

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

30 December 2021

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

690,248 people have been internally displaced in Afghanistan in 2021, of which 15% are families, 21% are women and 59% are children.

According to preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran, up to 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.

As borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers, Afghans continue to make their way to Iran informally through unofficial border crossing points. UNHCR is aware of **26,244 Afghans who arrived in Iran** from 1 January to 18 December, though the numbers are understood to be much higher.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- At the end of a three-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran between 17-21 December, the **UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, urged the international community to scale up its support to the Government and people of Iran**, who are receiving Afghans fleeing a deteriorating situation in their country. Grandi met with Iran's Foreign Minister, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Health to discuss ways forward to manage and assist newly arriving Afghans, including through registration and documentation. **He also called on the Government to recognize the protection needs and risks faced on return to Afghanistan.** Grandi travelled to Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchistan province – the first high-ranking UN official to do so in the past decade – where he met with Afghan families, including children and elderly people, who fled to Iran from Nimroz four months ago. “Afghan refugees spoke of their pain and desperation at having to leave their homes behind,” he said. University-aged women also conveyed to him their anguish at having to abandon their studies and not knowing what their future will hold. Upon meeting with the donor community, Grandi stressed the importance of international burden-sharing and the need for more funding and support for Iran's humanitarian efforts.
- The **UN Security Council unanimously** adopted a resolution to allow aid to reach Afghans in desperate need of basic support. This was welcomed by the **UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths**, as a “milestone” decision that will save lives. In passing the text, the Council exempted

humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs from sanctions imposed under resolutions 2255 (2015) and 1988 (2011), concerning individuals and entities associated with the Taliban. This will allow the processing and payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources, as well as the provision of goods and services necessary to ensure the timely delivery of assistance.

- On 19 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Martin Griffiths, virtually [participated](#) in the 17th Extraordinary Session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers held in Pakistan. He described the situation in Afghanistan as dire, with 23 million people facing hunger in the country, including children becoming malnourished. In addition, Griffiths stated that **70% of teachers in Afghanistan are currently working without salaries, while millions of students are out of school**. He added that the need for liquidity and stabilization of the banking system “is now urgent – not only to save the lives of the Afghan people but also to enable humanitarian organizations to respond.”
- According to [OCHA](#), since 1 September 2021, its partners have reached **43,921 children with community-based education activities**, supported 162,229 people with household items, provided 8.9 million people with food assistance, reached 1,385,999 people with primary and secondary healthcare (direct consultations), provided treatment for acute malnutrition to 238,223 children under five, supported 48,886 people with individual protection assistance including cash for protection, and reached 507,728 people with WASH assistance including through hygiene promotion and hygiene kits.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified **26,244 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran** (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,581 heads of households). As of 20 December, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 2,040 families (consisting of 7,700 individuals), have been interviewed for protection concerns:
 - **30% were women, 27% men and 44% children** (of whom, 24% are girls under the age of 18).
 - **5% of new arrivals (3,850 individuals) had special diseases**, which include haemophilia, thalassemia, renal failure, kidney transplants, and multiple sclerosis, as defined by the Iranian Ministry of Health. While new arrivals in Iran have free access to primary healthcare regardless of their documentation and status, secondary and tertiary healthcare needed to treat special diseases remains costly. Due to the prevailing economic downturn in Iran, mainly resulting from sanctions, health-related costs have increased in the last years. UNHCR continues to explore ways to support vulnerable individuals with medical assistance in Iran.
 - **58% reported their intentions to move outwards to third countries**, while 39% stated that they plan to remain in Iran. More support is needed from the international community for the Government of Iran in order to maintain and sustain their inclusive refugee policies, which allows persons of concern access to education, health, and livelihood opportunities. Without forthcoming support, including funding, limited access to services may lead to increased onward movement of refugees.
 - **Access to documentation (43%), shelter (42%), livelihoods (39%) and food (24%)** remain the primary concerns of asylum-seekers.
- According to preliminary estimates by the Government of Iran, up to 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.**

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

REGIONAL REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (RRPRP)

- On 25 August 2021, UNHCR launched the **Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRPRP)**. The plan covers Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, including Iran. **For Iran, the plan involved 10 partners, whose focus of intervention includes emergency preparedness and response** as well as expanded support to regular programmes. **The RRP for 2022 is currently being developed.** In Iran, UNHCR is leading its development and the current budget requirements proposed by its 16 partners, covering 8 sectors, is **USD 258.7 million.**

- **On 8-9 December 2021, UNHCR led an Inter-Sector Strategy Workshop, which involved 70 colleagues from all 16 of the 2022 RRP operational partners.** This exercise, while not a part of the RRP process, was conducted to enable sectors to develop strategies that will help frame sector-specific priorities for 2022, assist sectors in producing operational plans, facilitate multi-sectoral discussions among partners and sector coordinators, and build consensus on the most pressing needs to be addressed under the RRP.
- **Construction work at the Niatak site in Sistan and Baluchistan province is ongoing.** Once operational, the Niatak site will host up to 6,500 new arrivals. 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 to 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.

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 29 December 2021, UNHCR's **overall programmes in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **59% 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 | **Republic of Korea** 0.32 million | **Qatar Airways** 0.17 million | **Russian Federation** 0.1 million | **Czech Republic** 0.07 million | **UNAIDS** 0.02 million

Major softly earmarked contributions | USD

Germany 95.9 million | **Private donors Australia** 17.2 million | **France** 12.4 million | **Austria** 11.8 million | **Private donors Germany** 5.8 million | **Private donors Spain** 5.6 million | **Norway** 5.2 million | **Private donors Denmark** 5.1 million | **Denmark** 4.8 million | **Netherlands** 4.1 million | **Private donors United Kingdom** 3.8 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 | **Private donors Sweden** 16.9 million | **Switzerland** 16.4 million | **Ireland** 12.5 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Italy** 10.7 million | **Private donors USA** 10.6 million

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