

# Islamic Republic of IRAN

June 2026

The Islamic Republic of Iran is host to one of the **largest protracted refugee populations** in the world, with **1.65 million forcibly displaced people of different documentation statuses** in the country. Iran has generously provided protection and access to services for refugees for over four decades. Within the framework of the **Solutions Strategy for Afghan**

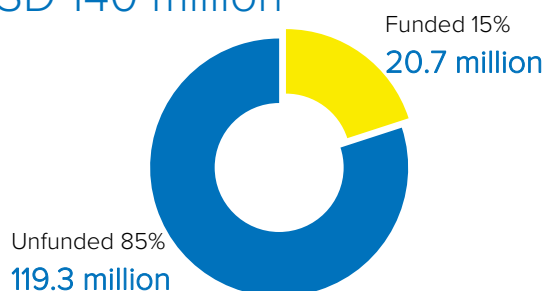
**Refugees (SSAR)**, UNHCR supports the Government of Iran in implementing inclusive refugee policies. The SSAR also facilitates coordinated protection and solution approaches, consensus-building on protection priorities, dialogue and partnerships in support of the Afghan refugee situation. Amid the recent escalation of

regional hostilities and the war in Iran, the majority of Afghans, alongside host communities, face significant protection risks and humanitarian needs. International responsibility-sharing by the global actors is a must in order for Iran to maintain its inclusive policies and address the needs of the refugee population.

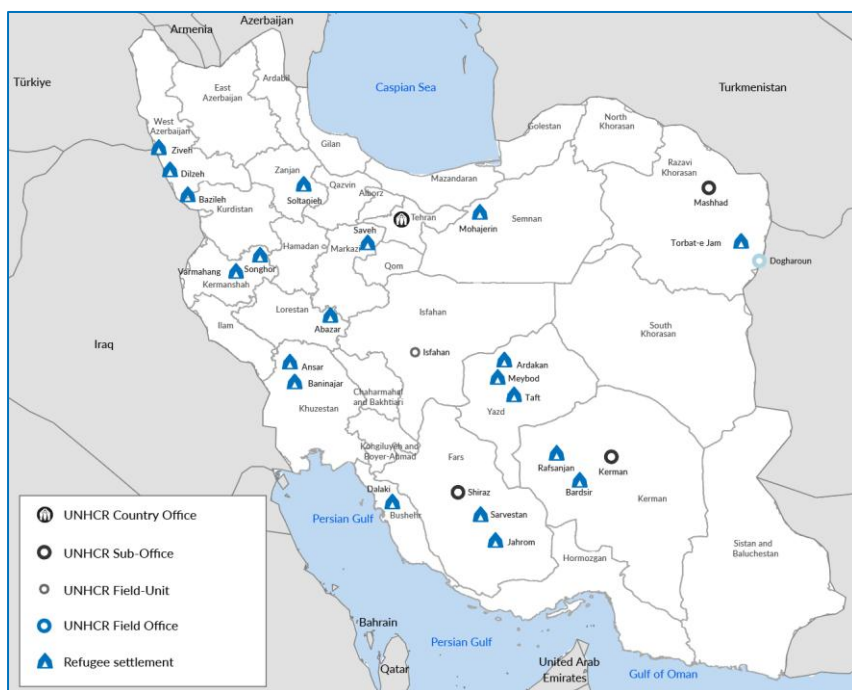
 **99 %** of registered refugees live in urban areas side by side with local communities.

