

Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran

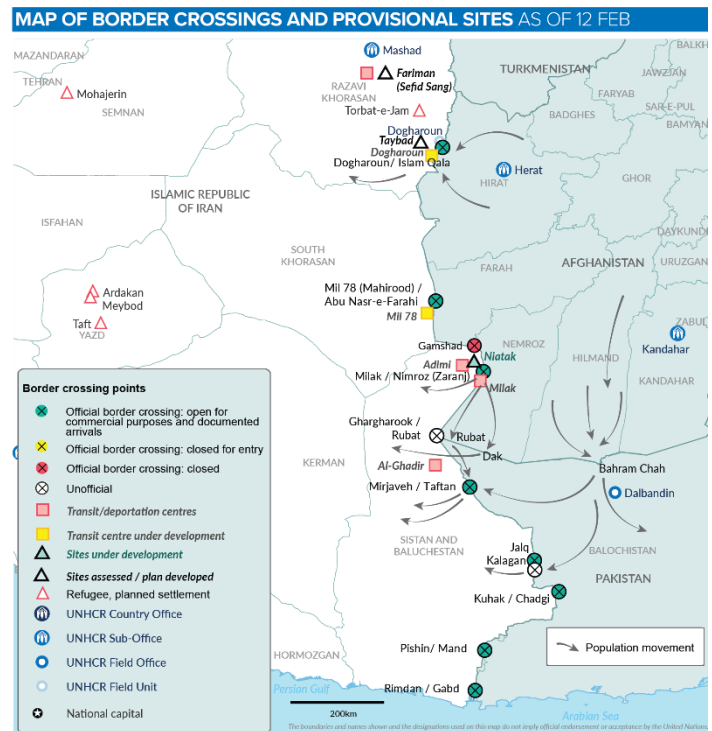
31 March 2022

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Over **736,800** persons have been internally displaced in Afghanistan since the start of 2021, of which 20% are women and 60% are children. Approximately 170,000 have now returned to their previous places of residence, as the security situation has relatively stabilized across the country.

According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. **500,000** Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. Some **34,398** Afghans, who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 23 March 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

100 families have been relocated from Fariman to Torbat-e-Jam settlement, who are accommodated in empty existing housing units.



POLITICAL, SECURITY & HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

- In view of the humanitarian situation, particularly for displaced people, [the High Commissioner for Refugees undertook a visit to Afghanistan in the middle of March](#) – his second since August 2021 – appealing for robust assistance to address the country’s humanitarian needs and those of Afghan refugees abroad. During the visit, he met with the interim Afghan government as well as UN and NGO workers who continue to provide vital assistance. During his meetings, the High Commissioner iterated that UNHCR’s commitment to stay and deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan is unwavering.
- On 17 March, [the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations special political mission in Afghanistan for one year until 17 March 2023](#), shifting its priority tasks to better align with the evolving reality on the ground. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), will further focus on several key activities, including coordinating the provision of humanitarian assistance and the delivery of basic human needs; providing outreach and good offices for dialogue between Afghan stakeholders and the international community; and promoting good governance and the rule of law.
- [The Taliban regime issued a decree banning female students above grade six from attending classes](#). The girls were told to stay home until the Islamic Emirate announces its next decision. The group blamed a lack of teachers on the closures and said they first needed to create an appropriate environment for girls to study and decide on appropriate uniforms. Expressing concern at the Taliban's decision to ban girls' education in

Afghanistan, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that this is an unjustifiable violation of equal rights, and it will damage the entire country. urged the Taliban de facto authorities to open schools for all students without any further delay.

- On 30 March, [China held two multinational meetings](#) in the ancient town of Tunxi to discuss the economic and humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan, making a diplomatic push for the country's stability and development under the Taliban. Afghan acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi attended the two-day meeting where foreign ministers of Afghanistan's immediate neighbours – Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were also present.
- On 31 March, [a High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan](#), co-hosted by the United Nations and the Governments of Germany, Qatar and the United Kingdom, brought together representatives of Member States, international organisations, UN Agencies, non-governmental organisations and civil society to raise funding to meet the humanitarian needs of Afghans. A total of 41 donor countries pledged more than \$2.44 billion toward the United Nations' \$4.4 billion appeal for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

