



## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1950 by the UN General Assembly, is mandated to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and other persons of concern and for the resolution of their problems. The legal status of refugees is defined in two international instruments: the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. These two tools together with the UN General Assembly Resolution 428 (V) that established the UNHCR Office and its Statute, have been the foundation of both international refugee law and UNHCR's mandate to help and protect refugees. The annual Conclusions adopted by UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) form part of the framework of the international refugee protection regime. They represent the agreement of more than 50 Countries. During its lifetime the Refugee Agency has assisted an estimated 50 million refugees to successfully restart their lives. Based on statistics given on the UN Treaty Collection website, in 2010 a total of 144 states are party to the 1951 convention and 145 to the 1967 protocol. The Islamic Republic of Iran acceded to both the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol on 28 July 1976, with reservations to article 17, 23, 24 and 26. UNHCR first opened an office in Iran in 1984. The Refugee Agency expanded its presence and scope of activities in Iran with the massive influx of Iraqi refugees following the Persian Gulf War in 1991, and the start of a mass voluntary return movement to Afghanistan in 1992. Today, UNHCR has its country office in Tehran and three sub-offices in Mashad, Kerman and Ahwaz. It has three field offices in Esfahan, Shiraz and Dogharoun which is also a border crossing station.

Based on government statistics, as of 01 October 2010, there are 1,029,320 Afghan registered refugees and some 42,854 Iraqi registered refugees residing in Iran. Refugee settlements in Iran are: 7 for Iraqi Kurd, 3 for Iraqi Arab and 5 for Afghan refugees. Less than 3% of the registered refugee population live in settlements.

UNHCR's Responsibilities within Its Mandate are as Follow (The Work of UNHCR is Entirely Non-Political, Humanitarian and Social):

- Assist asylum countries' governments with refugee and asylum/migration related issues in an advisory capacity;
- Protect refugees by ensuring that their basic rights are respected in the host country;
- Ensure that governments respect the rule of non-refoulement (not returning refugees to a country where they may be persecuted);
- Find durable solutions to the problems of refugees through voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement.



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Promote refugee rights in Iran; enhance protective environments for refugees in accordance with international refugee law and relevant Iranian legislation; Maintain its advocacy to ensure the continued access of all re-registered refugees to valid refugee resident cards (Amayesh) through inclusive re-registration exercises conducted by the Iranian authorities; Continue its advocacy dialogue for more predictable and sustainable issuance of Temporary Work Permits (TWPs), as well as for the issuance of work contracts to registered refugees holding TWPs. This would also include Iraqi registered refugees who do not yet have access to these permits. TWPs have the potential to assist the self-sustainability of registered refugees in Iran until the situation becomes more conducive for return; Ensure assistance interventions in Iran are organized in a way to emphasize developmental approaches for refugees. UNHCR focuses on enhancing refugees' livelihood also through vocational trainings to enable them acquire skills for gainful employment; Work with the Ministries of Education and Health to facilitate the access of urban registered refugees to education, primary health care and emergency medical assistance; Continue to ensure that registered refugees have access to free legal services without any discrimination; Enhance the well-being of refugee women, children and men through implementation of the Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy. This will be done by means of an annual Participatory Assessment (PA) exercise to identify the pressing protection risks to the livelihood, health, education and repatriation of registered refugees, which are to be addressed in the annual plan. It also includes increasing the active participation of refugees at all levels of the programme cycle, through the community-based approach (a way of working in partnership with persons of concern) and right-based approach (this approach promotes change to enable individuals and communities to exercise their rights and comply with their duties); Ensure protection of refugee women, girls and boys by applying the "Sex and Gender Based Violence" Protocol and HIV/AIDS awareness raising programmes; Develop partnership with relevant actors including the Iranian Government, UN, NGOs and Community-Based Organizations to mobilize the current mechanism and capacities for enhanced out-reach and service delivery to refugees; Facilitate voluntary repatriation of Afghan and Iraqi registered refugees from Iran in safety and dignity; Ensure respect for the voluntary character of repatriation. Following resumption of the Tripartite Commission Meetings on the Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan registered refugees, re-establish Dispute Settlement Committees in order to facilitate the resolving of repatriation applicants' legal disputes prior to departure; Enhance emergency preparedness; Provide One Time Assistance to the most vulnerable refugees; Pay part of the hospital bills of refugees on an emergency and life saving basis; Cover insurance fees of refugees suffering from Thalassaemia, Hemophilia or Renal failure; Continue its "Relief from Disability" assistance to refugees (wheel-chairs, hearing aid, etc)

From the start of the voluntary repatriation programme (2002 for Afghans and 2003 for Iraqis) until 30 November 2010, 873,566 Afghan registered refugees and 25,877 Iraqi registered refugees returned to their homeland with assistance from UNHCR Iran. Since 2000, UNHCR has also helped resettle in average around 800 refugees per year.

UNHCR's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) budget requirement for the year 2010 is USD 36,826,564.