 **1 %** of registered refugees live in **20** settlements across **12** provinces in Iran.

FUNDING (AS OF 30 APRIL 2026)

**USD 140 million**


## UNHCR Presence



### Staff:

113 UNHCR staff:

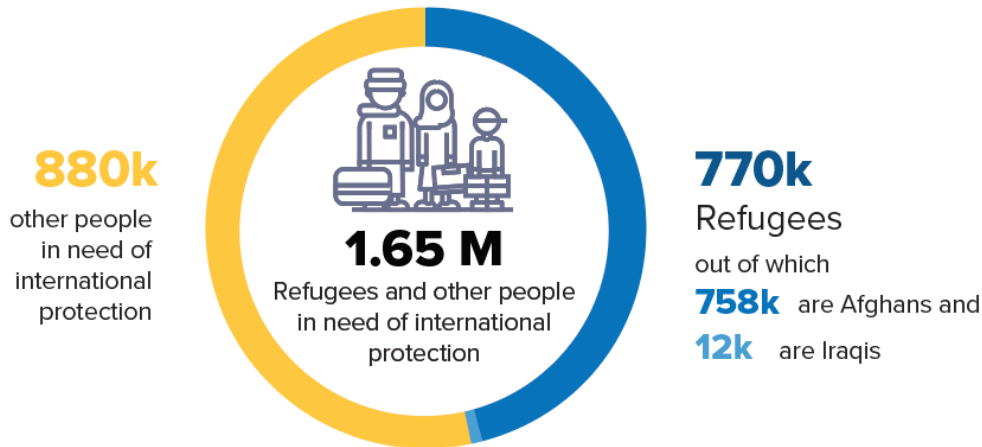
- 101 National Staff
- 12 International Staff

### Offices:

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

### Population figures and Legal Identity

In 2026, UNHCR estimates that around **1.65** million individuals falling under its mandate reside in Iran, including some 770,000 refugees with *Amayesh* (758,000 Afghans) and *Hoviat* cards (12,000 Iraqis), and Others in Need of International Protection (OIP).



The Government of Iran manages registration and documentation-related processes for foreign nationals, including forcibly displaced persons. The forcibly displaced persons in Iran have different documentation statuses, e.g. *Amayesh* (Afghans) and *Hoviat* (Iraqis) cards, *Movaghat* (temporary) cards, family passports, and visas, which enable individuals to access different rights and services. Since 2003, the Government has renewed refugee identification cards annually. These cards have been providing long-staying refugees with conditional freedom of movement, access to basic services, and eligibility for temporary work permits for limited job categories. In April 2026, the new round of annual card renewal began and, for the first time, requires individuals to have the mandatory health insurance and proof of residence, adding to the existing requirements and costs of document renewal and risking non-extension for those in the most vulnerable financial situation.

## Main Activities

UNHCR Iran delivers protection through an integrated approach that combines legal assistance, communication with communities, enrolment and verification, and protection case management. These interventions, combined with assistance and solutions interventions, aim to ensure access to rights, provide reliable information and services, identify and respond to protection risks, and support pathways to durable solutions for the populations UNHCR serves in Iran.

### Legal Assistance

UNHCR Iran runs a Legal Services Project with the objective of providing legal assistance to refugees in Iran and resolving legal cases through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. UNHCR-hired lawyers (UHLs) provide free legal advice and assistance to refugees, while the Dispute Settlement Committees (DSCs) assist refugees in finding solutions and settling their legal disputes through a mediation and advice mechanism. Family law (divorce/custody), employment (employee/employer), and property (landlord/tenant) disputes are among the top three issues that are resolved through the DSCs. UNHCR currently works with **12** UNHCR-hired lawyers (UHLs) and supports **16** Dispute Settlement Committees (DSC), covering 19 provinces.

### Communication with Communities (CWC)

CWC tools are critical given the limited outreach activities, and therefore, these mechanisms enable UNHCR to maintain continuous engagement with affected populations and facilitate access to accurate information and available services. Through the help page, helplines, online contact forms, mailboxes, and counselling desks, UNHCR systematically receives, records, and responds to protection-related queries and feedback. These channels are essential for the identification of protection risks, vulnerability profiling, and the timely referral of cases for assistance and appropriate interventions. Since January to the end of April 2026, UNHCR has engaged with over 302,000 visitors through its Help Page, helplines, in-person reception, online forms, and email channels, responding to tens of thousands of queries and requests for information, counselling, and support. While

communities raise multiple, interlinked concerns across locations, three overarching priorities consistently emerge based on frequency, urgency and recurrence across three main areas: 1) Financial assistance, livelihoods and basic needs, 2) Access to essential services and reliable information, particularly on documentation extension, 3) Safety, security and mental health. These priorities reflect the most urgent and recurrent needs identified by Afghan refugees across provinces and are intended to complement ongoing efforts by UNHCR, partners, and authorities.

