1-1.5 billion Iranian Rials (USD 2,500-3,750[2]) in order to receive a six-month residence booklet and access services including banking services and insurance. According to the Government, participation in the scheme is voluntary; the headcount slip holders are the primary eligible group to participate in the scheme. The Government has indicated that over 75,000 individuals have registered for the Financial Scheme[3].

Durable solutions

Following the UNHCR non-return advisory for Afghanistan, UNHCR remains cautious and continues to provide enhanced counselling under its **voluntary repatriation** programme to prospective returnees on the situation in their final destinations and routes thereto, particularly to those with more vulnerable profiles. From January to the end of June 2024, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 348 Afghans, which represents a 19 % increase compared to the same period in 2023. Some 51 % of the refugee returnees were females. Refugees declared to be returning for various reasons including financial constraints in Iran, to join family members in their country of origin/family reasons or acquiring documentation from Afghanistan. The interviews with the refugees showed that an increasing number demonstrated the financial constraints in Iran as a reason to return and look for better livelihood opportunities and prospects for their family members.

From 2022 to the end of June 2024, the Refugee Agency worked with Member States to obtain resettlement quotas and with the Government of Iran to resettle more than 8,300 refugees, as part of the solutions for the increasing protection needs of refugees in Iran combined with the security situation in Afghanistan. From January to the end of June 2024, a total of 1,898 refugees were submitted to resettlement countries for resettlement consideration. During the same period, 667 refugees departed Iran on resettlement. From January to the end of June 2024, UNHCR Iran provided support to 217 individuals to access family reunification and 56 individuals to access other pathways, such as education, employment, humanitarian visas, and private sponsorship programmes.

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[1] According to the statement of National Organization for Migration on 18 February 2024. No publicly available information is available about the number of cards issued.

[2] Based on the UN exchange rate

[3] According to the statement of National Organization for Migration on 18 February 2024. No publicly available information is available about the number of residency booklets issued.

Cash-based interventions

UNHCR provides cash assistance to refugees and refugee-like populations who are highly vulnerable, helping them address their immediate protection and basic necessities. Multipurpose cash assistance allows displaced individuals to make their own decisions about what they need most, restoring a sense of dignity. Cash can be used to meet a variety of needs, from food and shelter to healthcare and education, adapting to the unique circumstances of each recipient. UNHCR assisted 20,028 individuals (4,415 households) with cash support, utilizing a budget of approximately USD 950,000 within the reporting period.

Education

Since May 2015, all foreign national children in Iran have had access to primary and secondary education, regardless of their documentation status. Refugee, undocumented and foreign national children study side by side with Iranian schoolchildren and follow the same national curriculum.[4]

- 800,000 to 1,000,000 Afghan and Iraqi children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools for the 2023-2024 scholastic year, according to the Ministry of Education (MoE). Worsening economic conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers, combined with a lack of enrolment capacity in schools, have hampered many Afghan children's access to education, resulting in a considerable number of them dropping out of school. In 2024, UNHCR is supporting the government by co-funding the construction of four schools for refugee and host community children in refugee-hosting provinces.
- UNHCR also supports tertiary education for refugees through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme. In 2024, under the DAFI scholarship programme, 298 refugee students will benefit from support with tuition fees and living allowances.
- To mitigate the gaps in the education sector in 2024, UNHCR requires some USD 32 million. From this amount, 79 % would be used for school construction in refugee-hosting provinces, and 21 % for components of soft activities such as procurement of equipment, life-skills training, hygiene training, and support to tertiary education.

Health

UNHCR complements the inclusive health policies in Iran through working with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), to ensure that all refugees have access to vital and lifesaving medical services. These services include primary care, secondary, and tertiary healthcare and harm reduction services including medical referrals, prevention, and harm reduction services through individual and group counselling.

- Primary healthcare (PHC): Primary healthcare, which includes vaccinations, antenatal care, maternal and child health, essential medicines, and family planning, is available free of charge for refugees and asylum-seekers in health posts located in settlements and refugee-populated urban areas, at similar level of nationals. UNHCR supports the construction and rehabilitation of health posts, the costs of health personnel in 26 health posts (total 204 personnel of which 40% are Afghans), procurement of essential medicines and medical and non-medical items, immunization campaigns, and emergency response to communicable disease outbreaks.
- Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI): Since 2015, all registered refugees have access to the national health insurance scheme, similar to Iranians, as part of the agreement between UNHCR, the Bureau for Aliens and Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA)[5] and the Iranian Health Insurance Organisation (IHIO), with the cooperation of MoHME. The health insurance covers both hospitalization and para-clinical services at a subsidized rate. For the current/10th cycle (25 Feb 2024 to 24 Feb 2025), UNHCR is covering 100 % of the insurance premium for 95,000 of the most vulnerable refugees including refugees who suffer from special diseases[6] and their family members. The remaining refugee population can enrol in the health insurance scheme by paying the premium fee[7] themselves (self-enrolment in the scheme). UPHI is a family-based scheme for foreign nationals and individual enrollement is not an option, therefore refugees need to register all members of their family and pay the fee for each member. Moreover, UNHCR is engaged with its regional bureau and headquarters as well as the Government of Iran on the evaluation of health programmes, specifically health insurance to review achievements and next steps required to ensure further sustainability of the programmes.

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[4] *For uthe pcoming scholastic year (2024-25), the Government is putting additional restrictions making access to education available to those only having "YEKTA" code which is possible for categories of refugees and asylum-seekers who managed to get documentation during the past year (meaning Amayesh, headcount slip, financial scheme as well as passport holders with valid Iranian visa).*

[5] *The then UNHCR's main counterpart. Since 2023 the National Organization for Migration (NOM) has replaced BAFIA and the tripartite agreements are signed between UNHCR, NOM and IHIO.*

[6] *Special Diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Renal Failure, Kidney Transplant, and Multiple Sclerosis as defined by Iranian MoHME.*

[7] *IRR 2,966,000 per month (USD 7.9 monthly/ USD 95 per year). Based on the UN exchange rate*

- UNHCR requires some USD 19 million to mitigate the priorities and unmet needs of the health sector in 2024. Among those priorities is the need for further support to PHC, including vaccination, construction and rehabilitation of health centres, support to emergency response to communicable disease outbreaks in the country (e.g., Malaria, Aedes, TB, Measles), local and international procurement of essential medical equipment and supplies, and expanding the coverage of UPHI for all refugees beyond the vulnerable 95,000 target population.

Livelihoods

Enhancing refugees' livelihoods remains a priority for UNHCR, as it can help them become more self-reliant. Livelihood activities enables refugees to meet their basic needs and become less dependent on humanitarian assistance, which ultimately prepares them for their return to Afghanistan, when conditions become conducive.
In 2024, UNHCR is implementing livelihood interventions to enhance income and employment opportunities for refugees, in collaboration with the Government and non-governmental partners. These interventions include certified technical and vocational training in some 40 occupations, including welding, gas piping, repair of appliances, electrical works, tailoring, leather crafts, baking, and confectionery which will benefit around 782 refugees and vulnerable host community members across 14 provinces under the partnership agreement with the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO). Additionally, some 71 refugee women will receive vocational and skills training which will lead to income generation in Tehran and Alborz provinces under the partnership agreement with the Mehr ILIA Shemiranat Charity Institute in 2024. Finally, 68 Iraqi vulnerable refugees in three provinces of Ilam, Khuzestan, and Qom will benefit from multipurpose cash assistance in 2024 to address their basic needs and improve their livelihood situation, through the Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC),

Inter-Agency Coordination

The 2024-2025 **Refugee Response Plan** (RRP) for the Afghanistan Situation was launched in March 2024. The Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) oversees the development and implementation of the RRP in close coordination with eight sectors activated under the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM) in Iran. In total, 14 aid organizations[8] are partners to the RRP 2024, appealing for USD 252 million- currently **18 %** funded- (UNHCR budget: USD 26 million) targeting 2.8 million Afghans and Iranians. The RRP 2023 requested budget was USD 199 million (of which only USD 74.3 million was received) with a target population of 3.2 million. UNHCR continues to actively coordinate with partners to facilitate the implementation of the RRP.

Working with partners (5 Governmental, and 6 NGOs).

- The **National Organisation for Migration (NOM)**, of the Ministry of Interior, is UNHCR Iran's main government counterpart, superseding the previous counterpart, the Bureau for Aliens and Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA). The establishment of NOM had been the subject of discussion at the Iranian Parliament for several years, leading to an entity that deals with refugee issues on a large scale and enacts asylum policies for enhanced protection.
- **Government:** Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME), Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO), Iran Health Insurance Organization (IHIO).
- **National NGOs**: Rebirth Society, Society for Recovery Support (SRS), International Farda Development Activist Association (FDA), Mehr ILIA Shemiranat Charity Institute, Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC), and the Association for Protection of Refugee Women and Children (HAMI).

  UN Agencies and International Organizations: UNHCR coordinates with UN partner agencies, NGOs and international organizations under the umbrella of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR). The SSAR is a quadripartite multi-year regional strategy between UNHCR and the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

[8] *UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, ITC, NRC, RI, INTERSOS.*

Financial information

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.
Earmarked contributions for the Iran operation amount to some USD 21 million **as of 30 June 2024**:

Japan 4 million | **Germany** 1.6 million | **France** 0.5 million | **UN Programme on HIV/AIDS** 0.08 million | **Bulgaria** 0.075 million |

Donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2024 global programmes:
Sweden | **Norway** | **Netherlands** | **Denmark** | **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** | **Switzerland** | **Republic of Korea** | **Ireland** | **Belgium** | **Australia** | **France**

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