



UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Vision

UNHCR was established in 1950 by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to lead and coordinate international action for the worldwide protection of refugees and other persons of concern. During its lifetime UNHCR has assisted an estimated 50 million refugees to successfully restart their lives.

The legal status of refugees is defined in two international instruments: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Islamic Republic of Iran acceded to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol on 28 July 1976, with reservations to Article 17 (wage earning employment), Article 23 (public relief), Article 24 (labour legislation and social security) and Article 26 (freedom of movement).

The work of UNHCR is entirely non-political and humanitarian. UNHCR's global responsibilities are as follows:

- 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
 - resettlement



An Afghan refugee attending adult literacy classes in Yazd provided through UNHCR and the Ministry of Education. Photo: UNHCR/B. Moharrek.

Work in Iran

UNHCR first opened an office in Iran in 1984 and expanded its presence and scope of activities in connection with the massive influx of Iraqi refugees following the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The office further expanded to facilitate mass voluntary return of refugees movement to Afghanistan in 1992.

Today, UNHCR has its country office in Tehran and sub offices in Shiraz, Kerman, and Mashhad.

- UNHCR's main governmental counterpart is the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants' Affairs (BAFIA) of the Ministry of Interior.
- UNHCR activities for Afghan refugees in Iran are guided by the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) to support



UNHCR providing Afghan refugees in Dogharoun with repatriation assistance as they prepare for Voluntary Repatriation back to Afghanistan. Photo:UNHCR/D. Faramarzi.



An Afghan refugee, receiving vocational training as a seamstress in Torbat-e Jam settlement, Mashhad. Photo: UNHCR/S. Jalali.

- UNHCR activities for Afghan refugees in Iran are guided by the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration in the country of origin and assistance to host countries. The SSAR is a regional, multi-year strategy agreed upon by the governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan adopted in May 2012. Four outcomes guide the Strategy in Iran:
 1. Voluntary repatriation enhanced.
 2. Access to shelter and essential services for refugees and affected communities improved.
 3. Livelihood opportunities diversified and enhanced and food security strengthened.
 4. Social and environment protection of refugees and impacted communities improved, and resettlement enhanced.
- UNHCR promotes refugee rights in Iran and assists the government in maintaining the protection space for refugees in accordance with international refugee law and relevant Iranian legislation.
- UNHCR maintains advocacy to ensure the continued access of all registered refugees to valid refugee resident cards (*Amayesh*) and Temporary Work Permits (TWP), through inclusive re-registration exercises conducted by the Iranian Government.
- UNHCR finds durable solutions for refugees in Iran, mainly through facilitating voluntary repatriation of Afghan and Iraqi refugees in safety and dignity as well as resettlement of specific cases to third countries.
- UNHCR ensures assistance interventions in Iran are organized in a way that emphasizes developmental approaches for refugees, focusing on enhancing refugees' livelihood through vocational trainings to enable them acquire skills for gainful employment.
- In coordination with the Government of Iran, UNHCR develops partnerships with relevant actors including other UN Agencies, NGOs and community based organisations to mobilise available mechanisms and capacities to improve outreach and service delivery to refugees. This includes access by urban registered refugees to education and to health care at all levels including emergency medical assistance.
- UNHCR enhances emergency preparedness jointly with partners.

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