### Enrolment for Solutions

UNHCR Iran continues registration and verification activities to support protection delivery and durable solutions in the UNHCR internal registration system. These activities help ensure that population data remains accurate and up to date, while supporting the identification of additional cases for case management and solutions pathways, enabling timely assistance, improved protection follow-up and more effective planning of intervention.

### Protection Case Management

UNHCR continues to ensure a systematic, consistent, and effective approach to managing cases of persons falling under the UNHCR mandate with specific needs, ensuring their protection and access to rights and available services. Between January and April 2026, UNHCR assessed a significant number of cases to identify international protection needs and specific vulnerabilities. The majority of these cases were proposed for protection responses and referred to specialized services, including psychosocial and mental health counselling, medical referrals, child protection and GBV services, legal counselling, referrals for third-country solutions, and cash-based intervention considerations.

### 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 needs. 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.

In 2026, UNHCR aims to assist **30,000** individuals (6,000 households) with multipurpose cash support. Additionally, through a Partnership Agreement with the Iraqi Refugee Aid Council (IRAC) and International Farda Development Activist Association (IFDA), **100** Iraqi refugee families living in Ilam, Khuzestan, Qom, and Kermanshah have received cash for livelihood support.

### 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):** It includes vaccinations, antenatal care, maternal and child health, essential medicines, and family planning, and it is available free of charge for refugees and other Afghans in Need of International Protection (OIP) in health posts located in settlements and refugee-populated urban areas, at a similar level to that of nationals. UNHCR supports the rehabilitation of health posts, the costs of health personnel, 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 Center for Aliens and Immigrants' Affairs (CAFIA) 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 12<sup>th</sup> cycle (25 February 2026 to 24 February 2027), UNHCR is covering **100 per cent** of the insurance premium for **75,000** of the most vulnerable refugees, including refugees who suffer from special diseases<sup>1</sup> and their family members. The remaining refugee population can enrol in the health insurance scheme by paying the premium fee themselves. UPHI is a family-based scheme for foreign nationals, and individual enrolment is not an option. Therefore, refugees need to register all members of their family and pay the fee for each member.

<sup>1</sup> Special Diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Renal Failure, Kidney Transplant, and Multiple Sclerosis as defined by Iranian MoHME.

- **Mental Health:** To address the mental health needs of refugees, UNHCR has contracted five psycho-social counsellors in its offices in the field, to provide individual counselling services to refugees. This year, **325** individuals have participated in **524** sessions, while priority is given to survivors of gender-based violence and trauma. Among the top reasons for psycho-social counselling referral are anxiety disorder and depressive disorder. Additionally, **7** mental health experts provide free of charge psycho-social counselling services at health posts in **7** refugee settlements.

## Education

The Government of Iran has traditionally shown an exemplary approach towards the right to education, with foreign children learning side by side with Iranian children in public schools. While the Government of Iran keeps enrolling the forcibly displaced children in schools aligned with its inclusive policies, the lack of school capacity and the costs imposed on the Government have resulted in limitations on the access of the forcibly displaced children to education. Around **400,000** Afghan and Iraqi children are enrolled in primary and secondary schools for the 2025-2026 scholastic year, according to the Ministry of Education (MoE). Worsening economic conditions of refugees and other Afghans in Need of International Protection (OIP), combined with a lack of enrolment capacity in schools, and new documentation requirements, have hampered many Afghan children's access to education, resulting in a considerable number of them dropping out of school.