DISPLACEMENT TO IRAN

- UNHCR continues to rely on the Government of Iran to share figures on the total number of Afghans who arrived in Iran in 2021 and 2022. For now, UNHCR is working with the assumption of approximately **500,000** arrivals in 2021, with the understanding that a large number have likely been deported, others moved to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and a small number may have moved onwards towards Turkey.
- **In a letter by the Government of Iran to the United Nations Office of the Human Rights (OHCHR), it is indicated that only 505 Afghans have officially applied for asylum in Iran as a result of the upheaval in Afghanistan last summer.** UNHCR continues to seek clarity from Iranian authorities in relation to asylum procedures in Iran, including how persons with international protection needs can fill in their asylum claims in accordance with Iranian legislation and international standards.
- According to Javad Hedayati, Director General of the international transportation and transit with Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization, almost **5,000** Afghans have been entering Iran on a daily basis, since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan last August. According to the official, these numbers are only for those who are legally entering Iran with valid passports and visas. UNHCR is following up with governmental partners to confirm these figures.

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 provide 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.** In February 2022, UNHCR issued a [Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan](#), superseding the previously issues non-return advisory in August 2021. In the same vein, UNHCR continues to call on asylum States to ensure that Afghans whose claim for international protection was rejected prior to the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban are able to lodge a fresh or subsequent claim, on the basis that the current situation in Afghanistan amounts to changed circumstances that may give rise to a need for international protection as refugees or otherwise.
- On 19 March, in a meeting between UNHCR and BAFIA, BAFIA updated on the status of discussions around regularization and documentation for newly arrived Afghans. BAFIA further elaborated on more immediate plans to support new arrivals such as relocation of new arrivals in 'supervisory sites', new arrivals in urban areas and sites for supporting new arrivals."
- By the end of February, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of **53 returnees** to Afghanistan. This represents a decrease compared to the 256 returns facilitated in the same period in 2021. Voluntary repatriation declined to its lowest recorded numbers with 79% compared to the same period in 2021. UNHCR facilitated the return

of Afghan students from Iran to Afghanistan to obtain student visas to pursue their studies back in their country of asylum. From 1 January to 28 February 2022, **43%** of these returnees were students.

THE REGIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (RRP) 2022

- **On 11 January 2022, UNHCR launched the 2022 RRP.** 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**. **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 for health and nutrition, USD 42.5 million for shelter and NFIs, USD 35.1 million for WASH, USD 27.5 million for education, USD 27.3 million for protection, USD 27 million for livelihoods and resilience, and USD 22.2 million for food security.
- On 31 March, the [Afghanistan Situation Regional RRP 2021 Final Report](#) was published, outlining the response from July – December 2021. The interagency planning process was aligned with contingency planning efforts inside and outside Afghanistan and projections coordinated with the UN Country Team inside Afghanistan. While emergency preparedness and response efforts for the potential new influx were ongoing, interagency partners continued programmes to support the existing 2.2 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries in the region which were critically underfunded. As such, RRP 2021 integrated preparedness and response to new influxes with critically underfunded elements of existing programmes for in-situ Afghans in neighbouring countries in one plan.
- **100 families** (up to 600 individuals), were relocated from Fariman to Torbat-e-Jam settlement on 3 April, being accommodated in empty existing housing units supported by portable WASH infrastructure previously donated by UNHCR to BAFIA. UNHCR continues to seek further clarity from BAFIA on the status of those individuals relocated to Torbat-e-Jam. UNHCR is currently planning to support an immediate response in the location comprising limited shelter renovations and provision of CRIs while waiting for further details for a wider package of interventions/scale-up.
- UNHCR and BAFIA continue to make progress in the development of shelters and site infrastructure. So far, **the progress in Niatak includes:**
 - UNHCR has completed over 400 emergency shelters and work on 108 transitional shelters has begun.
 - 74% of work on the boundary walls have been completed. 30 units of prefabricated latrines and showers have been procured and delivered to Niatak.
 - UNICEF has signed the Partnership Coordination Agreements with NRC and Relief International, which will help the initiation of WASH-related activities by UNICEF and NRC at Niatak.

FUNDING NEEDS

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

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

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

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

FUNDING UPDATE

As of **29 March 2022**, UNHCR's **overall programs in Iran** (regular and emergency programming) were **41% 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 48.6 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 | **Norway** 72.5 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 | Peru | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Singapore | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

For more information, please contact:

Farha Bhoyroo

External Relations Officer

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