In 2026, UNHCR is supporting the government by co-funding the construction of **7** 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 2026, **103** refugee students benefit from support with DAFI tuition fees and living allowances.

## Livelihoods

Enhancing refugees' livelihoods remains a priority for UNHCR, as it can help them become self-reliant. In 2026, 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 welding, gas piping, repair of appliances, electrical works, tailoring, leather crafts, and baking, benefitting around **800** refugees and vulnerable host community members across **10** provinces under the partnership agreement with the Technical and Vocational Training Organization (TVTO).

## Durable Solutions

UNHCR continues to offer enhanced counselling under its voluntary repatriation programme, focusing on prospective returnees, particularly those with vulnerable profiles, regarding the situation at their final destinations. Refugees cited various reasons for returning, including financial challenges in Iran, family reunification, or the need to obtain documentation in Afghanistan.

Since 2022 to date, in collaboration with resettlement partners and the Government of Iran, UNHCR has submitted over **12,798** refugees for resettlement to Australia, Finland, the UK, New Zealand, Italy, Brazil among others. During the same period, over **4,450** departures took place. Given the increasing protection needs of refugees in Iran and the ongoing volatile security situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR is advocating for more resettlement quotas. The 2026 quota for UNHCR Iran is **500** places offered by Australia.

UNHCR Iran continues to expand access to complementary pathways as part of its broader protection and solutions work, supporting refugees to pursue safe and regular admission to third countries through family reunification, education, employment and labour mobility, humanitarian visas, and private sponsorship opportunities. In 2025, UNHCR Iran supported over **1,000** individuals to access complementary pathways. UNHCR Iran will continue to advance education mobility through initiatives such as the Digital Bridges for Afghan Scholars, offering Afghan refugee students mentoring opportunities to pursue academic opportunities abroad. In 2026, UNHCR Iran has so far counselled **100** individuals on complementary pathways.

## Working with Partners

### Working with partners (5 Governmental and 6 NGOs)

- The **Center for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (CAFIA)** of the Ministry of Interior is UNHCR Iran's main government counterpart. The Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA) is UNHCR's main provincial counterpart at the field level, reporting to CAFIA.
- **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 (IFDA), 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 locally with UN sister agencies, NGOs, and international organizations under the CRRP framework, with two MoUs signed with IOM and UNICEF. Its response is aligned with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), a quadripartite, multi-year framework involving the governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, as well as UNHCR, and is implemented through the local SSAR Plus Working Group in close coordination with the Global SSAR Core Group strategy.

### Inter-Agency Coordination

In 2026, the Refugee Response plan has moved from a regional coordination scheme together with Pakistan to a Country Refugee Response Plan (CRRP) in Iran only. In February 2026, nine CRRP partners<sup>2</sup> launched a Flash Appeal to address the needs of the conflict-affected populations, requesting USD **80** million (USD **36** million by UNHCR). The Flash Appeal aims to support **2.8** million people, including Afghan and Iraqi refugees, other Afghans in Need of International Protection (OIP), Afghans of other statuses and the host community.

## Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the Iran operation, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

Australia | Australia for UNHCR | Belgium | Denmark | España con ACNUR | European Union | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Norway | Private donors in China | Private donors in the Republic of Korea | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe | Private Donors in Japan

### For more information, please contact:

UNHCR Iran External Engagement: [irnteer@unhcr.org](mailto:irnteer@unhcr.org)

### Links:

Data portal: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/irn>  
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/unhcriran/>

### Recent Publications (also found at UNHCR's data portal in the above link):

- UNHCR Iran Protection Concerns Among Afghan Refugees in Iran - Helpline and Field Insights- May 2026
- Protection Concerns Among Afghan Refugees in Iran – Helpline and Field Insights in March 2026
- Protection Overview of Afghan Refugees in Iran - Key Protection Risks, Needs and Priorities amid Economic Pressure and Insecurity – April 2026

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<sup>2</sup> 2026 CRRP Partners are INTERSOS, IOM, Norwegian Refugee Council, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO.