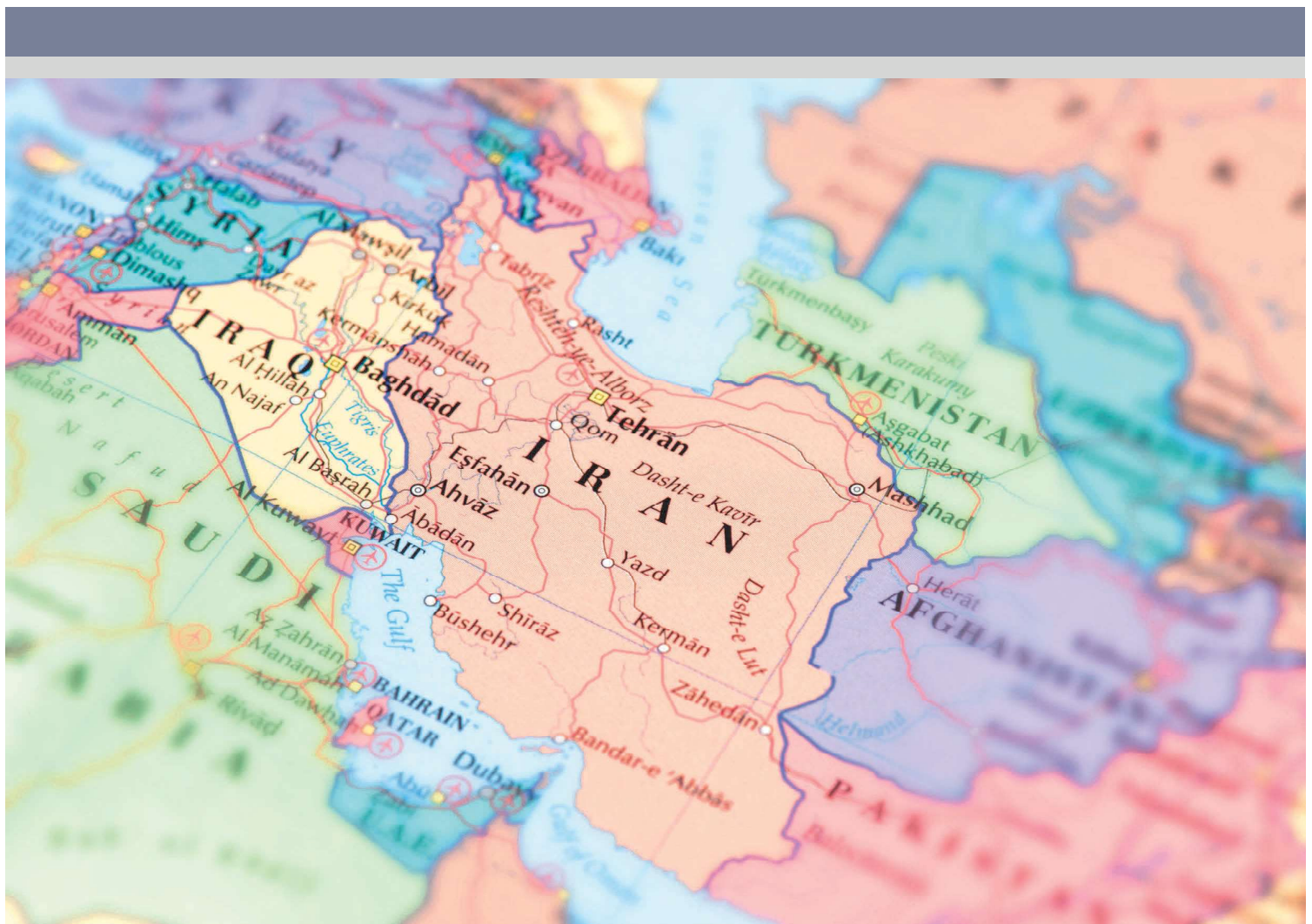


# Iran:

# COI Repository

## Asylum seekers from Afghanistan

1st September 2021 - 1st August 2022



# Iran: COI Repository



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## Background to this document

The Iran Country of Origin Information (COI) Repository was started as part of an emergency response to the crisis in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in 2021. The initiative is coordinated by Asylos and Clifford Chance.

## Purpose of this document

This document is a collection of COI and its purpose is to address and pre-empt needs that arise as asylum seekers who have fled the current situation in Afghanistan, and are in neighbouring states, will make claims for international protection. This document builds on the existing [Afghanistan COI Repository](#).

This document is intended to collect sources that are reporting on the situation for asylum seekers in Iran and relevant source excerpts. Research themes for this report are devised in consultation with lawyers representing Afghan asylum seekers seeking to evacuate Iran.

## Disclaimer

The COI Repository is intended as background reference material for legal representatives and those assisting asylum seekers, to assist in their preparation of the case. The COI Repository should be used as a tool to help identify relevant COI. The information cited in the repository can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. Legal representatives are welcome to submit relevant excerpts cited in this document for their specific case to decision makers (including judges) to assist in the determination of an asylum claim or appeal. **However, this document should not be submitted directly, in its entirety or in isolation as evidence to decision-makers in asylum applications or appeals.**

The information cited in this document is illustrative, but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. Submissions should always be complemented by case-specific COI research. While we strive to be as comprehensive as possible, no amount of research can ever provide an exhaustive picture of the situation. It is therefore important to note that the absence of information should not be taken as evidence that an issue, incident or violation does not exist.

We are COI research experts and adhere to strict research principles of providing relevant, objective, transparent, timely and reliable sources material. We therefore include all discoverable relevant information, whether or not supportive of any human rights or asylum claim. **It is therefore imperative that legal representatives and those assisting asylum seekers read the whole COI Repository and submit only relevant excerpts cited in this document for their specific case in addition to conducting their own case-specific COI research.**

Due to the rapid unfolding of events in Afghanistan and the increased media interest during August 2021, as well as internal organisational matters, it was agreed that research would only start on 1st September 2021. Therefore, sources published during or before August 2021 have not been included.

## Feedback

If you would like to suggest additional research topics or sources to include that would assist you in supporting your clients, please fill out this [form](#) or get in touch by emailing [misha.nayak-oliver@asylos.eu](mailto:misha.nayak-oliver@asylos.eu).

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## SECTION 1 - COI Findings

### Territory overview of movement, and status, of Afghan asylum-seekers to Iran

*Background context: movement of people from Afghanistan to Iran*

*For more country of origin information on the situation in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, please see the [Afghanistan COI Repository](#) jointly produced by Asylos and Clifford Chance.*

UNHCR, [Asia & the Pacific; Regional Trends; Forced Displacement; 2021](#), 25 July 2022

“For the past five years, Afghanistan’s situation has been the largest situation in the region with a steady increase of forcibly displaced every year. In 2021, Afghanistan’s situation deteriorated dramatically with a 12 per cent increase of forcibly displaced persons by the end of the year compared to end-2020. Globally, at the end of 2021, there were 6.4 million forcibly displaced Afghans, of which 89 per cent reside in the South-West Asia subregion. [...] By the end of 2021, the number of new arrivals who approached UNHCR and Partners were the following: in Pakistan (108,000), Tajikistan (2,700) and Iran (27,800) reached 138,500.”

UNHCR, [External Update: Afghanistan Situation #18 as of July 2022](#), July 2022

*There are more than 180,000 reported newly arriving Afghans seeking international protection to neighbouring countries since 1 January 2021, composed of 53% children and 22% adult women in Iran and Pakistan. [Map estimates 44,500 into Iran since Jan 2021]*

UNCHR, [Iran: Protection Dashboard Jan-Mar 2022 Q1](#), 7 June 2022

“Afghan women and girls and other vulnerable groups are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, child or forced marriage and intimate partner violence. UNHCR continue to provide comprehensive GBV case management support to survivors who approach UNHCR offices. 32.2% were physical assaults cases, 15% were rape, another 15% were physiological and emotional abuse, 12.5% forced marriage. Other incidents were reported to a lesser extent such as sexual assault, denial of resources, sexual harassment and sale and exchange of sex. The majority of GBV survivors are women (91%), while only 5% of reported cases were perpetrated against girls and 4% against men.”

“Protection risks for children from vulnerable families continue to be reported across the country. Number of cases with CP/GBV claims is concerning, including school drop-outs, child labour, forced/early marriage, physical assaults and domestic violence. Since the start of unrest in Afghanistan, a new profile of UASC is observed more than before in Iran: the children are either separated from their parents who are still in Afghanistan and ended in Iran usually irregularly or whose parents engaged in onward movement to West but did not manage to take them for various reasons. In the absence of CP partners and working relations with State Welfare Organization, the scope of UNHCR’s work with regard to this group and other children remains limited. New opportunities might rise in near future to find durable solution for some of the UASC children in framework of RST, while BID procedures are already in place and will be strengthened. 112 reported child at risk.”

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis](#), May 2022

“Additional aggravating factors are the expected reduction of remittances, especially from Iran, a further decrease of formal and informal employment opportunities, increasing debt levels and distress livestock

sales. The improvements observed when comparing results in the IPC timeline (22.8M, 19.7M, 18.9M food insecure in the last three analyses periods) are far from indicating a positive trend of food insecurity. Not only is the decrease of people in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or above are relatively low compared to the massive HFA scale up reminiscent of the underlying vulnerabilities experienced by Afghan families; such a decrease was only possible thanks to the prominent scale up of HFA in the current period - as the overall deteriorating conditions outrank these efforts.”

Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 'Struggling to Survive: Gender, Displacement, and Migration in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan', 23 February 2022

‘Beyond the gender-based discrimination, Afghanistan is dealing with a humanitarian crisis, with almost 700,000 people internally displaced due to conflict and disaster, more than 1.2 million returned Afghans from Iran and Pakistan, and 14 million people (or 35 percent of the country) facing hunger and in urgent need of food. The pressure on Afghans to seek refuge elsewhere, especially having lost everything due to the need to escape escalating conflict and violence will be very high, although so will pressure on states to impede movements and stem flows, especially through traditional routes to Europe via Iran and Turkey.’

HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

“Iran hosts a long-staying population of about 780,000 registered Afghan refugees and another estimated 850,000 undocumented Afghans. In mid-August, the government set up three temporary tent camps for refugees fleeing Afghanistan, but its border remained closed to most Afghan asylum seekers, as entry was limited to people with valid passports and visas. During September, about 2,000 Afghans per day were estimated to enter Iran irregularly, but a comparable number of Afghans were deported from Iran.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 October 2021

“The situation facing Afghan refugees and the internally displaced has changed drastically since last quarter with the Taliban taking control of the country, State said. Relief agencies report the humanitarian situation worsened in 2021, with increased conflict-related displacements inside the country; a higher rate of returns of undocumented Afghans from Iran; severe drought, which is expected to contribute to below-average crop harvests and further worsen food insecurity in the coming months; increased rates of malnutrition among children ages five years and younger; and growing gaps in health-system coverage to address health needs, including for COVID-19 prevention and response.

#### *Current situation of Afghans in Iran*

UNCHR, WFP Iran Country Brief, June 2022, 19 July 2022

“As part of the efforts to promote education for refugee girls, WFP Iran provided monthly monetary incentives of Iranian Rials (IRR) 500,000 (US\$ 2) to 2,810 refugee girls in June in recognition of their regular school attendance. Due to the closure of schools during summer, there will be no school feeding and cash incentive distributions in July, August and September.”

Afghanistan Analysts Network, A Pledging Conference for Afghanistan... But what about beyond the humanitarian?, 31 March 2022

“The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has launched a separate annual appeal for USD 623 million to support 5.7 million Afghan nationals (including registered refugees and asylum seekers and projected new arrivals) mainly in Iran and Pakistan and with smaller numbers in Central Asia, as well as 1.77 million people in the communities that host the refugees and five host governments.

[...] Iran and Pakistan have long hosted large populations of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans who have relocated there in search of jobs or sanctuary. UNHCR estimates that an additional 1.4 million Afghan refugees will arrive in Pakistan in 2022, another one million will seek asylum in Iran and a smaller number of refugees, 31,000, will go to Central Asia. These numbers will add to the already significant population of refugees and undocumented Afghans in these countries.”

UNSG, United Nations Secretary General, 26 January 2022

“I will never forget the generosity of countries like Pakistan and Iran, which – for decades – have hosted millions of Afghans in need,” [Secretary-General of the United Nations] Guterres said in a statement released on January 26 to the Security Council on Afghanistan”.

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 2 November 2021

“On 31 October, an Iranian media reported that, as thousands of Afghans cross the borders to Iran, many may have “terrorism agendas”. This is a worrying development in the narrative surrounding new refugee arrivals in Iran. UNHCR continues to advocate for Refugee Status Determination and protection screening for new arrivals, to ensure that those fleeing to Iran can have their claims assessed.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 20 September 2021

“Iran already hosts some 4 million Afghans (refugees, undocumented, and passport-holders) and has maintained inclusive policies towards refugees for over 40 years, despite its own economic challenges.”

Human Rights Watch (HRW), What’s Next for Afghans Fleeing the Taliban?, 9 September 2021

“On Iran’s western border with Afghanistan, media reports suggest that the authorities have set up temporary camps to receive Afghans. At least 1,000 Afghans are reported to have entered through the land crossing at Dogharoun, but Iranian officials have said that those who enter the country will be repatriated once conditions improve. [...] At least 2.6 million Afghans were already living abroad as registered refugees, with the largest numbers in neighbouring Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey.

Over the years, most Afghans who have fled their country have been hosted by neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. Others have made their way to Turkey, Germany, and India. At some points in the past, Afghans in Iran and Pakistan were recognized as prima facie refugees. But, due to inconsistent policy towards recognizing their status, most displaced Afghans in both countries today are not recognized as refugees.

As of July, Iran hosted 800,000 registered refugees and up to 3 million other displaced Afghans. Refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan have also faced abuses in Iran, including being prohibited from living in “no-go areas,” areas in most provinces off-limits to all non-citizens; being denied access to education; and being detained and deported without due process. Between 2019 and early 2021, Iran pushed almost 1.5 million Afghans back to Afghanistan, many involuntarily.

According to a report in the Financial Times, the European Commission plans to allocate €600 million to Afghanistan’s neighbours, including Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to help cover expenses generated by an influx of Afghans, and €300 million in humanitarian assistance in the country, largely earmarked for women and girls and other vulnerable groups. However, this greatly needed assistance should not serve as a justification for refusing to accept Afghan refugees within Europe’s own borders.”

#### *Number of Afghans evacuating Afghanistan and entering Iran*

UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Afghanistan Situation in Iran (Islamic Republic of), 26 July 2022

“Between January 2021 until 30 June 2022, Afghan refugees in Iran who are in need of international protection are 44,500, (out of 780,000 Afghan refugees in Iran).”



UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency Preparedness and Response in Iran: 16 May – 15 June 2022, 5 July 2022

“Around 5,000 entry of Afghans into Iran per day (estimated). As of March 2021, a 69% increase in entry into Iran by Afghans has been estimated. Foreign nationals have been arrested and deported by Iranian border guards.”

“To regularise the presence of Afghan refugees in Iran, there has been a headcount exercise led by the government, and failure to participate has led to harsh measures, but the cost of participation is 270,000 rials per individual.”

“Returns to Afghanistan: despite UNHCR’s non-return advisory and advocacy for providing asylum, Afghans trying to enter Iran are continuously returned by the government, an estimated 65% of all asylum seekers are deported.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 15 May 2022

“According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. Some 37,595 Afghans, who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 10 May 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran (30 April 2022), 9 May 2022

“UNHCR lifted the Level 2 emergency for the Afghanistan situation in Iran in April. However, new arrivals to Iran continue, increasing the need for more support. According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans arrived in Iran in 2021. Some 37,042 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 30 April 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection. Afghan families who were accommodated by the Government of Iran in Fariman are now being transferred to the Torbat-e-Jam refugee settlement. Over 200 families currently reside in the settlement shelters at Torbat-e-Jam and need immediate support. BAFIA has confirmed that all families will receive a form of document such as Laissez Passé.

“[...] 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 that, of the approximate 500,000 new arrivals in 2021, a large number have likely been deported, others moved to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and have since returned voluntarily to Afghanistan, and a small number have moved onwards towards Turkey. For 2022 planning purposes, we estimate that 278,000 will remain in Iran.”

IOM, Displacement tracking matrix: Movements in and out of Afghanistan, 6 May 2022

“Violation/situation: 1.6 million people moved from AFG to IRAN (May 2021 to Apr 2022).”

Refugees International, ‘Now, There is Nothing Safe’: A Roadmap for Investing in Afghan Women and Girls, April 2022

“Huge numbers of Afghans have also escaped the country and crossed international borders. Reports indicate that during just the four months from October 2021 through January 2022, more than 1 million Afghans from the southwest of the country fled into Iran. Significant numbers of Afghans are also travelling overland to seek refuge in Pakistan. Yet the prospects for safety and integration in Iran or Pakistan are bleak. Iran and Pakistan have both taken a hardline stance towards those who enter without the proper paperwork, and there are already millions of registered and unregistered Afghan refugees living in those countries. Pakistan recently deported at least 500 Afghans from just one province. Donors must help address issues countries in the region are citing for refusing Afghan refugees, provide more robust financial support to these countries, and incentivize the integration of Afghan refugees in host countries.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 31 March 2022

“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.

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 international transportation and transit with Iran’s Road Maintenance and Transportation Organisation, 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.”

Amnesty International, International Report 2021/22 – Afghanistan 2021, 29 March 2022

“The Taliban takeover increased the number of Afghan refugees entering neighbouring countries. After evacuations from Kabul airport were stopped, thousands of desperate Afghans sought land routes to Pakistan and Iran. Tens of thousands crossed into Pakistan before it closed its borders on 2 September to most Afghans. Only the Torkham crossing point was open to those holding gate passes. In November, the Norwegian Refugee Council reported that 4,000-5,000 Afghans were crossing the border to Iran every day.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #15, 15 March 2022

“There have been 174,460 reported newly arriving Afghans in need of international protection to neighbouring countries since 1 January 2021. The number of new arrivals includes those who approached UNHCR and Partners in Tajikistan (5,710), Iran (34,400) and Pakistan (117,550), new arrivals reported by the Government of Uzbekistan (13,020), as well as the Afghans who were kept by the Iranian authorities at border locations (3,780) since 1 January 2021, although only 738 individuals of the latter group remain in the country.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 March 2022

“According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent Event, 13 December 2021

“According to the Norwegian Refugee Council on 10 November, 300,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran since 15 August, and between 4,000 and 5,000 Afghans migrate across the border to Iran on a daily basis. Iran and Pakistan in total host 90% of the five million Afghans displaced outside their country of origin.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #8 (1 – 15 October 2021), 20 October 2021

“In Iran, official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain largely closed, except for those with Afghan passports and valid visas for Iran. At the same time, local media citing the Iranian authorities continue to estimate upwards of 4,000 – 5,000 newly arriving individuals per day into Iran, with some 1,200 reportedly entering daily through unofficial border points in Dogharoun. UNHCR does not have access to border crossing points in Iran to verify these estimates, however 81% of those interviewed by UNHCR report crossing into Iran through unofficial border points, an increase from 75% reported previously.”

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent Developments in the Security Situation, Impact on Civilians and Targeted Individuals, 10 September 2021

“The Iranian government estimated in July that approximately 5,000 Afghans a day entered Iran in an irregular manner.”

Ministry of Immigration and Integration, The Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent developments in the security situation, impact on civilians and targeted individuals, September 2021

“The Iranian government estimated in July that approximately 5,000 Afghans a day entered Iran in an irregular manner.”

#### *Demographic of Afghan population evacuating Afghanistan to Iran*

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), External Update: Afghanistan Situation #17, 1 June 2022

“There are more than 178,200 reported newly arriving Afghans who may be in need of international protection in countries neighbouring Afghanistan since 1 January 2021. The overall number of Afghans with international refugee protection needs is likely to be much higher, as not all approach or contact UNHCR. In Iran and Pakistan, more than half are children and nearly a quarter are women.[...]”

“In Iran, according to evolving estimates by the Government, approximately 500,000 –1 million Afghans have arrived since 2021. The Fariman facility is located approximately 80 km away from Mashhad and functions as a transit/reception area where BAFIA hosts newly arrived Afghans who voluntarily report themselves to border guards for assistance and asylum at Khorasan Razavi province border points. According to the manager of the Fariman facility, some 2,300 individuals who were previously in Fariman have since been given Laissez-Passers and been allowed to leave to urban settings in Mashhad. Currently, 250 families (1,200 individuals) remain in the facility; they have been screened and may receive documentation when they are relocated to Torbat e Jam refugee settlement or allowed to move to urban settings.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran (30 April 2022), 9 May 2022

“UNHCR lifted the Level 2 emergency for the Afghanistan situation in Iran in April. However, new arrivals to Iran continue, increasing the need for more support. According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans arrived in Iran in 2021. Some 37,042 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 30 April 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection. Afghan families who were accommodated by the Government of Iran in Fariman are now being transferred to the Torbat-e-Jam refugee settlement. Over 200 families currently reside in the settlement shelters at Torbat-e-Jam and need immediate support. BAFIA has confirmed that all families will receive a form of document such as Laissez Passe.

“[...] 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 that, of the

approximate 500,000 new arrivals in 2021, a large number have likely been deported, others moved to Iran for livelihoods or family reasons, and have since returned voluntarily to Afghanistan, and a small number have moved onwards towards Turkey. For 2022 planning purposes, we estimate that 278,000 will remain in Iran.”

IOM, Afghanistan: Survey on Drivers of Migration Summary Brief: Round 2 (November 2020 - March 2021), 2022

“Study interviewed 19,605 Afghan migrants, 15,810 of which said their destination country was Iran (81%)(99% were male). Those reported to intend to migrate to Iran had highest accumulation of debt, (avg USD 1,885) whereas to Pakistan had the lowest. Intention for those migrating to Iran was to work or earn a living, rather than obtaining refugee status (those for Turkey).”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022

“As of March 15, 2022, UNHCR recorded 174,460 Afghans who may be in need of international protection after arriving in neighbouring countries since the beginning of 2021. Among Afghans crossing into Iran and Pakistan, approximately 53% were children and 22% adult women; in Tajikistan, newly arrived Afghans included 40% children and 31% adult women. The majority of individuals interviewed by UNHCR personnel reported leaving Afghanistan due to security-related issues. UNHCR estimated that approximately 2.6 million Afghans were refugees outside of Afghanistan in 2021.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 31 March 2022

“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.

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 international transportation and transit with Iran’s Road Maintenance and Transportation Organisation, 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.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan – 2021 Final Report, 31 March 2022

“In 2021, Iran hosted almost 4 million Afghans, including 780,000 Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders), almost 600,000 Afghans holding Afghan passports with Iranian visas, and some 2.1 million undocumented Afghans. With the humanitarian crisis building up in Afghanistan since mid-2021, there was an outflow of Afghans into neighbouring countries, including Iran. Throughout the year, UNHCR

witnessed an increased number of Afghans approaching its reception centres requesting urgent assistance and seeking assurances of protection, including guidance on accessing the asylum system. UNHCR is aware of at least 31,574 Afghan new arrivals in Iran in 2021 who are in need of international protection. This includes 27,816 persons who approached UNHCR and 3,758 reported by BAFIA. However, according to statements provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI), some 500,000 Afghans are estimated to have arrived in the country since August 2021 and are largely residing in urban areas. As such, the overall number in need of international protection is likely to be much higher. Data gathered from new arrivals indicates that 80 per cent are of Hazara or Tajik ethnicity, with 23 per cent single, 77 per cent families, and 22 per cent of all new arrivals being female headed households.”

“Key drivers for cross-border movements included insecurity and persecution, discriminatory treatment of women and girls, targeted violence against persons with specific risk profiles by state and non-state actors, increasing levels of food insecurity, and poverty in Afghanistan.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 14 March 2022

“According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021. As confirmed by BAFIA, 750 individuals are currently at Fariman centre – also known as Sefid Sang. BAFIA is reportedly planning to relocate 100 individuals from Fariman and settle them inside Torbat-e-jam settlement. The tentative timeline for this development is estimated to be one month.

As reported by the UNHCR office in Kerman, 23 families (115 individuals) are being held by the government in the Alghadir site in Sistan and Baluchestan province. Four families (19 individuals) have been given exceptional permission by BAFIA to be relocated to Zahedan city. Their movement is no longer restricted by BAFIA; however, they are still awaiting the finalisation of their accommodation, which is likely to be supported by NRC.

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.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 February 2022

“33,456 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 17 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

“Since the start of 2021 and so far in 2022, UNHCR has identified 33,456 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 8,264 heads of households). As of 8 February 2022, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had interviewed 2,888 families (which consist of 11,209 individuals) for protection concerns. Of these, the following was reported:

- The average family size is 3.9.
- 47% are children and 56% are adults.
- 16% are infants aged 0-4 years old.
- 28% are children aged 5-17 years old.
- 90% fled Afghanistan due to the general security situation, 43% because of specific security threats, and 30% because of discrimination.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan #14, 15 February 2022

“UNHCR has recorded 172,940 newly arriving Afghans who may be in need of international protection to neighbouring countries since the start of the year, composed of 53% children and 22% adult women in Iran and Pakistan. In Tajikistan, Afghan new arrivals are composed of 31% adult women and 40% children.

The overall number of Afghans in need of international protection are thought to be higher. The majority of those interviewed report leaving Afghanistan for security-related reasons. Basic needs cited by those newly arriving Afghans interviewed in Iran and Pakistan include access to shelter, livelihoods, food and documentation, with a large majority of those undocumented Afghans in Iran also citing concerns regarding detention and forced return.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran (8 February 2022), 14 February 2022

“According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approximately 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 centralised 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.

Since the start of 2021 and so far in 2022, UNHCR has identified 32,198 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 7,981 heads of households). As of 8 February 2022, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had interviewed 2,888 families (which consist of 11,172 individuals) for protection concerns. Of these, the following was reported:

- 55% are women and 45% are men.
- The average family size is 3.9.
- 38% are Hazara and 37% are Tajiks.
- 90% fled Afghanistan due to the general security situation, 43% because of specific security threats, and 30% because of discrimination.
- A further 8% fled because of loss of livelihoods and 6% fled due to loss of property or land.
- Regarding province of origin in Afghanistan - 23% came from Herat, 16% came from Kabul, 9% came from Ghazni and 9% came from Balkh.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 23 January 2022

“Reports indicate that the number of Afghans arriving in Iran has decreased in recent weeks as a result. 29,345 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 23 January 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #13, 15 January 2022

“UNHCR has recorded 141,210 newly arriving Afghans who may be in need of international protection to neighbouring countries since the start of 2021. The overall number of Afghans in need of international protection are thought to be higher. The majority of those interviewed report leaving Afghanistan for security-related reasons. Basic needs cited by those newly arriving Afghans interviewed in Iran and Pakistan include access to shelter, livelihoods, food and documentation, with a large majority of those undocumented Afghans in Iran also citing concerns regarding detention and forced return.”

European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), Afghanistan Country Focus – Country of Origin Information Report, January 2022

“At the end of August 2021, UNHCR estimated 1 435 000 registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 780 000 in Iran. In November 2021, UNHCR reported on continuous ‘movements of largely undocumented Afghans resorting to irregular land border crossing points’ with Iran. The Norwegian Refugee Council

(NRC) noted on 10 November 2021 that 4 000 – 5 000 Afghans were leaving Afghanistan for Iran daily via informal border crossings. Referring to Iranian Students' News Agency, NRC noted that 'at least 300 000 Afghans have entered Iran' since the Taliban takeover."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 6 January 2022

"UNHCR is aware of 27,816 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 3 January 2022, although the total number of new arrivals in the country is understood to be much higher.

Since the beginning of 2021, UNHCR identified 27,816 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,581 heads of households). As of 5 January 2022, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 2,195 families (consisting of 8,326 individuals) have been interviewed for protection concerns.

- 30% were women and 44% were children.
- 24% were female heads of households.
- The majority of new arrivals interviewed were from Herat (20%), Kabul (17%) and Ghazni (10%).
- New arrivals reported that they had spent an average of 9 days travelling to Iran, with 85% crossing directly from Afghanistan, while 12% crossed via Pakistan."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 30 December 2021

"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.

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."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 December 2021

"Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified 24,691 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 6,171 heads of households). As of 5 December, out of the new arrivals who directly approached UNHCR, 1,819 families (consisting of 7,028 individuals), were interviewed by UNHCR.

- Those interviewed comprised 30% women, 27% men and 44% children.
- The majority were originally from Kabul and Herat provinces (both 19%), followed by Ghazni (11%) and Balkh (9%).
- Individuals spent an average of 9 days travelling to Iran, with 80% travelling by cars and 70% by foot. The percentages represent many who used both means of transportation, with the first leg of their journey by cars and the second by foot or vice versa.
- The large majority of new arrivals are temporarily being hosted by relatives/friends in Iran (64%), while 21% are living in rental accommodation. Paying rent can add strain on Afghans who recently arrived in Iran, as many are expected to have limited financial support/income.
- 66% reported having extended family members already settled in Iran, with 74% stating they are able to get support from their family members. While this can be temporarily sustained, if extended for longer periods, it may cause increased burdens on the family members providing support to new arrivals and who may need to be assisted at a later stage."

[...] "Different government officials, at various times and events, have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals to Iran may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

"The number of newly arrived Afghans is much higher than reported by UNHCR, as many Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and irregularly. Different government officials at various times and events have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

"Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified 21,389 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (on behalf of 5,244 individuals who approached UNHCR's receptions). Out of the new arrivals approaching us directly, 1,324 families (consisting of 5,281 individuals), have been interviewed by UNHCR:

- Hazaras (41%) and Tajiks (38%) made up the highest ethnicities approaching UNHCR's receptions.
- 46% of newly arrived Afghan asylum-seekers who contacted UNHCR are currently in Tehran, followed by Khorasan Razavi (21%) and Isfahan (14%). This underscores the need for an out-of camp, urban response, which is being discussed by UNHCR with the Government of Iran.
- 45% indicated they crossed into Iran through the Milak border with Afghanistan in eastern Iran. UNHCR had provided food items, bottled water and other core-relief items to BAFIA in Sistan and Baluchistan to be distributed to new arrivals at the border."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 2 November 2021

"Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR identified 20,878 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (on behalf of 5,103 individuals who approached UNHCR's receptions). As of 31 October, out of the new arrivals approaching us directly, 1,158 families (consisting of 4,719 individuals), have been interviewed by UNHCR:

- 61% were women and 39% were men. 23% were female heads of households, who are considered vulnerable as they may be more at risk to resort to negative coping mechanisms to provide basic needs for their families. 26% were girls below the age of 18.
- 72% of the interviews were conducted through UNHCR's hotlines, while the rest took place at UNHCR's receptions. UNHCR continues to enhance Communicate with Communities (CwC) in



person and through its social media accounts, to ensure new arrivals have access to reliable information.

The number of newly arrived Afghans is much higher than reported by UNHCR, as many Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and irregularly. Different government officials at various times and events have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas. UNHCR's sub-office in Mashhad received reports on the arrival of 1,000-1,200 persons daily in the past week."

"Afghans continue to make their way to Iran irregularly through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of 20,878 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January until 29 October, though the numbers are understood to be much higher."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 26 October 2021

"[...] As of 23 October, UNHCR identified 20,341 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (based on 4,962 heads of households who approached UNHCR directly at our receptions). The higher number of new arrivals approaching UNHCR between August and September, as compared to October, is due to the initial influx of Afghans following the Taliban takeover and initial misinformation on resettlement opportunities.

To date, out of the new arrivals approaching us directly, UNHCR interviewed 1,044 families (consisting of 4,317 individuals) of which:

- 24% were men, 31% women and 45% children. o Refoulment<sup>1</sup> (30%) and detention (30%) were the highest concerns reported in Iran by Afghans.
- The majority of Afghans who UNHCR interviewed had no registration status in Iran (84%). Only six per cent were valid visa-holders and the remaining population were passport-holders and previous Amayesh cardholders.
- The highest reported needs are access to shelter (56%), access to livelihoods (50%) and documentation (43%).

"The number of newly arrived Afghans is much higher than reported by UNHCR, as many Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and irregularly. Different government officials at various times and events have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 26 October 2021

"Afghans continue to make their way to Iran irregularly through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of 20,341 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January-23 October. The numbers are much higher."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021

"As of 18 October, UNHCR identified 19,641 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (based on 4,786 heads of households who approached UNHCR directly at our receptions). UNHCR noticed a sudden increase in the number of new arrivals in August, in the lead up to and immediately after the Taliban takeover of Kabul. Due to ongoing instability, Afghans have continued to flee their country for Iran. However, it remains challenging for UNHCR to understand whether the number of arrivals from August to October have increased, decreased or stayed at the same levels. That said, UNHCR has increased its reception capacities and is now able to conduct protection screenings of larger numbers of newly arrived Afghans. To date, UNHCR interviewed 870 families (consisting of 3,609 individuals) of which:

- 40% were Hazara and 38% were Tajik.

- 71% had documents (of whom 52% had Tazkiras, 18% passports with visas and 12% passports without a visa), while 28% had no documents.
- 50% were in Tehran, followed by Mashhad (18%) and Isfahan (17%).
- Access to shelter (56%), livelihoods (52%) and documentation (41%) were amongst the most required needs by newly arrived Afghans.
- On average, newly arrived Afghans spent 7.8 days travelling to Iran, with 80% crossing from Afghanistan while 17% went through Pakistan. 81% said they travelled to Iran by car, while 72% said they travelled on foot.

According to official figures shared by the Government of Iran to UNHCR, 807 individuals remain in Iran and are being held by the Government in facilities in border areas (107 in Al-Ghadir, in Sistan and Baluchistan province, and 700 individuals in Sefid Sang, in Khorasan Razavi province). These are among the 3,646 persons previously communicated by the government to have arrived in Iran in August. The majority of these individuals are understood to have returned to Afghanistan, though UNHCR is seeking clarity on the voluntary nature of these returns.

The number of newly arrived Afghans is much higher than reported by UNHCR, as many Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and irregularly. Different government officials at different times and events have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals may range between 100,000-300,000. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 11 October 2021

“Afghans continue to make their way to Iran irregularly through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of 19,102 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January until 7 October. The numbers are very likely much higher. Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers.

[...] From 1 January to 7 October, UNHCR identified 19,102 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (based on 4,650 heads of households who approached UNHCR directly at our receptions). UNHCR noticed a sudden increase in the number of new arrivals in August, in the lead up to and immediately after the Taliban takeover of Kabul. Due to ongoing instability, Afghans have continued to flee their country for Iran. However, it remains challenging for UNHCR to understand whether the number of arrivals from August to September have increased, decreased or stayed at the same levels. That said, UNHCR has increased its reception capacities and is now able to conduct protection screenings of larger numbers of newly arrived Afghans. To date, UNHCR interviewed 753 families (consisting of 3,148 individuals, out of the 19,102 new arrivals) of which:

- 24% were female-headed households. 47% were children (of which 17% were below five years old).
- 34% were in Tehran, followed by Razavi Khorasan (27%) and Isfahan (18%).
- 24% stated that they had been previously voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan, while 10% said they had been previously deported to Afghanistan.
- Access to documentation (40%), food (33%) and education (23%) are amongst the most required needs by newly arrived Afghans. This is a shift compared to the beginning of the Taliban takeover when resettlement was the highest reported need by Afghans in Iran. The latter is much related to UNHCR’s mass distribution of information to those approaching its offices regarding the limited number of resettlement slots.

A video posted on Instagram showed thousands of people waiting to cross the Zaranj border in Afghanistan’s Nimroz province to Iran. UNHCR reached out to provincial BAFIA counterparts to corroborate these reports; provincial BAFIA confirmed to UNHCR that, based on their cameras in border areas, there were no large crowds of people making their way towards and/or gathered at the border;

they further confirmed they will inform UNHCR, should the situation change, and movements of large groups become apparent. Due to continued lack of access to border areas, UNHCR is not able to independently confirm these movements, although we are liaising with regional colleagues to better triangulate this information.

According to official figures shared by the Government of Iran to UNHCR, 807 individuals remain in Iran and are being held by the Government in facilities in border areas (107 in Al-Ghadir, in Sistan and Baluchistan province, and 700 individuals in Sefid Sang, in Khorasan Razavi province). These are among the 3,646 persons previously communicated by the government to have arrived in Iran in August. The majority of these 3,646 individuals have returned to Afghanistan, though UNHCR is seeking clarity on the voluntary nature of these returns.

The number of newly arrived Afghans is much higher than what UNHCR is able to report, as the vast majority of Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and irregularly. Different government officials at different times and events, have unofficially stated that the number of new arrivals (who have managed to make it past border areas and have not been apprehended and returned to Afghanistan) may range between 100,000-300,000. Additionally, on 10 October, the border commander for Nimroz province in southwestern Afghanistan, Mohammad Hashem Hanzaleh, stated that the number of persons crossing the borders to Iran has risen to 3,000 and 4,000 individuals per day, as compared to the 1,000 to 2,000 crossing monthly before the Taliban takeover. However, UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of comprehensive and sustained access to border areas.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 September 2021

“Afghans continue to make their way to Iran in an irregular manner through unofficial border points. UNHCR is aware of 17,786 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January until 25 September. The actual numbers are very likely much higher. Out of the newly arrived families interviewed by UNHCR, 75% reported having crossed into Iran through unofficial borders. Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers, while borders are open for commercial purposes and foreign-national passport holders with valid visas for Iran.”

“From 1 January to 25 September, UNHCR identified 17,786 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (based on 4,282 heads of households who approached UNHCR directly at our receptions). Amongst them, 587 families (consisting of 2,448 individuals) were interviewed, of which: 47% were children and 60% were female, 41% were Hazara and 37% were Tajik. 24% were female-headed households. 84% report having no legal registration status in Iran, while others have valid visas (6%) and other types of documents. The majority of new arrivals reported their need for access to livelihoods and documentation, as well as urgent need for food and shelter.

Additionally, as per information received by Iran’s Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), 218 Afghans (88 in Khorasan Razavi and 130 in Sistan and Baluchistan) are being hosted by the government.

However, the number of newly arrived Afghans are understood to be much higher than reported by UNHCR as many Afghans continue to cross into Iran undetected and, for fear of being apprehended by authorities, do not make themselves known to the government or UNHCR. UNHCR continues to face challenges in monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, due to the absence of a centralised registration system and continued lack of access to border areas.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 20 September 2021

“From 1 January to 18 September, UNHCR identified 16,335 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (based on 3,937 head of households who approached UNHCR directly at our receptions). Amongst them, 511 families (consisting of 2,120 individuals) were interviewed, of which:

- 39% were Hazara and 38% were Tajik.
- 23% were female-headed households.
- 31% of new arrivals do not have any identity documents.
- 84% report having no legal registration status in Iran.

An additional 172 Afghans are understood to be in Iran (out of the 2,988 who arrived during the second week of August, as informed by Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs) and are currently hosted by the government (88 in Khorasan Razavi and 84 in Sistan and Baluchistan).

UNHCR estimates that the actual number of new arrivals in Iran is likely to be significantly higher, as many have entered through informal routes. UNHCR has especially received reports of increased informal movements through Pakistan, into Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan province, due to the prevalence of smugglers there and fewer natural barriers. The number of families crossing in has also reportedly increased.

There however continues to be challenges monitoring arrivals and verifying figures, including due to the absence of a centralised registration system. Sistan and Baluchistan remains a no-go province, yet a crucial one in terms of border movements, thus UNHCR continues to advocate for access. Advocacy also continues, aimed at establishing centralised registration and documentation of new arrivals to facilitate assistance provision and enhance protection."

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent Developments in the Security Situation, Impact on Civilians and Targeted Individuals, 10 September 2021

"The Iranian government estimated in July that approximately 5,000 Afghans a day entered Iran in an irregular manner."

Ministry of Immigration and Integration, The Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent developments in the security situation, impact on civilians and targeted individuals, September 2021

"The Iranian government estimated in July that approximately 5,000 Afghans a day entered Iran in an irregular manner."

## **Humanitarian and socio-economic situation for Afghan asylum-seekers in Iran**

### *Overview*

UK Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note – Afghanistan: Humanitarian Situation, April 2022

"On 15 December 2021, BBC News reported how aid arrived in the country: 'Most aid continues to be sent by road – through Afghanistan's borders with Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Despite restrictions on the movement of people across the country's borders, the UNOCHA says they have remained largely open to the flow of humanitarian aid. Most commercial flights to Kabul remain suspended – but aid organisations and governments have also been able to use air routes to send some emergency supplies. Iran has been sending humanitarian aid to Afghans via land and air routes. Some food aid is also being sourced locally, the WFP says. But major challenges remain in distributing aid within Afghanistan. Conditions remain "volatile and hard to predict due to sporadic violence that might erupt", the IRC [International Rescue Committee] in Afghanistan says.'"

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 31 March 2022

"On 11 January 2022, UNHCR launched the 2022 RRP. The RRP targets 5.7 million persons of concern in the neighbouring 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.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan – 2021 Final Report, 31 March 2022

“Among Amayesh card holders, undocumented Afghans, and new arrivals there are several profiles who have specific needs, including female headed households, unaccompanied and single children (UASC), single men who may be forced to return, and persons with disabilities. With a lack of livelihoods options, and with the protracted socio-economic downturn in Iran, exacerbated by economic sanctions and the ongoing pandemic, households have struggled to make ends meet. In addition to the lack of livelihoods leading to greater risk of exploitation, major concerns reported by these population groups include lack of access to documentation, lack of access to health care services (including on sexual and reproductive health), refoulement, detention, and limited freedom of movement. The needs and vulnerabilities of host communities converge with those of Afghan populations, specifically the high levels of poverty and limited access to livelihoods.” [...]

“Restricted access to the border areas to monitor the situation and the lack of established facilities has hampered the identification of and support to new arrivals and those most vulnerable amongst them. Identifying those in need of international protection and establishing adequate referral pathways for them remains difficult as there are challenges to be registered and file asylum claims. Lack of access to reliable data from the government (including population figures) and analysis further complicated efforts to deliver a timely and evidence-based response. Data on and access to newly arrived Afghans was particularly lacking in urban settings, where most new arrivals were located, precluding efforts to provide targeted and tailored assistance to these groups. In some cases, new arrivals used informal routes, including using smugglers, which presented additional challenges in identifying them and exacerbated the protection risks they faced. While UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan, detention, and deportation of Afghans, particularly single men, continued without clear indications that assessment of

these groups for vulnerabilities or international protection needs was systematically being conducted. Iranian borders also remain closed for those arriving without documentation.”

UNHCR, UNHCR’s Emergency Response in Afghanistan, 28 February 2022

“As the situation deteriorated in early 2021, UNHCR issued a Level 1 Emergency Declaration for Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan in June, triggering preparations to respond to a likely humanitarian emergency – and teams immediately leapt into action.”

Norwegian Refugee Council, ‘Humanitarian needs in Iran rise as 300,000 Afghans arrive since Taliban takeover’, 10 November 2021

“Thousands of exhausted women, children and men are crossing from Afghanistan into Iran every day in search of safety. Iran cannot be expected to host so many Afghans with so little support from the international community. There must be an immediate scale up of aid both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries like Iran, before the deadly winter cold,” said the Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) Secretary General Jan Egeland on a visit to Iran this week.’

‘Between 4,000 and 5,000 Afghans are fleeing into Iran each day via informal border crossings, according to locally reported figures. NRC is on the ground in Iran supporting those Afghans, in addition to hundreds of thousands of others who have been sheltering in the country for much longer – some for decades...’

“We’ve heard heartbreaking stories from families that have recently arrived in Iran. One refugee said they were targeted for being Shi’a Muslim, their few remaining possessions were taken, their house burned, and they had to flee multiple times within Afghanistan before reaching Iran. They were told that their daughters would be married off to fighters as soon as they reach the age of 10,” said Egeland.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“Access to shelter remains the highest need of new Afghan asylum-seekers (50%), followed by documentation (48%), livelihoods (46%) and food (26%). With a harsh winter looming and prices of rent having seen a sharp increase in Iran in the past months, UNHCR is worried many of the most vulnerable individuals will be left homeless, increasing their vulnerability.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 2 November 2021

“On 27 October, the Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Majid Takht Ravanchi, stated that the developments in Afghanistan have seen “several hundred thousand more refugees” crossing into Iran, without Iran having received “any added resources from the international community”. Ravanchi added that the international response to the influx of asylum-seekers to neighbouring countries, including Iran, must be intensified. This message was echoed on 30 October by the Iranian Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Zahra Ershadi, who, while addressing the UN General Assembly, stated that Iran is currently hosting more than 300,000 new Afghan asylum-seekers and that the country is unable to host the displaced populations any longer because of the economic downturn it has been experiencing. Ershadi further urged UNHCR to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and resettlement of refugees.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 26 October 2021

“On 22 October, the Iranian Minister of Interior, Ahmad Vahidi, called on Afghan officials to improve the living conditions in their country to prevent Afghans from crossing the borders. “We have always asked the people of Afghanistan not to come to our borders and if they have any needs, we will provide them in other ways inside Afghanistan and we hope that the rulers of Afghanistan will pay attention to this issue,” said Vahidi during the inauguration ceremony of the new Governor-General in the Razavi Khorasan province.”

### *Access to education*

World Food Programme, Iran Country Brief, June 2022, 19 July 2022

"• As part of the efforts to promote education for refugee girls, WFP Iran provided monthly monetary incentives of Iranian Rials (IRR) 500,000 (US\$ 2) to 2,810 refugee girls in June in recognition of their regular school attendance.

- Due to the closure of schools during summer, there will be no school feeding and cash incentive distributions in July, August and September."

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

"The government claimed to grant Afghan children access to schools. During the 2020-21 academic year, more than 470,000 Afghan children were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, including 138,000 undocumented Afghan children. According to media reports, however, Afghans continued to have difficulty gaining access to education."

### *Access to employment*

Tolo News, Afghan Officials: Iran Deported 5,600 Afghans in Past Week, 28 July 2022

"According to the information of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), in the past week nearly 6,000 Afghan immigrants have come to Afghanistan from Iran, of which 5,600 were forcibly deported. "We have asked countries, especially Iran, where Afghan immigrants live to respect the rights of Afghan immigrants based on the Islamic and international law," said Mohammad Arsalah Kharoti, deputy of the MoRR. Officials of the Ministry asked Iran and all other countries to respect the rights of refugees and to address their problems. Many young people are reportedly forced to travel abroad due to economic issues and a lack of employment. "Two times I went to Iran, and they deported me. I have to go to Iran, there is no work here in Afghanistan," said Noor Mohammad, an immigrant forcibly deported from Iran. "Due to economic challenges and lack of employment, I want to go to Iran," said Abdul Sami, a resident of Kapisa."

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

"Only refugees with government-issued work permits were able to work."

TOLO News, Afghan Refugees Say Iran Officials Not Allowing Them to Work, 3 April 2022

"The Afghan refugees said that the local officials in Abu Shaar instructed the residents to not allow the refugees to have access to work or to rent homes."

Norwegian Refugee Council, Enabling Afghan refugees to work from home, 14 October 2021

"With no immediate signs that the Covid-19 situation is easing in Iran, heading to work continues to put people at risk. NRC has found an innovative way to help Afghan refugees in the country to work from home."

'Many vulnerable Afghans in Iran are struggling to make ends meet because of pandemic-related financial difficulties. The dilemma is common: stay at home to avoid infection and forego income, or work outside the home to afford basic family needs, despite the health risk.'

'In order to help Afghan refugees across Iran have a source of income, especially during the pandemic, NRC has been providing "business toolkits, thanks to the generosity of the European Union. Toolkits are offered for a variety of occupations such as: welding, hairdressing, tailoring and carpentry. They are provided to Afghan refugees who have completed vocational training with NRC, or those who are already skilled but without work."

UNHCR, [Announcement on Services Available for the Undocumented](#), 26 September 2021

“In Iran, Afghans have access to different rights and services based on their status (Amayesh card holder, passport & visa holder, undocumented). [...] Undocumented individuals are not eligible for Temporary Work Permits (TWP) that allow them to work legally in Iran.”

#### *Access to healthcare*

WHO, [Islamic Republic of Iran scales up efforts in tropical diseases surveillance and ensure availability of health care services for Iranian and Afghan refugees](#), 14 February 2022

“Islamic Republic of Iran scales up efforts in tropical diseases surveillance and ensures availability of health care services for Iranian and Afghan refugees.”

NRC, [Humanitarian Overview: Iran](#), Undated

“Iran’s inclusive policies grant access for all Afghans to access primary health care and all Afghan children can study in Iranian public schools. Amayesh and visa holders are allowed to work in certain job categories. Despite the inclusive policies and support from the international community, Afghans still face challenges finding and retaining stable incomes. This affects their ability to secure housing, keep children in school, and could adversely impact their ability to renew documentation and legal status on time.”

UNHCR, [Announcement on Services Available for the Undocumented](#), 26 September 2021

“In Iran, Afghans have access to different rights and services based on their status (Amayesh card holder, passport & visa holder, undocumented). [...] Undocumented individuals are not eligible for any health insurance in Iran. However, all primary healthcare is free of charge, regardless of your documentation status. You may access primary healthcare by approaching the health center or health post nearest to you. Hospital care is also available, however at a higher rate than for nationals.”

#### *Covid-19*

UNHCR, [Afghanistan Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan 2022](#), 12 Jan 2022

“Many of those who have crossed into Iran have likely been able to move to urban centres. Central and local authorities have reported an increase in both demand on healthcare centres and participation in school enrolment campaigns. [...]” The urban response also considers the situation of Afghans already living in Iran, some 96 per cent of whom live outside of refugee sites/settlements. Against the backdrop of recent developments – including an increase in new arrivals and a challenging socio-economic situation brought about by unilateral economic sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic – the situation of these populations is increasingly precarious, with depleted income-earning opportunities contributing to deepening needs among existing Afghan populations and Iranian host communities alike.”

OCHA, [Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan \(Jan-Dec 2022\)](#), 11 January 2022

“Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, host more than 2.2 million registered refugees from previous waves of forced displacement, and a further 4 million Afghans of varying statuses. This has stretched the capacity of host communities. The majority of Afghans in both countries reside in urban and peri-urban areas, relying on national public services that are largely available to them. However, the difficult economic situation in these and other neighbouring countries, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and a growing asylum fatigue in some host communities, is creating further challenges for the host governments to continue their policy of inclusion of Afghans in national systems.”



## *Child labour*

UNICEF, Afghan Children on the Move: A Framework for Action to Protect Children in Iran and Afghanistan (Phase I), Undated

“Thousands of undocumented Afghans are also unaccompanied children who travel to Iran, and neighboring countries, to work. Most of them are involved in low-wage jobs within the informal sector and the small-scale business sectors. Child labour violates many of the children rights such as the right to education, rest and play, and protection from health hazards, violence, and abuse.” “Children, and young people living in Afghanistan, and those Afghan refugee children in Iran and in transit, face multiple deprivations – poverty, insecurity, limited access to education, health care and a protective environment. Thus, it is of utmost importance to ensure a comprehensive package of interventions to address and respond to these interlinked social challenges.” New arrivals are likely to face dire needs, particularly in health, nutrition and protection sectors.

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

“In a 2017 report, HRW asserted that the IRGC had recruited Afghan children as young as age 14 to serve in the Fatemiyoun Brigade, reportedly an Iranian-supported Afghan group fighting alongside government forces in Syria and noted that at least 14 Afghan children had been killed fighting in the Syrian conflict. In a July 2020 interview by IranWire, a Fatemiyoun Brigade member claimed he had joined the brigade in 2018 at age 16, and another brigade member said he had joined at age 15.”

“There were reports of thousands of Afghan refugee children in the country, many of whom were born in Iran but could not obtain identity documents. These children were often unable to attend schools or access basic government services and were vulnerable to labor exploitation and trafficking.”

“There were reportedly significant numbers of children, especially of Afghan descent, who worked as street vendors in major urban areas. According to official estimates, there were 60,000 homeless children, although many children’s rights organizations estimated up to 200,000 homeless children. The Committee on the Rights of the Child reported that street children in particular were subjected to various forms of economic exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation by the public and police officers. Child labor also was used in the production of carpets and bricks. Children worked as beggars, and there were reports criminals forced some children into begging rings. According to the Iranian Students’ News Agency, Reza Ghadimi, the managing director of the Tehran Social Services Organization, stated in 2018 that, according to a survey of 400 child laborers, 90 percent were “molested.””

USDOS – US Department of State, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Iran, 29 July 2022

“Reports of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Iranian Basij Resistance Force (Basij), a paramilitary force subordinate to the IRGC, actively recruiting—through coercion and deception—Afghan migrants and refugees for combat in IRGC-led and commanded militias in Syria, continued during the reporting period. In previous reporting periods, observers reported the IRGC and the Basij forces—through force or coercive means—recruited and used migrant and refugee children, as well as Iranian children, for combat in IRGC-led and commanded militias in Syria. Despite such reports, the government has never reported investigating, prosecuting, or convicting officials complicit in the recruitment or use of child soldiers.”

“Afghan girls are vulnerable to forced marriage with men living in Iran, which frequently leads to their victimization in sex trafficking and forced labor, including domestic servitude. Child marriage of Iranian and some foreign girls is reportedly increasing in Iran and is most widespread among communities in lower-income areas of large cities, often with the consent of parents; girls in these marriages may be at risk of sex trafficking or domestic servitude.”

“Iranian and Afghan refugee and migrant children, orphans, and children who are homeless or use the streets as a source of livelihood in Iran are highly vulnerable to forced labor, and experts suggest child trafficking is increasing. An Iranian official stated that the number of child laborers has increased significantly due to the pandemic and the related economic downturn, and that some of the children are forced to work for profiteers and traffickers. [...] Young Afghan children, mainly boys, are forced to perform cheap labor and domestic work, which often involves debt-based coercion, restriction of movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse. Criminal groups kidnap or purchase and force Iranian and migrant children, especially undocumented Afghan children, to work as beggars and street vendors in cities, including Tehran. These children, who may be as young as three years old, are routinely subjected to physical and sexual abuse and drug addiction.”

### *Food insecurity*

UN, World Food Programme: the UK contributes £1 million to support Afghan Refugees in Iran, 17 January 2022

“Food insecurity amongst refugees living in settlements in Iran-Afghanistan border in Iran. Support from the UK and Germany was needed to help 31,000 refugees living in 20 settlements across the country.

“Country Director in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Negar Gerami. “The harsh winter months, job losses, lack of cash and soaring prices have pushed the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan to new highs, with close to 23 million threatened by food insecurity.”

“Iran holds one of the largest urban refugee situations in the world; food insecurity due to limited job opportunities, no access to farming land, and prohibition to keep livestock.”

### *Access to money and financial situation*

OHCHR, Iran: Unilateral sanctions and overcompliance constitute serious threat to human rights and dignity - UN expert, 19 May 2022

“In a statement, the Special Rapporteur highlighted several other areas impacted by the combination of unilateral sanctions and overcompliance, including but not limited to the preservation and further development of essential infrastructure; the difficulties to expand social support programmes in the context of rising prices and unemployment rates, including in support of the growing population of Afghan refugees. “

“Sanctions imposed on main export goods, designation of all Iranian banks along with a long list of companies and nationals, including some engaged in pharmaceuticals and food production, have resulted in reduced state revenue, inflation, growing poverty, insufficient resources to guarantee basic needs of people with low incomes and other vulnerable groups, including people suffering from rare or severe diseases, disabled people, Afghan refugees, women-led households and children.”

“Economic challenges arising from UCMs and lack of international cooperation based on shared responsibility prevent the Government of Iran from providing sustainable assistance to the most vulnerable categories of the population, including the Afghan refugees.”

The Diplomat, As Iran-Taliban Tensions Rise, Afghan Migrants in Tinderbox, 2 May 2022

“Since the Taliban takeover, Iran has escalated its deportations of Afghan migrants, according to the U.N. migration agency, warning that its sanctions-hit economy cannot handle the influx. [...] As more Afghans arrive, helping them gets harder. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh lamented last month that “waves of displaced Afghans cannot continue to Iran” because Iran’s “capacities are limited.”

Iran's youth unemployment hovers over 23 percent. Iran's currency, the rial, has shrivelled to less than 50 percent of its value since 2018."

## Documentation

### *Asylum registration mechanisms for Afghan asylum-seekers in Iran*

UNHCR, UNHCR Iran: Afghanistan Situation Update, 15 June 2022

"The 2022 headcount exercise was a Government led census of the undocumented Afghan population and an important step to regularize their presence in Iran. Whilst the legal implications of participation in the 2022 Headcount are still unclear, it is understood that those who participate will be afforded a certain level of protection including against refoulement and access to services. Conversely, as a time bound exercise, the 2022 Headcount cannot be understood as a comprehensive ongoing registration mechanism. Official statements announcing harsh measures for undocumented Afghans who fail to participate in the 2022 Headcount are particularly of concern to UNHCR in the absence of an open, functional, transparent and easily accessible asylum system in Iran."

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

"After the Taliban took control of the Afghan government in August, official border crossings between Afghanistan and Iran were closed on August 16 to persons without valid passports and Iranian visas, and the government does not allow the entry of undocumented persons. UNHCR issued a nonreturn advisory for Afghanistan on August 16 and continued to call on countries to keep their borders open to Afghans seeking international protection. Most Afghans fleeing to Iran entered irregularly through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers. UNHCR reported an increase in the number of Afghans in need of international protection, and 27,816 newly arrived Afghans approached UNHCR offices in Iran in during the year. UNHCR believed the total number of new arrivals to be much higher. According to preliminary estimates by the government, up to 500,000 Afghans arrived during the year."

"The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status to qualified applicants. While the government reportedly has a system for providing protection to refugees, UNHCR did not have information regarding how the country made asylum determinations. According to HRW the government blocked many Afghans from registering to obtain refugee status. Afghans not registered under the Amayesh system who had migrated during past decades of conflict in their home country continued to be denied access to an asylum system or access to registering with UNHCR as refugees. NGOs reported many of these displaced asylum seekers believed they were pressured to leave the country but could not return to Afghanistan because of the security situation in their home provinces."

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Official Message: Afghanistan, 28 March 2022

"Op 31 december 2020 waren er meer dan 2,2 miljoen geregistreerde Afgaanse vluchtelingen in de buurlanden Pakistan en Iran. Daarvan waren er 1,435 miljoen in Pakistan en 780.000 in Iran. In zowel Pakistan als Iran bood registratie door de overheid Afgaanse asielzoekers/vluchtelingen in het verleden toegang tot een vluchtelingenstatus. In de praktijk betekent dit dat in Iran Afghanen met een zogenaamde amayesh-kaart, en in Pakistan Afghanen met een proof of registration (PoR) kaart als vluchteling worden erkend. [...] Sinds de machtsovername door de Taliban hebben zowel Pakistan als Iran geen actie ondernomen om asielaanvragen van Afgaanse nieuwkomers of reeds in Pakistan en Iran gevestigde Afghanen te beoordelen. [...] In Iran voert UNHCR geen pre-screening uit. Volgens UNHCR is in Iran het Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) verantwoordelijk voor het registreren van

asielzoekers en het behandelen van asielaanvragen. Dit bureau had in december 2021 echter nog niet besloten wat het beleid met betrekking tot nieuwe Afghaanse asielzoekers zou zijn, aldus UNHCR.”

Google Translate: “As of December 31, 2020, there were more than 2.2 million registered Afghan refugees in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. Of those, 1.435 million were in Pakistan and 780,000 in Iran. In both Pakistan and Iran, government registration has historically provided Afghan asylum seekers/refugees with access to refugee status. In practice this means that in Iran Afghans with a so-called amayesh card [...] are recognized as refugees. [...] Since the Taliban took power, neither Pakistan nor Iran have taken any action to assess asylum applications from Afghan newcomers or Afghans already established in Pakistan and Iran. [...] UNHCR does not conduct pre-screening in Iran. According to UNHCR, in Iran the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) is responsible for registering asylum seekers and processing asylum applications. However, this agency had not yet decided on its policy regarding new Afghan asylum seekers in December 2021, UNHCR said.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 14 March 2022

“According to the Government of Iran, 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. Refugee focal points in Kerman have told UNHCR that the majority of new arrivals are families- as opposed to single males. It is understood that most settle in suburbs upon their arrival, as they are not able to afford rent in urban areas. Once settled they often take up work as daily labourers, which is usually tolerated by the government. Borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. 34,398 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 5 March 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

UNHCR, Announcement on Services Available for the Undocumented, 26 September 2021

“The Government of Iran, through the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA), is responsible for the registration of asylum-seekers and refugees as well as for Refugee Status Determination in Iran, in accordance with Iranian legislation. If you are newly arrived in Iran, you may wish to approach your local BAFIA office for further information. For new arrivals from Afghanistan, the Government of Iran is still deciding on the process for registration and documentation, and UNHCR does not have details on this yet.”

### **Treatment of Afghan asylum-seekers by the Iranian government or public authorities**

International Rescue Committee, 'Wahida's journey across the Mediterranean Sea', 27 June 2022

“Wahida made the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Greece in a dinghy with her two sons. She came to find protection for her family from persecution as an Afghan in Iran. Watch and share their story.”

Amnesty International, 'End violence and serious human rights violations against Afghan refugees', 20 June 2022

“Regrettably, many Afghan refugees, including in Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Malaysia and Turkey do not enjoy their rights under international law. They continue to face brutality, violence, ill-treatment and pushbacks. They face discrimination and struggle to access basic services, education, work, identity and travel documents. In the worst cases, they face arbitrary detentions, penalties and forced deportation. We are appalled by the increasing number of incidents of violence and serious human rights

violations against Afghan refugees. In the face of such egregious abuses, many governments are ignoring the great suffering of individuals in need of international protection, particularly women and children.”

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

“According to activist groups and NGOs, authorities routinely arrested Afghans without Amayesh cards and sometimes threatened them with deportation. From the beginning of the year to November 28, according to the International Organization for Migration, 1,150,842 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan, with some claiming they were pressured to leave or left due to abuse by police or state authorities. As of December the government continued to return Afghans who were apprehended while trying to enter Iran, despite advocacy by UNHCR to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. In December UNHCR estimated the government deported 65 percent of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers.”

“HRW and other groups reported the government continued its mistreatment of many Afghans, including through physical abuse by security forces, deportations, forced recruitment to fight in Syria, detention in unsanitary and inhuman conditions, forced payment for transportation to and accommodation in deportation camps, forced labor, forced separation from families, restricted movement within the country, and restricted access to education or jobs. In May 2020 Iranian border guards reportedly forced a group of 57 Afghan migrant workers they had detained entering the country into a fast-flowing river near Zulfiqar at gunpoint. According to a Reuters report sourced to Afghan lawmakers investigating the incident, at least 45 of the men drowned. There was no information regarding the status of a joint investigation into the incident by the Iranian and Afghan governments.”

TOLO News, Afghan Refugees in Iran Complain of Harassment, 7 April 2022

“Afghan refugees in Iran complained over their deteriorated condition, saying they have been facing harassment there.”

UN-OHCHR, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 13 January 2022

“Between 1 January and 1 December 2021, at least 275 people were executed, including at least 2 child offenders and 10 women, for charges involving murder, drug crimes, *moharebeh* (taking up arms to take lives or property or to create fear in the public), *efsad-e fil-arz* (spreading corruption on earth), *baghy* (armed rebellion) and rape. Over 80 of the executions, including of one woman and at least four nationals of Afghanistan, had been for drug-related charges, compared to 25 in 2020, representing an increase in executions for drug-related crimes. An increase in the execution of individuals from minority communities had also been observed, with over 40 Baluchi and over 50 Kurdish individuals executed between 1 January and 17 November 2021. There had also been an increase in the execution of women. Women and men living in poverty remain overrepresented in death penalty cases. The Government reiterated that the death penalty was imposed only for the most serious crimes.”

Insecurity Insight, Protection in Danger Monthly News Brief November 2021, 14 December 2021

“As reported on 11 November 2021: Afghan refugees and migrants have been held in crowded, unhygienic detention camps, where some are subjected to beating and abuse, before being deported to Afghanistan. An Afghan man has reportedly been beaten by Iranian authorities for not being able to pay for his deportation. Source New Age.”

RAND Corporation, Afghan Refugees Are Being Recruited to Join an Iranian Paramilitary, 23 November 2021

“Recently, Iran has recruited thousands of Afghans into its Liwa Fatemiyoun, which it has used as “cannon fodder (PDF)” in the war in Syria. [...] Since at least 2012, Iran has recruited Afghan adults and children into the Liwa Fatemiyoun, which supports Bashar al-Assad's forces (PDF) in Syria's civil war. Of its

estimated 50,000 Afghan fighters, approximately 5,000 were killed and another 4,000 injured during the war. Prior to the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, Iranian officials indicated the group could be used in Afghanistan, especially in the context of fighting Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K). If relations between Iran and the Taliban deteriorate, Tehran may try using the Liwa Fatemiyoun as a force inside Afghanistan. One possible trigger for this action could be violence targeting Afghanistan's Hazara population, a Shia minority. Iran has taken advantage of vulnerable Afghans by offering a path to permanent residency. This is a powerful incentive as Iran and other countries repatriated Afghan refugees in recent years."

## **Ethnic minority groups in Iran**

### *Main ethnic minority groups amongst Afghan asylum-seekers*

International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies, Regional Population Movement - Afghanistan Preparedness and Response - Revised Emergency Appeal No. MDRAFRPM21, Revision# 1, 13 July 2022

"Most population movements from Afghanistan are mainly from Hazara and Tajik communities, coming from the eight provinces/locations of Herat, Balkh, Kunduz, Parwan, Baghlan, Nimruz, Ghazni and Faryab."

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan 2021 Final Report Jan - Dec 2022

"According to statements provided by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI), some 500,000 Afghans are estimated to have arrived in the country since August 2021 and are largely residing in urban areas. As such, the overall number in need of international protection is likely to be much higher. Data gathered from new arrivals indicates that 80 per cent are of Hazara or Tajik ethnicity[...]."

Reliefweb.int/International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies, Regional Population Movement - Afghanistan Preparedness and Response - Revised Emergency Appeal No. MDRAFRPM21, Revision# 1, 13 July 2022

"Access to Iran's territory remains limited to Afghan passport holders with valid visas, although the Iranian authorities report that some 500,000 Afghans have crossed into Iran since 2021. An increase in security measures at unofficial border crossing points, as well as the resumption of visa issuance at the Iranian embassy in Kabul, has led to a decrease in the proportion of arrivals who reported arriving irregularly and a decrease in the proportion who reported using smugglers to enter."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran 23 January 2022, 23 January 2022

"Since the start of 2021 and so far in 2022, UNHCR has identified 29,345 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran [...] As of 23 January, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had interviewed 2,403 families (which consist of 9,160 individuals) for protection concerns. Of these interviewed: [...] 40% are Hazara, 36% are Tajiks, 11% are other, 8% are Pashtuns and 2.41% are Uzbeks."

US Department of State (USDOS), 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 12 April 2022

"UNHCR reported that approximately 40 percent of Afghan arrivals to Iran were Hazaras."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 16 January 2022

Since the start of 2021 and so far into 2022, UNHCR spoke to 29,345 Afghans who newly arrived in Iran (and approached UNHCR receptions through 7,333 heads of households), seeking urgent assistance. As of 11 January, out of these new arrivals, UNHCR had interviewed 2,403 families (consisting of 9,160

individuals) for protection concerns. Of these: 40% were Hazara, 36% were Tajik and 8% were Pashtun (11% were categorised as being from 'other' ethnicities)."

LA Times, Amid a crackdown, Afghan refugees in Iran fear the 'unthinkable': Being sent back, 16 December 2021

"The great majority of the refugees here are members of the Tajik, Uzbek or Hazara ethnic minorities, who are routinely discriminated against — or worse — at home."

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021

"[...] Among the new arrivals in Iran, 40% are Hazaras; UNHCR suspects the number of Hazaras crossing to Iran will likely increase, in light of these recent attacks."

#### *Treatment of Afghan asylum-seekers from the Hazara Shia ethnic minority group*

German Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt), Briefing on the Situation of the Hazaras in Afghanistan, May 2022

"[...] Due to this exodus and their Shiite religion, the Hazaras also maintain close relations with Iran, even though they are often considered second-class citizens there. Since many of them live precariously in Iran, it is not difficult for the Iranian government to recruit them to fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. There is a separate brigade called Liwa Fatemiyoun, which consists only of Afghan Hazaras. Partly because of this direct involvement of the Hazaras in Iran's war against IS in Syria, they have become direct targets of the local IS offshoot Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) in Afghanistan."

Infomigrants.com, Reports of abuse of Afghan refugees as Iran continues deportations, 5 May 2022

"Life is becoming more and more difficult for Afghan refugees in Iran, where anxiety about the threat of extremism from its neighbour has been rising after a series of violent attacks against the minority Hazaras. A prominent Afghan journalist based in Tehran, Abbas Hussein, told AP that paranoia in Iran is growing. "There are reports that some extremists are entering Iran easily with refugees," he said. Last month, two Iranian clerics were stabbed to death at a sacred Shiite shrine in northeastern Iran. The attacker was identified in the media as an Afghan national of Uzbek ethnicity. In the following days, a surge of videos allegedly showing Afghans being abused by groups of Iranian men flooded Iranian social media."

Gandhara, New Videos Show Mistreatment of Afghan Refugees in Iran, 8 April 2022

"A grainy video shows several police officers standing idly as an angry mob beats a young man. The 30-second video, shared widely this week on social media, purportedly shows a group of Iranian men assaulting a young Afghan migrant. The video is among several that have been uploaded on social media in recent days. [...]. The videos have put the spotlight on the widespread abuse and discrimination suffered by members of Iran's sizeable Afghan community, many of whom have no legal status or basic rights."

Atlantic Council, The Hazara community in Afghanistan is stuck in the middle between Iran and the Taliban, 22 October 2021

“The Fatemiyoun Brigade is primarily rooted from Afghan refugees of Hazara ethnicity in Iran, who are often forcibly encouraged to join. Estimates from a 2019 US Institute of Peace report claim there are between forty thousand and sixty thousand members of the brigade. The number of Fatemiyoun troops Iran deployed to support Bashar al-Assad in Syria to fight ISIS is estimated to be in the tens of thousands. Internal reports have made indications of Iran offering Hazara individuals and their families coercive incentives, such as legal protections, citizenship, and payment in return for serving within the Fatemiyoun. However, many are intimidated into joining by threats of deportation and arrest. This seemingly contractual relationship creates an air of uncertainty in terms of the level of allegiance Iranian-involved Hazaras hold towards their religious custodians.”

## **Religious minority groups in Iran**

### *Main religious minority groups*

U.S. Department of State - Office of International Religious Freedom, 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 12 May 2021

"The constitution defines the country as an Islamic republic and specifies Twelver Ja'afari Shia Islam as the official state religion. [...] The constitution states Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians, excluding converts from Islam, are the only recognized religious minorities permitted to worship and form religious societies "within the limits of the law."

US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), USCIRF – Recommended for Countries of Particular Concern (CPC): Afghanistan, April 2022

"Following the Taliban takeover, over 120,000 Afghans, including religious minorities, were evacuated to the United States and ally countries. Additionally, masses fearing persecution at the hands of the Taliban fled to neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran, where they continue to face uncertainty."

CSW, General Briefing: Afghanistan, 22 March 2022

Most Afghans are Sunni Muslims, while Shi'as account for approximately 10-15% of the population. Other religious groups, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs and Baha'is officially account for only 0.3% of the population.

### *Treatment of religious minorities*

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Religious Propaganda in Iran, July 2022

"State propaganda against Sunnis is often shrouded in anti-Wahhabi discourse, implicating foreign conspiracies often involving Saudi Arabia. A report by Defa Press warned that Wahhabis target Sunni religious schools in border areas, alleging that anti-Shi'a concepts are taught at these schools."

"The Iranian government provides false narratives regarding alleged ties between religious minorities inside Iran and foreign states and non-state entities, and it makes baseless allegations about threats posed by religious minorities to Iran's security and territorial integrity. The same tactic is used in state-sponsored antisemitic propaganda, with Jews being implicated in international conspiracies against Iran. Sunni Muslims and Gonabadi Sufi Dervishes are also portrayed as furthering foreign interests at the expense of Iran's security and stability, with both groups being tied to extremist groups such as ISIS."

ACLED, Minority Repression in Iran, 4 April 2022



“In Iran, religious minority groups suffer systematic violations of religious freedoms at the hands of state authorities. Across 2020 and 2021, Iranian state forces perpetuated more than 400 repression events targeting minority Muslim communities and other non-Muslim religious communities, accounting for approximately 96% of all repression events targeting civilians with a salient religious affiliation in the country.”

UN-OHCHR, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 13 January 2022

“The Special Rapporteur continued to receive reports about the targeting of the rights of individuals belonging to ethnic and religious minority groups. As highlighted elsewhere in the present report, minorities are disproportionately affected by the imposition of the death penalty and arbitrary deprivation of life, and are also disadvantaged with regard to recognition of rights in law and as a matter of policy.”

HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

“Iranian law denies freedom of religion to Baha’is and discriminates against them. Authorities continue to arrest and prosecute members of the Baha’i faith on vague national security charges and to close businesses owned by them. Iranian authorities also systematically refuse to allow Baha’is to register at public universities because of their faith. The government also discriminates against other religious minorities, including Sunni Muslims, and restricts cultural and political activities among the country’s Azeri, Kurdish, Arab, and Baluch ethnic minorities. Minority activists are regularly arrested and prosecuted on vaguely defined national security charges in trials that grossly fall short of international standards. It appears that over the past year, authorities have increased the crackdown against Kurdish political activists. On September 9, IRGC forces launched missile attacks against the bases of Kurdish opposition forces (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran or KDPI) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.”

United State Institute of Peace, US Report on Religious Minorities in Iran, 9 August 2021

“In the first half of 2021, Iran persecuted religious minorities including Baha’is and Christians as well as Sunni and Sufi Muslims, according to a new report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. “Iranian authorities have arrested scores of religious minorities, who face lengthy prison sentences, while harassing others or denying them advancement in higher education.” Iran’s population is predominantly Shiite Muslim, and Shiism is the official religion of the state. Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are the only recognized religions, while the Baha’i are considered heretics. The government—notably the judiciary and security forces—has persecuted members of recognized faiths as well as unrecognised faiths. The following are excerpts from the report.”

“Iran’s persecution of Sunni Muslims also continued in 2021. On New Year’s Eve 2020, the government executed three Sunni Muslim political prisoners at Vakilabad prison without notifying their families beforehand. In January, it demolished the foundations of a Sunni mosque in Iranshahr, and also reportedly halted the construction of two new Sunni mosques in the region. In March, authorities arrested a Sunni author and translator and sent him to Zahedan prison. That same month, the Urmia Revolutionary Court sentenced a Sunni Muslim man to three years in prison on the charge of membership in a Salafi group.”

ACLED, Religious Repression and Disorder: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen, 4 June 2021

“Article 12 of the Iranian constitution accords “full respect” and “official status” to Muslim minorities. Yet, despite these legal provisions, Sunni Muslims are reported to be among the most persecuted minorities in the country.”

## Afghan women and girls

### *Afghan women and girls evacuating Afghanistan to Iran*

For more country of origin information on the situation of women in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, please see the [Afghanistan COI Repository](#) jointly produced by Asylos and Clifford Chance.

Ministry of Immigration and Integration, The Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan - Taliban's impact on the population, 1 July 2022

"The rates of gender-based violence have increased since August 2021, mainly due to the deteriorating economy and the socio economic situation. Many men are out of work and are stuck at home which implies why the rates of violence increased. The increasing gender based violence is also linked to returnees coming from Iran. They recently came back in high numbers and many of whom are out of jobs and thus using negative coping mechanisms. Moreover, there are many drug abusers among the male returnees from Iran correlated effect to gender based violence and households."

"During March 2022, an international organisation received information regarding how women without a *mahram* had been denied the right to cross land borders to Pakistan and Iran. Some of them were allowed to pass, while others had been returned, with the request for a legitimate *mahram* to accompany them. [...] Coupled with this the source had heard that women in the past two weeks have been actively prevented from boarding international flights. Two local carriers are still conducting international flights: Kam Air and Ariana Afghan Airlines."

Danish Immigration Service (COI), Afghanistan: Taliban's Impact on the Population, June 2022

"The rates of gender-based violence have increased since August 2021, mainly due to the deteriorating economy and the socio-economic situation. Many men are out of work and are stuck at home which implies why the rates of violence increased. The increasing gender-based violence is also linked to returnees coming from Iran. They recently came back in high numbers and many of whom are out of jobs and thus using negative coping mechanisms. Moreover, there are many drug abusers among the male returnees from Iran correlated effect to gender-based violence and households."

UNCHR, Iran: Protection Dashboard Jan-Mar 2022 Q1, 7 June 2022

"Afghan women and girls and other vulnerable groups are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, child or forced marriage and intimate partner violence. UNHCR continue to provide comprehensive GBV case management support to survivors who approach UNHCR offices. 32.2% were physical assaults cases, 15% were rape, another 15% were physiological and emotional abuse, 12.5% forced marriage. Other incidents were reported to a lesser extent such as sexual assault, denial of resources, sexual harassment and sale and exchange of sex. The majority of GBV survivors are women (91%), while only 5% of reported cases were perpetrated against girls and 4% against men" "Protection risks for children from vulnerable families continue to be reported across the country. Number of cases with CP/GBV claims is concerning, including school drop- outs, child labour, forced/early marriage, physical assaults and domestic violence. Since the start of unrest in Afghanistan, a new profile of UASC is observed more that before in Iran: the children are either separated from their parents who are still in Afghanistan and ended in Iran usually irregularly or whose parents engaged in onward movement to West but did not manage to take them for various reasons. In the absence of CP partners and working relations with State Welfare Organization, the scope of UNHCR's work with regard to this group and other children remains limited. New opportunities might rise in near future to find durable solution for some of the UASC children in framework of RST, while BID procedures are already in place and will be strengthened. 112 reported child at risk [...]"

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan – 2021 Final Report, 31 March 2022

“[...] Meanwhile, unaccompanied, and separated children (UASC), women and girls and other extremely vulnerable persons continued to be at high risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse, which are aggravated by socioeconomic and cultural barriers and risks. A lack of access to these groups hampered the provision of assistance to them.”

UN Women, UNHCR, Afghanistan Crisis Update – Women and Girls in Displacement, 1 March 2022

“Prior to 2021, there were more than 2 million Afghan refugees registered in those countries, of which more than 64 per cent were in Pakistan and 35 per cent were in Iran. With the 2021 crisis, however, it is expected that the number of Afghans in need of international protection has increased in these and other countries. During 2021, women and girls made up an estimated 46 per cent of the almost 80 thousand Afghans in need of international protection reported in these countries. Although most of those entering Pakistan and Iran were recorded as nuclear groups of women and men with children and other dependents, more than 4,000 people fled without a partner to Pakistan and Iran in 2021 alone. Data show that, overall, women are more likely than men to seek asylum with children and other dependents. An estimated 68 per cent of non-partnered women who fled to Pakistan and Iran did so with children or other dependents, compared to 7 per cent of non-partnered men. Data also show that non-partnered women on average take more dependents than non-partnered men when seeking asylum. Non-partnered women fleeing to Pakistan with dependents had on average 4.2 children or other dependents each, compared to 3.1 for men. Similarly, in Iran, these figures stood at 3.8 for women and 3.1 for men. This evidences the additional burden placed on non-partnered women, to find shelter, safety and resources not only for themselves but also for their families.

“[...] Almost all Afghans in need of international protection fleeing to Pakistan and Iran in 2021 cited violence and insecurity as a key reason for fleeing. The second most cited reason was specific security threats, which was cited disproportionately by groups with more women and girls. In Iran, where the reasons for displacement included “discrimination” among the response options, more women and girls were also among the groups that fled because of this reason.”

HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

“Women face discrimination in personal status matters related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and decisions relating to children. Under the Passports Law, a married woman may not obtain a passport or travel outside the country without the written permission of her husband who can revoke such permission at any time. Under the civil code, a husband is accorded the right to choose the place of living and can prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” Iranian law allows girls to marry at 13 and boys at age 15, as well as at younger ages if authorized by a judge. [...]. While cases of femicide are increasingly reported in media and social media, Iran has no law on domestic violence to prevent abuse and protect survivors.[...] Under Iranian law, extramarital sex is criminalized with flogging if unmarried or death if married, impacting women in particular as pregnancy serves as evidence of sexual relations and women who report sexual violence can find themselves prosecuted if authorities believe it to be consensual.”

### *Afghan women and girls in Iran*

UNCHR, Iran: Protection Dashboard Jan-Mar 2022 Q1, 7 June 2022

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offices. 32.2% were physical assaults cases, 15% were rape, another 15% were physiological and emotional abuse, 12.5% forced marriage. Other incidents were reported to a lesser extent such as sexual assault, denial of resources, sexual harassment and sale and exchange of sex. The majority of GBV survivors are women (91%), while only 5% of reported cases were perpetrated against girls and 4% against men" "Protection risks for children from vulnerable families continue to be reported across the country. Number of cases with CP/GBV claims is concerning, including school drop- outs, child labour, forced/early marriage, physical assaults and domestic violence. Since the start of unrest in Afghanistan, a new profile of UASC is observed more than before in Iran: the children are either separated from their parents who are still in Afghanistan and ended in Iran usually irregularly or whose parents engaged in onward movement to West but did not manage to take them for various reasons. In the absence of CP partners and working relations with State Welfare Organization, the scope of UNHCR's work with regard to this group and other children remains limited. New opportunities might rise in near future to find durable solution for some of the UASC children in framework of RST, while BID procedures are already in place and will be strengthened. 112 reported child at risk [...]"

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HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

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prevent his wife from having certain occupations if he deems them against “family values.” Iranian law allows girls to marry at 13 and boys at age 15, as well as at younger ages if authorized by a judge. [...]. While cases of femicide are increasingly reported in media and social media, Iran has no law on domestic violence to prevent abuse and protect survivors.[...] Under Iranian law, extramarital sex is criminalized with flogging if unmarried or death if married, impacting women in particular as pregnancy serves as evidence of sexual relations and women who report sexual violence can find themselves prosecuted if authorities believe it to be consensual.”

### **Afghan LGBTQI+ people**

Danish Immigration Service, [Afghanistan: Taliban’s Impact on the Population](#), 1 July 2022

“The Taliban members are very harsh at the checkpoints and some trans-people have been beaten and detained for hours. Based on religious principles, the Taliban is against LGBT persons, and for this reason, there is plenty of hostility against the LGBT community. Large parts of the LGBT community have moved to Iran and Pakistan; in Afghanistan, many are living in hiding”

Human Rights Watch (HRW), [“Even If You Go to the Skies, We’ll Find You” LGBT People in Afghanistan After the Taliban Takeover](#), January 2022

“Those who have fled to nearby countries remain in a tenuous situation. Most of the countries with which Afghanistan shares major borders, including Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, also criminalize same-sex relations, as do some other countries in the region; in Iran same-sex sexual acts can be punished by death.”

### **Other Afghan individuals (including security forces, soldiers, human rights defenders, lawyers)**

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), [Interim Report – Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: An Assessment of the Factors That Led to Its Demise](#), May 2022

“As the western districts of Afghanistan started falling to the Taliban, around 3,000 Afghan security forces consisting of high-ranking officers to foot soldiers, along with their military equipment and vehicles, crossed the border into Iran. While most of these forces feared going back to Afghanistan, it has been reported that most of them were sent back after United Nations representatives intervened and the Taliban issued a general amnesty.”

HRW, [World Report 2022 - Iran](#), 13 January 2022

“Scores of human rights defenders remain behind bars while authorities continue to harass, arrest, and prosecute those seeking accountability and justice, including human rights lawyers Nasrin Sotoudeh, Mohamad Najafi, and Amirsalar Davoudi. On August 14, Iranian authorities arrested six prominent human rights lawyers and activists working on filing a complaint against Iranian authorities for their abject mismanagement of the Covid-19 crisis. As of November 8, they continued to detain three of them: Arash Keykhosravi, Mostafa Nili, and Mehdi Mahmoudian. Mahmoudian’s lawyer said that authorities are implementing a four-year prison sentence his client previously received for his human rights activism. On September 26, prominent human rights defender Narges Mohammadi announced that authorities summoned her to serve a 30-month prison sentence for charges including “signing a letter opposing the death penalty,” “staging a sit-in at the prison office,” “refusing order (to end the sit in),” and “property damage.” Authorities previously released Mohammadi on October 5, 2020, after she served five years in prison for her rights activism. Since the IRGC’s downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 in January 2020 that killed 176 people, authorities have harassed the families of victims and restricted their rights to seek truth and justice. In July, an Iranian court sentenced Manoucher Bakhtiari, the father of

Pouya Bakhtiari, 27, who was fatally shot during the crackdown on protesters in November 2019, to three and a half years in prison and two and a half years in internal exile to a remote area on unclear charges. Seven members of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, a local NGO focused on preserving biodiversity, remained behind bars on the charge of “collaborating with the hostile state of the US.” Iranian authorities have failed to produce any evidence to support their charges nor have they investigated allegations of torture against them.

## **TB testing**

*Non-approved list of TB testing clinics (compiled independently by Asylos in consultation with lawyers in the UK):*

Atieh Clinic  
Atieh Hospital  
Dadman Boulevard  
Shahrake Qods  
Tehran  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-21-8836-8925  
Email: [srzsini@gmail.com](mailto:srzsini@gmail.com)

Dejbod Medical Centre  
Shaheb Divani Cross Road  
Simetri Cinema Saadi  
Shiraz  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-711-230-4671

Iran Mehr Hospital/Clinic  
1317 Dr Shariati Avenue  
Do-Rah-Golhak  
Tehran  
1949913413  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-21-2200-9071  
Email: [iranmehr\\_hospital@yahoo.com](mailto:iranmehr_hospital@yahoo.com)

Medical Clinic Dr Daneshvar and Dr Karamy Jazireh  
303 Vahid  
Isfahan  
8175745433  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-311-626-0067  
Email: [dr.daneshvarclinic@yahoo.com](mailto:dr.daneshvarclinic@yahoo.com)

Shiraz Central Hospital  
Ground Floor Chamran Blvd  
Shiraz  
7194885899  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-711-612-6009  
Email: [info@mrishiraz.com](mailto:info@mrishiraz.com)

Sepahan Medical Imaging Center  
Parto Building  
6 Mohtasham Kashani  
Isfahan  
8175889535  
Iran  
Telephone: +98-311-627-3030  
Email: [info@SMIC.ir](mailto:info@SMIC.ir)

## DNA testing

*Non-approved list of DNA testing sites (compiled independently by Asylos in consultation with lawyers in the UK):*

Name	Public/Private	Address	Website	Email	Phone
DNA Worldwide Group	Private	Tehran DNA Clinic , Gharb , Tehran , Iran	<a href="https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/shiraz/shiraz-dna-clinic">https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/shiraz/shiraz-dna-clinic</a>	<a href="https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/tehran/tehran-dna-clinic">https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/tehran/tehran-dna-clinic</a>	International - 01373 800130
DNA Worldwide Group	Private	Shiraz DNA Clinic, Chamran Boulevard, Shiraz	<a href="https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/tehran/tehran-dna-clinic">https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/tehran/tehran-dna-clinic</a>	<a href="https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/shiraz/shiraz-dna-clinic">https://www.dna-worldwide.com/clinic/shiraz/shiraz-dna-clinic</a>	International - 01373 800130
DNA Labs Iran	Private	No25, Gharb Street, Tehran, 1419854888			0098 21 7598 1017
Iranian Surgery	Private	Shiraz: Aseman Street, Bessat Blvd.	<a href="https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/">https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/</a>	<a href="mailto:iraniansurgery@gmail.com">iraniansurgery@gmail.com</a>	9871364 80209
Iranian Surgery	Private	Tehran: 8th Ahmad Qasirah Street, Argentina Square.	<a href="https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/">https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/</a>	<a href="mailto:iraniansurgery@gmail.com">iraniansurgery@gmail.com</a>	009821 8873 544
Iranian Surgery	Private	Mashhad: W Danesh st, Emam Reza Blvd.	<a href="https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/">https://iraniansurgery.com/en/paternity-testing/</a>	<a href="mailto:iraniansurgery@gmail.com">iraniansurgery@gmail.com</a>	9851381 12029
Karimi-Nejad-Najmabadi Pathology and Genetics Center		#2, West Side of Sanat Sq. - Metro Station, Shahrak Gharb, Tehran, Iran. Postcode: 14667-1371	<a href="http://www.irangenepath.com/en/contact">http://www.irangenepath.com/en/contact</a>	<a href="mailto:lab@irangenepath.com">lab@irangenepath.com</a>	8836395 5 - 8837083 8
Pardis Lab		Second Floor, Ordibehesht Building, Beheshti Ave, Ahmadabad St, Mashhad  Razavi Khorasan Province, Mashhad, Vakil Abad Hwy, 8FW+G29	<a href="http://pardislab.com/en/pardis-genetic-counseling2/">http://pardislab.com/en/pardis-genetic-counseling2/</a>	<a href="mailto:info@pardislab.com">info@pardislab.com</a>	0513846 6660 between 2-4pm  00+98 51 3770 0000
Navid Laboratory		Ahmadabad Blvd, Mashhad	<a href="https://navidmedlabs.com/">https://navidmedlabs.com/</a>		00+98 51 3844 5757

## Freedom of movement

*Overview of the challenges to moving freely across the Afghanistan-Iran border*

USDOS – US Department of State, 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, 12 April 2022

“Refugees faced certain restrictions on in-country movement and faced restrictions from entering certain provinces, according to UNHCR. They could apply for laissez-passer documents allowing them to move among those provinces where Afghans were permitted to travel.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan – 2021 Final Report, 31 March 2022

“Since July 2021, with border closures and non-issuance of visas, irregular border crossings have increased, sometimes using smugglers, leading to additional protection risks, including detention and arbitrary arrests.”

#### *Border closures and documentation requirements*

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Official Message: Afghanistan, 28 March 2022

“Sinds de machtsovername door de Taliban hebben zowel Pakistan als Iran reisbeperkingen ingevoerd en kunnen – enkele uitzonderingen daargelaten - alleen Afghanen met paspoorten en visa legaal de grens naar beide landen oversteken”

Google Translate: “Since the Taliban takeover puts travel restrictions on both Pakistan and Iran entered and – with a few exceptions – only Afghans with passports and visas legally cross the border into both countries”

“In april 2021 sloot Iran tijdelijk de gehele grens voor reizigers vanuit Afghanistan vanwege Covid-19. Het is niet precies duidelijk wanneer de grens openging, maar in juni 2021 waren twee grensovergangen tussen Iran en Afghanistan weer open voor tweerichtingsverkeer van burgers. [...] De Iraanse autoriteiten sloten grensovergangen in augustus 2021 enkele keren vanwege de ontwikkelingen in Afghanistan en om de verspreiding van het coronavirus in te dammen.”

Google Translate: “In April 2021, Iran temporarily closed the entire border for travellers from Afghanistan because of Covid-19. It's not clear exactly when the border opened, but in June 2021, two border crossings between Iran and Afghanistan were reopened to two-way traffic for citizens. [...] The Iranian authorities closed border crossings several times in August 2021 due to developments in Afghanistan and to contain the spread of the coronavirus.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 March 2022

“Borders remain officially closed for asylum seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. 34,185 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 28 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“Afghans continue to make their way to Iran irregularly through unofficial borders. UNHCR is aware of 21,389 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January until 05 November, though the numbers are



understood to be much higher. Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. UNHCR continues its advocacy with the Government to open borders and allow individuals in need of international protection to get it.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 16 January 2022

“Borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers and Afghans continue to make their way to Iran informally.

UNHCR, News Comment: UNHCR: Afghans struggle to seek safety as borders remain shut to most, 1 December 2021

“As of today, Afghanistan’s land borders with Pakistan and Iran are open almost solely to those with the required passports and visas, though a small number of medical cases are permitted to exceptionally enter Pakistan without documents. The land borders of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are closed entirely to Afghans. [...] Many entering Iran report having sought the assistance of smugglers in order to leave Afghanistan. Most have told UNHCR and partners they were exposed to serious protection risks on the journey - including extortion, beatings and other violence, particularly against women and girls.

Deportations of Afghans have also escalated from Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan since August, in contravention of UNHCR’s non-return advisory. Local media citing Iranian authorities report up to 5,000 Afghans arriving each day into Iran. Simultaneously, UNHCR estimates that an average of 3,000 Afghans have been deported from Iran to Afghanistan daily between August and November.”

Amnesty International, The Fate of Thousands Hanging in The Balance: Afghanistan’s Fall into the Hands of the Taliban, September 2021

“On 18 August 2021, Iranian authorities announced that they will deny entry to Afghan refugees. [...] New construction is visible along the Turkey border with Iran. It will hinder the crossing of Afghan refugees coming from Iran.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #16, 15 April 2022

“Access to Iran’s territory continues to remain inaccessible to asylum-seekers, with entry only being granted to Afghan passport holders with valid visas for Iran. An increase in security measures at unofficial border crossing points, as well as the resumption of visa issuance at the Iranian embassy in Kabul, has led to a decrease in the proportion of arrivals who reported arriving irregularly and a decrease in the proportion who reported using smugglers to enter. UNHCR continues to advocate for an improved asylum-system to be accessible, so those in need of international protection can access it.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #15, 15 March 2022

“Access to Iran’s territory remains limited to Afghan passport holders with valid visas for Iran, though the Iranian authorities report that some 500,000 Afghans crossed into Iran since 2021. An increase in security measures at unofficial border crossing points, as well as the resumption of visa issuance at the Iranian embassy in Kabul, has led to a decrease in the proportion of arrivals who reported arriving irregularly and

a decrease in the proportion who reported using smugglers to enter. With the potential for new arrivals, UNHCR and the Iranian authorities continue to make progress on preparing potential sites in the location of Niatak, comprising some 400 shelters.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 14 March 2022

“[...] Based on the information received from BAFIA Khorasan Razavi, the number of Afghan deportees has been reduced from 1500 to 500 per day. Meanwhile, the Iranian Consulate in Afghanistan says it has scaled up its visa issuance per day. According to Shahr-Ara local news, Afghan nationals who have Iranian visas (type A, B, C, and M) and consider extending the validity of the visa can apply for an appointment online through <http://kanoonnobat.ir/>. UNHCR had previously heard that Afghans who entered Iran with temporary visas were facing difficulties in getting them renewed in Iran. With many having no option to return to Afghanistan and having to stay in Iran on expired visas, risk of arrest and deportation increased.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran (8 February 2022), 14 February 2022

“Borders remain officially closed for asylum-seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. 32,198 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 4 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.”

“UNHCR border monitoring reports indicate a meaningful decline in the number of undocumented inflows into Iran through the unofficial crossing points near Islam Qala since the Iranian Consulate in Herat restarted issuing tourist visas. Moreover, reports indicate that the number of Afghan students going from Iran to Afghanistan for status change has declined during the past two weeks. UNHCR is following up to better understand this trend.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 23 January 2022

“On 9 January, the Iranian government lifted the restriction on tourist visas at the Iran-Afghanistan border, which was introduced at the end December 2021 due to the new Omicron COVID-19 variant. Afghans can now apply again for a tourist visa to enter Iran. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied at the border and tighter border control measures continue to be enforced in areas of unofficial border crossing points. In Kerman Province, UNHCR observed a sharp decrease in the number of new arrival cases approaching the Office compared to the previous months, most likely as a result of these developments. In Tehran, there continues to be high numbers of approaches to the Office by passport-holding Afghans who arrived in the country earlier this year, mainly to request either visa extension, visa registration or resettlement to third countries.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #13, 15 January 2022

“Local media citing the Iranian authorities continue to estimate upwards of 5,000 newly arriving individuals per day into Iran. In Pakistan, Afghans with Tazkira cards are able to cross into Chaman. At Torkham, locals from the Shinwari tribe are able to cross with passports. Afghans in critical medical conditions are also allowed to enter Pakistan at both crossings on humanitarian grounds.”

HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

“In mid-August, the government set up three temporary tent camps for refugees fleeing Afghanistan, but its border remained closed to most Afghan asylum seekers, as entry was limited to people with valid passports and visas. During September, about 2,000 Afghans per day were estimated to enter Iran irregularly, but a comparable number of Afghans were deported from Iran.”

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent Event, 13 December 2021

“Both countries [Iran and Pakistan] have closed their borders to those without valid travel documents coming from Afghanistan. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 10 November 2021, Afghans continue to make their way into Iran irregularly through unofficial border-crossings.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“Only 8% reported having a valid visa for Iran, confirming that the vast majority of Afghans coming to Iran to seek asylum are doing so irregularly through unofficial border points.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 2 November 2021

“Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. UNHCR continues its advocacy with the Government to open borders and allow individuals in need of international protection to get it.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 26 October 2021

“Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. UNHCR continues its advocacy with the Government to open borders and allow individuals in need of international protection to get it.”

Human Rights Watch (HRW), Policy Responses to Support Afghans Fleeing Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan, 21 October 2021

“Although Iran set up three temporary tent camps in mid-August for Afghans fleeing the Taliban takeover, since entry is limited to people with valid passports and visas, Iran’s border crossing points have been generally closed to Afghan asylum seekers. Human Rights Watch has received reports of congestion on the Afghanistan side of the Iran border at Nimroz with estimates that about 2,000 Afghans per day are entering Iran irregularly, but a comparable number of Afghans are deported from Iran on a daily basis.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021

“Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers, with only individuals with passports and valid visas being reportedly allowed in. The passport department of the de facto authorities in Afghanistan has announced the resumption of passport distribution in Afghanistan. According to officials, the department will issue up to 6,000 passports per day. UNHCR believes that this development may lead to an increase in arrivals in Iran.”

"[...] The Government of Iran continues to return Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran, despite advocacy by UNHCR to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. Notably, UNHCR in Kerman reported a considerable increase in the number of irregular movements, subsequent arrests and deportations over the past week. On 12 October, the Iranian Minister of Interior, Ahmad Vahidi, urged Afghans not to approach the Iranian borders, confirming that police forces will systematically return those crossing. UNHCR continues to call on the Iranian Government to keep borders open for asylum-seekers." "UNHCR continues to advocate with Iranian authorities to be able to visit the Government-managed Fariman facility at the border, where it is understood Afghans who have been intercepted while trying to enter Iran are being held, to assess the conditions and identify potential ways to assist vulnerable persons of concern who remain at the facility. In principle, UNHCR does not support returning people to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened. On 16 August 2021, UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan, which remains in place. UNHCR is seeking further clarity and reiterating the principle of non-refoulement to the Government."

### *Ill treatment by Iranian border guards*

The New Humanitarian, For desperate Afghans, risky crossings into Iran are worth chancing, 17 May 2022  
"In recent years, Iran – its own economy flagging amid long-term Western sanctions – has taken a hardline stance against Afghans trying to enter the country illicitly. Border forces often respond violently when arresting and deporting undocumented migrants. According to Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, over 6,000 Afghan refugees are deported from Iran every day. Videos showing Afghan migrants and asylum seekers being abused by Iranian police, border guards, and even civilians have regularly emerged on social media and become a source of tension: Protests broke out last month at the Iranian embassy in the Afghan capital, Kabul. Even a legal visa doesn't guarantee a safe stay in Iran. Yousuf, 34, paid more than 100 euros to get a visa for Iran, only to be arrested by police while sitting in a park in the Iranian capital, Tehran. They then placed him in a crowded and filthy detention camp. Speaking to The New Humanitarian in Zaranj, Yousuf, who – for security reasons – shared only his first name, said he knew of detention centres throughout Iran "where even kids are imprisoned, and when they ask for food, Iranian soldiers beat them"."

Anadolu Agency, 'Cruel' action on Afghan refugees in Iran sparks outrage, 24 Apr 2022

"Videos circulating on social media showing Afghan refugees being subjected to "cruel" treatment by Iranian authorities at the border and within Iran have sparked widespread outrage."

Khaama Press, Amnesty International expresses concern over Afghan refugees torture in Iran, 10 April 2022

"Amnesty International's campaigner in South Asia Samira Hamidi expressed concern over the recent torture of Afghan refugees in Iran terming the acts to be a blatant violation of human rights. Speaking to Radio Free Samira Hamidi said, Iran's border guards force Afghan refugees by guns at borders and oust them from their country. "Reliable sources have confirmed torture and sexual harassment of Afghan refugees by border guards of Iran. The footages that show discriminatory, violent, and shocking act of Iranians towards Afghans in the country are a blatant act of violation of human rights," said Hamidi.

Further, she added Afghans also have issues with extending visas and payment systems. She has called on the international community to address the issue of Afghan refugees in Iran.”

Gandhara, Gandhara Briefing: Refugees in Iran, April 8 2022

“Abuse of Afghan refugees in Iran. Videos showing Afghans being beaten and humiliated by Iranian police. Amnesty International researcher Zaman Sultani confirms viewing such videos.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 14 March 2022

“UNHCR’s office in Kerman received reports on the Iranian Government’s reinforcement of security measures along unofficial crossing points at the Iran-Pakistan border, where many Afghans cross to Iran irregularly. According to BAFIA in Sistan and Baluchistan province, because of these measures, there has been a drastic decrease in the number of new arrivals crossing unofficially from Pakistan, particularly in the number of families. Over the last week, BAFIA estimated that some 500 Afghans (only singles) have managed to enter Iran from Pakistan, as compared to the previous minimum number of 1,000 individuals and families crossing daily.” “On 29 December, to contain the spread of the new COVID-19 variant, the Iranian government introduced new restrictions for the entry of individuals with tourist visas that will last for 15 days. This means that individuals intending to flee Afghanistan to Iran with a tourist visa will no longer be able to enter the country until the restriction is lifted. Passport holders entering for medical treatment, business, education, and individuals holding Iranian residence are exempted from the new restriction.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 February 2022

“On 8 February 2022, it was reported that according to officials from the Herat Department of Refugees and Repatriations in Afghanistan, nearly 100 Afghan refugees have been killed by Iranian Security Forces in the last six months (ToloNews and Latestly). The report noted the body of a 16 year-old boy, Sohrab, which recently arrived in Herat from Iran. The teenager’s relatives said he had been shot and killed by Iranian soldiers in Isfahan after crossing the border irregularly to find work. In addition, the report highlighted that over 460 Afghan refugees were also “beaten at the border when they wanted to cross into Iran”, according to Jailani Sharifi, Nursing Director of Nimruz Hospital. “There are people who have been beaten, their arms and legs have been broken,” said Mawlawi Abdulhai Manib, Head of the Refugees and Repatriation Department of Herat. In the past weeks, several extremely disturbing but unverified videos posted to social media show severe abuse being carried about by the Iranian police against Afghan asylum seekers in Iran. These videos appear to show Afghans being beaten or extorted for money. UNHCR’s counterparts in BAFIA Sistan & Baluchistan confirmed they have not received such reports and have also categorically denied that such incidents are taking place at the border. UNHCR is following up to try to verify these videos.”

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany (BAMF), Briefing Notes Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration, 14 February 2022

“According to local reports, about 100 people who tried to cross the border between Afghanistan and Iran illegally have been shot dead by Iranian security forces since the Taliban seized power. The Office for

Refugees and Returnees in Herat claims that more than 460 people bearing injuries have returned to Afghanistan at the Islam Qala border crossing during this time.”

ANI News, Nearly 100 Afghan refugees shot dead by Iranian security forces during past 6 months: local officials, February 8 2022

“Killed or beaten at border: nearly 100 Afghan refugees wanted to enter Iran illegally have been shot dead by Iranian security forces, their bodies transferred to Afghanistan within 6 months. The sick or wounded people were beaten, according to their relatives, when they wanted to cross the border into Iran.”

Al Jazeera News, Iran deporting thousands of Afghan refugees, 11 Nov 2022

“Iran is sending tens of thousands of Afghan refugees back over the border, aid agencies and witnesses say, amid allegations of mistreatment by Iranian authorities.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“[...] UNHCR also knows of 601 Afghans who have been apprehended while attempting to cross into Iran and are currently being held by the Government of Iran in Al-Ghadir, in Sistan and Baluchistan province, and in Sefid Sang, in Khorasan Razavi province.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“[...] On 6 November, Turkish border forces apprehended at least 149 Afghan refugees along its borders with Iran. Turkey has recently increased its security measures at its borders to prevent an influx of refugees coming from Iran. Human rights groups have protested the conditions that Afghans face when crossing the borders. "We call on regional as well as other countries - if you don't help us and the migrants, refrain from taking actions that are against international law," said Lal Gul Lal, the Chairman of the Afghanistan Human Rights Organization. An Afghan civil rights activist, Farddin Fedayee, also expressed that it is unfortunate how regional countries have acted violently toward Afghans.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021

“On 15 October, Human Rights Watch reported that Afghans who crossed from Iran to Turkey described abuse by soldiers at the Turkish-Iranian border. Experiences of beatings, having belongings seized, and being denied adequate food or medical treatment while in custody were among the abuses reported. UNHCR does not have access to border areas in Turkey and cannot verify these accounts. UNHCR notes the building of a wall by Turkish authorities along its Iranian border; while States have a legitimate right to control their borders and manage irregular movements, this has to be done in accordance with international law, including the right to seek international protection. UNHCR continues to engage with Turkish authorities to support the application of such mechanisms in compliance with national legislation.”

#### *Capture of checkpoints by Taliban or armed groups*

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Interim Report – Collapse of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: An Assessment of the Factors That Led to Its Demise, May 2022

“In July 2021, the Taliban had also started seizing border crossings with Tajikistan, Iran, and Pakistan, depriving the Afghan government of critical customs revenues. Watkins told Vox, “As important as the Taliban capturing provincial capitals is that the Taliban has begun to capture large, commercial cross-border customs points, and they’ve done so for several central Asian countries that border Afghanistan, as well as at crossing points into Iran and Pakistan.” On June 22, 2021, the Taliban took the strategic Shirkhan Bandar border crossing with Tajikistan, which generated millions of dollars daily for the Afghan government, without firing a shot.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 September 2021

“[...] According to BAFIA, the number of undocumented Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran, are detained in Sistan and Baluchistan and thereafter deported has reportedly decreased from 1,500 per day last week to about 1,000 per day during the reporting week. The reason for this may be the increasingly restrictive measures of the Taliban, who are reportedly preventing Afghans without proper documentation from exiting Afghanistan’s southern border with Pakistan, which is commonly used for entering Iran. However, this represents a mere fraction of new arrivals, who in larger numbers are succeeding in making their way past border areas and towards urban centres.”

#### *People smugglers*

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan #14, 15 February 2022

“Most Afghans fleeing to Iran are doing so in an irregular manner through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers, as official border points remain closed for entry to persons without valid passports and visas intending to seek asylum. According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approximately 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 16 January 2022

“[...] 65% reported crossing to Iran unofficially, while 28% reported entering officially. Additionally, 63% reported using smugglers to cross the border, while 31% stated that they did not. These figures show a decrease in Afghans crossing unofficially and with the use of smugglers, which is in line with reports of increased security measures in areas of unofficial border crossing points and the reopening of the Iranian consulate in Afghanistan and the recommencement of passport and visa issuance.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #13, 15 January 2022

“In Iran, UNHCR has seen an increase in the number of approaches by newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection. Most Afghans fleeing to Iran are doing so in an irregular manner through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers, as official border points remain closed for entry to persons without valid passports and visas intending to seek asylum.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“A graphic video circulated on social media that allegedly showed smugglers assaulting young Afghan refugees between the Iranian-Turkish border. The incident has yet to be verified with no information available regarding the nationalities of persons appearing in the video.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 19 October 2021

“71% of those interviewed by UNHCR reported having resorted to smugglers to cross into Iran. Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. UNHCR continues its advocacy with the Government to open borders and allow individuals in need of international protection to get it.”

The Independent, “We don’t know where our mother or father is”: Hazara refugees in Pakistan fear for their families and future, 23 September 2021

“[...] Thousands more Afghans have also poured into Iran, where border security has tightened considerably over the last month. Afghan and Iranian smugglers openly peddle their services in Facebook pages sent to *The Independent*. Many who make it into Iran have taken the treacherous route to Turkey, hoping to be welcome there.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 20 September 2021

“Afghans continue to make their way to Iran in an irregular manner and through unofficial border points. UNHCR is aware of 16,335 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January up until 18 September. Out of the 502 families that UNHCR interviewed so far, 71% indicated having had to resort to using smugglers. Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for individuals seeking asylum, while borders are open for commercial purposes and foreign-national passport-holders with valid visas for Iran.”

*Iran’s ‘emergency preparedness’ in response to Afghanistan’s country situation*

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 23 January 2022

“The bodies of two refugees from Afghanistan have been found near the Turkey-Iran border in the Saray district of Turkey's eastern Van province. This comes after an Afghan refugee mother froze to death at the border earlier this month and reports by Bianet that in the last two months, at least eight refugees froze to death at the border. According to the Turkish organisation Human Rights Association (IHD), in the last three years, at least 160 refugees have lost their lives in Van after crossing from Iran, with 49 refugees dying from hypothermia, 68 drowned in Lake Van, 42 killed in traffic accidents and one killed by gunfire. Despite these risks, evidence continues to emerge of Afghans undertaking this dangerous journey. On 14 January, MedyaNews reported on video showing what appears to be hundreds of Afghan refugees walking through a snowstorm at the Iran-Turkey border as they try to reach Turkey. On 15 January, another video purportedly showed a long line of Afghans in winter conditions using a ladder to climb what was said to be a border wall at the Iran-Turkey border.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 December 2021

“UNHCR’s sub-office in Kerman received information from provincial BAFIA that there has been a considerable decrease in the numbers of Afghans crossing to Iran through Sistan and Baluchistan province, last week. BAFIA attributed the decrease to the cold winter weather. UNHCR foresees that Afghans will



continue to cross the borders if the situation in Afghanistan remains unstable. With the harsh winter season, Afghans crossing – including women, children/infants- may not be able to bear below freezing temperatures during their journeys, which may result in catastrophic outcomes such as loss of lives.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“[...] Road accidents in border areas involving newly arrived Afghans have been on the rise.”

## **Return (voluntary or forced) of Afghan asylum-seekers from Iran to Afghanistan**

### *Overview*

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Regional Refugee Response Plan 2022, 12 Jan 2022

“Despite the non-return advisory issued by UNHCR, Iranian authorities continue to return Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran, including when detected on Iranian territory. Humanitarian actors continue to advocate for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (GIRI) to uphold its commitment to the principle of non-refoulement and process the asylum claims of those fleeing Afghanistan, as well as to abstain from a policy of systematic detention of new arrivals.”

### *Number of returnees from Iran to Afghanistan*

International Organisation for Migration, Movements In and Out of Afghanistan, 15 June 2022

“Over one million Afghans have been sent back from Iran from June 2021-May 2022. In six months (Dec, Jan, Feb, April, May, June) IOM figures show approximately 420,000 Afghan refugees left Iran for Afghanistan. Since the Afghan evacuation, till dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2021, 304,889 Afghan refugees left Iran for Afghanistan.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 31 March 2022

“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 provided 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 issued nonreturn 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.

[...]

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.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 March 2022

“According to evolving estimates by the Government of Iran, approx. 500,000 Afghans have arrived in Iran in 2021.

Borders remain officially closed for asylum seekers. The requirements of valid visas and passports are still being strictly applied and tighter border control measures are being enforced at unofficial border crossing points. 34,185 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 28 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

The Government of Iran continues to systematically return Afghans in large numbers, despite UNHCR’s non-return advisory. Last week, UNHCR in Afghanistan witnessed several hundred Afghans being returned at the border crossing point of Islam Qala.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran (8 February 2022), 14 February 2022

“UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.

During the course of 2021, 865 individuals voluntarily returned to Afghanistan. This represents a slight decrease from the previous year, where 947 individuals returned in 2020. However, the key difference was that 57% of those returning in 2021 were students who had to change their status by leaving the country in order to enrol in tertiary education and therefore reentering shortly afterwards, as compared to 29% in 2020. There was also a sharp decrease in voluntary returns after August, explained by developments in Afghanistan.

In January 2022, only 30 individuals voluntarily returned to Afghanistan from Iran. For comparison, in January 2021, 107 individuals voluntarily repatriated, of which 97 were students.

Reports indicate that the number of Afghan students going from Iran to Afghanistan for status change has declined during the past two weeks. One possible reason for this decline, based on information obtained from UNHCR Afghanistan, is the reports of extreme crowds around the Iranian Consulate in Herat and that the Taliban resorted to using force to control the crowd. In addition, this may be linked to UNHCR support for Afghan students traveling to Kish Island to change their status.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (29 November – 5 December 2021), 21 December 2021

“Returnees in 2021 (as of 21 November): 1,128,445 Returnees from Iran.”

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany (BAMF), Briefing Notes: Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration, 15 November 2021

“Afghan refugees - Iran / Pakistan: It was reported in the media on 10.11.21 that approx. 4,000 to 5,000 people were fleeing to Iran daily. 300,000 have reportedly fled since the Taliban assumed power in mid-August 2021. On 11.11.21 it was reported that approx. one million Afghans have been expelled from Iran and returned to Afghanistan since the beginning of the year.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update \(1 - 7 November 2021\)](#), 12 November 2021

“Returnees in 2021 (as of 27 October): 1,032,571 Returnees from Iran.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update \(18 - 24 October 2021\)](#), 29 October 2021

“Returnees in 2021 (as of 13 October): 947,235 Returnees from Iran.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update \(4 - 10 October 2021\)](#), 14 October 2021

“Returnees in 2021 (as of 22 September): 903,392 Returnees from Iran.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), [Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update \(20 - 26 September 2021\)](#), 30 September 2021

“Returnees in 2021 (as of 9 September): 859,756 Returnees from Iran.”

#### *Number of voluntary returns*

Ministry of Immigration and Integration, [The Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan - Taliban's impact on the population](#), 1 July 2022

“Between May 2021 – April 2022, 2,554,615 Afghans have returned from Pakistan and 1,171,251 from Iran. These returns from neighbouring countries are due to a variety of reasons, including labour migration, personal safety, the risk of deportation and economic hardship abroad. [...]”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, [Voluntary Repatriation – Response Snapshot \(1 January – 31 May 2022\)](#), 13 June 2022

“539 registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1 Jan 2022 to 31 May 2022 of whom 425 returned from Pakistan and 114 from Iran.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, [Voluntary Repatriation – Response Snapshot \(1 January – 30 April 2022\)](#), 7 June 2022

“196 registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1 Jan 2022 to 30 Apr 2022 of whom 108 returned from Pakistan and 88 from Iran.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), [Quarterly Report to the United States Congress](#), 30 April 2022

“During the quarter, UNHCR recorded 132 registered refugees returning to Afghanistan as of April 5, 2022, bringing the total number to around 1,400 since January 2021.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, [Voluntary Repatriation – Response Snapshot \(1 January – 31 March 2022\)](#), 27 April 2022

“131 Registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1 Jan 2022 to 31 Mar 2022 of whom 74 returned from Iran and 57 from Pakistan.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation – Response Snapshot (1 January – 28 February 2022), 27 April 2022

“74 Registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 1 Jan 2022 to 28 Feb 2022 of whom 47 returned from Iran and 27 from Pakistan.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #16, 15 April 2022

“Since the start of the year, 167 Afghan refugees have returned under UNHCR’s facilitated voluntary repatriation programme, including 84 from Iran and 83 from Pakistan. This figure represents 24 per cent of the 691 that returned by the same period in 2021 and 58 per cent of the 290 that returned during the same period in 2020.”

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Official Message: Afghanistan, 28 March 2022

“Gedurende heel 2021 registreerden ongeveer 1.300 Afghanen zich bij de UNHCR voor vrijwillige terugkeer vanuit Iran en Pakistan, 1.100 van deze 1.300 terugkeerders keerden terug voor 15 augustus 2021. Vrijwillige terugkeer (via UNHCR) is dus sterk afgenomen sinds de val van Kaboel.”

Google Translate: “During the whole of 2021, approximately 1,300 Afghans registered with the UNHCR for voluntary returns from Iran and Pakistan, 1,100 of these 1,300 returnees returned before August 15, 2021. Thus, voluntary returns (via UNHCR) have declined sharply since the fall of Kabul.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan #14, 15 February 2022

“[...] Since the start of the year, UNHCR has also recorded 43 Afghan refugees who voluntarily returned home on their own, bringing the number of Afghan refugees who have voluntarily returned since January 2021 to some 1,400. Some 900 of that number returned from Iran and 480 from Pakistan, among other countries.”

UNHCR, Iran, Afghan Voluntary Repatriation (January – December 2021), 7 February 2022

“However, as the situation in Afghanistan remains fragile, only a small number of Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran have shown willingness and ability to return to their home country. For as long as they have to remain in Iran, UNHCR supports the host government in providing Afghans with health, education and livelihoods opportunities. Individuals who are healthy, educated and have marketable-skills are typically more likely to return to their country of origin and feel capable of rebuilding their lives. Nonetheless, ultimately, a longer-term, political solution for Afghanistan’s protracted crisis is the only way to ensure safe, sustainable and voluntary return of refugees.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation Response Snapshot (1 January – 31 December 2021), 1 February 2022

“1363 registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 3 Jan 2021 to 31 Dec 2021, of whom 868 returned from Iran, 437 from Pakistan, and 58 from other countries.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 23 January 2022

“In 2021, the total number of voluntary repatriations assisted through Field Unit Dogharoun reached 851 individuals, of which 57.3% were students who then re-enter Iran on a student visa. During the first half of January 2022, 24 applicants were assisted, including 16 students (67%), to return to Afghanistan. This suggests that refugee students still show interest in travelling to Afghanistan for status change, as opposed to going to Kish Island (which the Government put in place after August). This could be associated with volrep package assistance they receive.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 16 January 2022

“In 2021, it was reported that 20 families, consisting of 32 individuals, voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation Response Snapshot (1 January – 30 November 2021), 30 November 2021

“Registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 3 Jan 2021 to 30 Nov 2021, of whom 835 returned from Iran.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 October 2021

“As of September 23, UNHCR reported that 1,264 refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan in 2021. Most of the refugees returned from Iran (800) and Pakistan (413).<sup>49</sup> UNHCR estimated that approximately 2.6 million Afghans were refugees in other countries in 2020.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation Response Snapshot (3 January – 30 September 2021), 30 September 2021

“Registered Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between 3 Jan 2021 to 29 Sep 2021, of whom 801 returned from Iran.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 September 2021

“During the reporting period, UNHCR’s field office in Dogharoun facilitated the voluntary repatriation of a number of Afghans, the majority of which were refugee students who were travelling to Afghanistan to exchange their Amayesh cards for a passport and student visa. BAFIA recently announced that, due to the volatile situation in Afghanistan, refugee students could make this change in documentation in Kish island (south of Iran), although this has seemingly not yet been implemented. UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan on 16 August 2021, which remains in place. UNHCR reiterates its call for a bar on returns of Afghan nationals, including asylum seekers who have had their claims rejected. UNHCR is seeking further clarity and reiterating the principle of non-refoulement to the Government.”

### *Reasons for voluntary returns*

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Taliban's Impact on the Population, 1 July 2022

"Between May 2021 – April 2022, 2,554,615 Afghans have returned from Pakistan and 1,171,251 from Iran. These returns from neighbouring countries are due to a variety of reasons, including labour migration, personal safety, the risk of deportation and economic hardship abroad."

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022

"During the quarter, UNHCR recorded 132 registered refugees returning to Afghanistan as of April 5, 2022, bringing the total number to around 1,400 since January 2021. Returned refugees said their main reasons for leaving Iran and Pakistan were the high cost of living, lack of employment opportunities, and fear of COVID-19. They further cited the UNHCR's assistance package, reunification with family, land allocation by the Taliban regime, and perceived employment opportunities as reasons to return to Afghanistan."

UNHCR, Afghanistan, Voluntary Repatriation Update (January – December 2021), 21 February 2022

"During 2021, 1,363 Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan from Iran (868) [...] The decrease in return trends in 2021 could be attributed to the political developments in Afghanistan and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, despite the end of widespread conflict in the country following the Taliban takeover on 15 August 2021, the return trend from Pakistan and Iran further declined. Between 15 August and 31 December 2021, only 103 refugees from Iran [...] voluntarily returned, based on an informed decision which consists of 10% of returns in 2021. This figure is very low compared to the 1,076 refugees who returned from Pakistan and 447 refugees from Iran during the same period in 2020 and this decline could be attributed to a number of factors, including the temporary closure of border crossing points linked to COVID-19 and the Taliban takeover, the overall political context, as well as the deterioration of the economic situation in Afghanistan.

The main reasons for leaving Pakistan and Iran (push factors) stated by interviewed returnees were high cost of living, lack of employment opportunities and fear of COVID-19. While UNHCR's assistance package, reunifications with family/relatives, land allocation by the government of Afghanistan and perceived employment opportunities were mentioned as the reasons for return (pull factors) to Afghanistan."

### *Forced returns*

The National News, Iran forcing out desperate Afghans amid chaotic withdrawal, UN says, 15 July 2021

"Forced returns: 'hundreds of thousands of Afghans have been deported back to Afghanistan from Iran this year, where many face hunger, conflict, and death amid a dizzying Taliban offensive.'"

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), External Update: Afghanistan Situation #17, 1 June 2022

[...] Through the analysis of available data and information provided by the Government of Iran, UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghans are deported from Iran and 274,000 of the new arrivals will remain in Iran by the end of 2022."

Ariana News, Ariana News reports that around 700,000 Afghan refugees have been deported in the last 9 months, 28 May 2022

“Abuse to forced returnees: ““On the way back home, if you get caught by them, they will take money from you, in short, they will do whatever they want,” said another forced returnee.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 15 May 2022

“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 provided 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 (\*65% of deportations are estimated using the data from UNHCR daily monitoring, IOM, and media monitoring. These sources indicate a high rate of deportations, up to 70% of arrivals are estimated to be deported. A more conservative and lower rate, 65%, was adopted for this estimation to factor in possible fluctuations and unaccounted movement to balance the possible under-reporting of new arrivals).”

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Official Message: Afghanistan, 28 March 2022

“Het aantal gevallen van gedwongen terugkeer vanuit met name Iran nam sterk toe in 2020.”

Google Translate: “The number of forced returns from Iran in particular increased strongly in 2020.”

“Reeds voor de machtsovername door de Taliban was er sprake van een sterke stijging van met name gedwongen terugkeer van ongedocumenteerde Afghanen vanuit Iran. Sinds de machtsovername door de Taliban hebben zowel Iran als Pakistan maatregelen genomen om vluchtelingenstromen tegen te gaan. [...] Iran heeft uitzettingen van Afghanen zonder documenten verder opgeschroefd sinds augustus 2021.”

Google Translate: “Even before the Taliban took power, there was already a sharp increase in forced returns of undocumented Afghans from Iran, in particular. Since the takeover by the Taliban, both Iran and Pakistan have taken measures to curb refugee flows. Iran has further ramped up evictions of undocumented Afghans since August 2021.”

“In totaal keerden er in 2021 1,2 miljoen Afghanen terug uit Iran in 2021, het hoogste aantal ooit gemeten door IOM. UNHCR schatte dat Iran tussen 15 augustus en november ongeveer drieduizend Afghanen per dag heeft uitgezet zonder dat er sprake was van een verblijfsprocedure voorafgaand aan de uitzetting. Tussen augustus en begin december 2021 keerden ongeveer een half miljoen Afghanen terug uit Iran. Ongeveer 360.000 Afghanen werden uitgezet en 126.000 Afghanen keerden terug op eigen initiatief. Veel van deze laatste groep besloten terug te gaan uit angst voor uitzetting, aldus UNHCR. In januari 2022 schatte UNHCR dat 65% van de recentelijk gearriveerde Afghanen in Iran weer werd uitgezet. Provinciale kantoren van het Iraanse Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) rapporteerden dat de Iraanse autoriteiten in de grensprovincies Sistan en Balochistan ongeveer vierhonderd Afghanen per dag arresteerden. Volgens de door de VS gefinancierde regionale nieuwsorganisatie Al-Mashareq lag het aantal uitzettingen van Afghanen door Iran in januari 2022 nog steeds op de twee- tot vijfduizend personen per dag. Sommige Afghanen die werden uitgezet door Iran stelden dat zij voor hun uitzetting opgesloten zaten in drukke, vieze detentiekampen aan de grens met Afghanistan. Volgens BIAFA werd het

merendeel van de gedetecteerde ongedocumenteerde Afghanen binnen 24 uur uitgezet. Iran werd beschuldigd van het gebruik van excessief geweld bij het uitzetten van Afghanen.”

Google Translate: “In total, 1.2 million Afghans returned from Iran in 2021, the highest number ever measured by IOM. UNHCR estimated that Iran expelled about 3,000 Afghans a day between August 15 and November without any pre-expulsion residency procedure. Between August and early December 2021, about half a million Afghans returned from Iran. About 360,000 Afghans were expelled and 126,000 Afghans returned on their own initiative. Many of the latter group decided to move back in fear of deportation, UNHCR said. In January 2022, UNHCR estimated that 65% of newly arrived Afghans in Iran were being deported again. Provincial offices of Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) reported that Iranian authorities in the border provinces of Sistan and Balochistan were arresting about 400 Afghans a day. According to the US-funded regional news organisation Al-Mashareq, the number of evictions of Afghans from Iran in January 2022 was still between 2,000 and 5,000 people a day. Some Afghans expelled from Iran claimed they had been held in crowded, filthy detention camps on the border with Afghanistan before their deportation. According to BIAFA, the majority of undocumented Afghans detected were deported within 24 hours. Iran was accused of using excessive force in expelling Afghans.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 14 March 2022

“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 provided 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 issued nonreturn 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.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 27 February 2022

“33,456 Afghans who arrived in Iran from 1 January 2021 to 17 February 2022 have approached UNHCR requesting assistance and protection.

“The Government of Iran continues to systematically return Afghans in large numbers, despite UNHCR's non-return advisory. Last week, UNHCR in Afghanistan witnessed several hundred Afghans being returned at the border crossing point of Islam Qala.”

“[...] UNHCR estimates that 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the Government.”

“[...] According to UNHCR Afghanistan, mass returns of Afghans from Iran, organised by the Government of Iran, are still being witnessed. UNHCR Iran is concerned regarding these returns, given that Iran's asylum system remains inaccessible and most Afghans coming to Iran are not having their international protection needs assessed, which means that these returns are likely to be forced. Once the Afghan returnees cross into Afghanistan, they are received by the Afghan Department of Refugee Returns (DORR),



which processes them, records their details and then allows IOM to provide first aid and food. As reported by UNHCR colleagues in Afghanistan based on their interaction with partners on the ground, there is evidence that in Iran the Afghan returnees have been badly treated by the Iranian border security forces. Following receiving immediate assistance, DORR then arranges their transfer, via bus, to the centre of Herat; from there, IOM tries to facilitate their return to their communities but some likely try again to cross into Iran. UNHCR in Afghanistan is also reporting that large numbers of people are still attempting to cross into Iran. UNHCR in Afghanistan is stepping up its direct engagement at the border and another visit to Islam Qala will be conducted in the new few days.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #13, 15 January 2022

“Deportations of Afghans to the country continue to be a concern. In January to date, for instance, UNHCR has observed an average daily deportation rate of over 1,100 Afghans from Iran. UNHCR continues to call on countries to keep their borders open to those seeking safety, as well as draw to attention UNHCR’s non-return advisory for Afghanistan, calling for a bar on forced returns of Afghan nationals in the current circumstances.”

HRW, World Report 2022 - Iran, 13 January 2022

“Iran hosts a long-staying population of about 780,000 registered Afghan refugees and another estimated 850,000 undocumented Afghans. In mid-August, the government set up three temporary tent camps for refugees fleeing Afghanistan, but its border remained closed to most Afghan asylum seekers, as entry was limited to people with valid passports and visas. During September, about 2,000 Afghans per day were estimated to enter Iran irregularly, but a comparable number of Afghans were deported from Iran.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 December 2021

“Based on information collected by UNHCR in Afghanistan, a total of 60,532 Afghan individuals have been deported during the first three weeks of November this year, which is a daily average of 2,900 deportations, with a peak of 5,200 in one day on 2 November.”

Al Jazeera, Iran deporting thousands of Afghan refugees, 11 November 2021

“Iran is sending tens of thousands of Afghan refugees back over the border, and allegations of mistreatment by Iranian authorities. The IOM found just over a million Afghans have been sent back. Some reported to AFP news agency that they were beaten before being transported to the border, after being held in filthy detention camps.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 8 November 2021

“9% indicated that they had previously been deported to Afghanistan from Iran, but to make their way back to Iran in search of asylum.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 11 October 2021

“The Government of Iran continues to return Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran, despite advocacy by UNHCR to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. On 16 August 2021, UNHCR issued

a nonreturn advisory for Afghanistan, which remains in place. UNHCR is seeking further clarity on the voluntary nature of returns and continues to reiterate the principle of non-refoulement to the Government.”

“UNHCR is actively engaging with the Iranian authorities to be able to visit the Government-managed Fariman facility at the border, where it is understood Afghans who have been intercepted while trying to enter Iran are being held to be deported, to assess the conditions and identify potential ways to assist vulnerable persons of concern who remain at the facility. As a matter of principle, UNHCR does not support returning people to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened, taking into account the still applicable Non-Return Advisory.”

Amnesty International, Like An Obstacle Course: Few Routes to Safety For Afghans Trying to Flee Their Country, October 2021

“Yet, as of September 2021 both Iran and Pakistan had closed their border to Afghan nationals, either completely or partially to those who do not hold valid passports, visas and other travel document, with few exceptions. Both countries are also still conducting forcible transfers to Afghanistan (see below). Despite a few discussions about hosting Afghan refugees, Central Asia countries including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have closed most of the land border-crossing points to those without visas, passports and other valid travel documents.

In mid-September, Afghans needed a passport and visas to cross into Iran, with a few exceptions for medical reasons. 22 As a result, UNHCR reported increased movements of undocumented Afghans resorting to irregular land border crossing into Iran. IOM figures show that Iranian authorities deported 58,279 undocumented Afghans between 27 August and 9 September 2021.

[...]Iran, Pakistan and Turkey are still carrying out deportations or other transfers of Afghans back to Afghanistan, despite the situation there, thereby violating the obligation of non-refoulement. Amnesty International notes that the obligation of non-refoulement prohibits forcible transfers not only directly to places where individuals would be at real risk of serious human rights violations, as Afghanistan is now, but also to countries where individuals would not be protected from onward forcible returns (so-called chain refoulement). Forcible returns of Afghans to Iran, Pakistan and Turkey would therefore be unlawful.”

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent Developments in the Security Situation, Impact on Civilians and Targeted Individuals, 10 September 2021

“Iran, on the other hand, has returned 752,000 Afghans in 2021 as of 3 September. As of May 2021 that represented a 345 % increase compared to 2020.”

Ministry of Immigration and Integration, The Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Recent developments in the security situation, impact on civilians and targeted individuals, September 2021

“Iran, on the other hand, has returned 752,000 Afghans in 2021 as of 3 September. As of May 2021 that represented a 345 % increase compared to 2020.”

*Return of undocumented Afghan asylum-seekers from Iran to Afghanistan*

United Nations – General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security; A/76/862 I S/2022/485, 15 June 2022

“Between 1 January and 21 May, 348,158 undocumented Afghan migrants returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran. [...] In 2021 alone, 882,546 people were displaced owing to conflict. More than 200 refugees voluntarily returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2022

“In February 2022, the UN OCHA reported over 57,000 undocumented Afghan migrant returnees from Iran and 5,800 migrant returnees from Pakistan since the beginning of the year. [...] Official border crossings with Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan require individuals to have valid passports and visas.”

UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP), Flash External Update: Afghanistan Situation #16, 15 April 2022

“[...] Deportations of Afghans have continued from Iran. In March, UNHCR observed an increase in the average daily deportation rate of over 2,200 Afghans from Iran (1,000 in January). Since the beginning of November, there has been a significant decrease in the number of deportations, with January showing the lowest figures, though the average deportation rate has again increased in recent months.”

US Department of State (USDOS), 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Afghanistan, 12 April 2022

“The pre-August 15 government’s ability to assist vulnerable persons, including returnees from Pakistan and Iran, remained limited, and it continued to rely on the international community for assistance. The Taliban’s “Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation Affairs” repatriated approximately 4,000 IDPs to their communities of origin, although the IOM estimated there were more than five million IDPs in the country. “Interim Minister” Khalil Haqqani told al-Jazeera that the Taliban had a plan to return all IDPs to their homes, assist in repairing damaged homes, and designate provincial support zones to assist returnees. The IOM estimated that all returning migrants required humanitarian assistance. Between January and September, the IOM recorded a total of 866,889 undocumented Afghans returning or being deported from Iran and Pakistan. In the same time period, the IOM recorded 40,089 assisted returnees. UNHCR reported the number of registered refugees returning remained lower than in 2020, mainly due to the Taliban takeover. The country lacked the capacity to reintegrate successfully large numbers of returnees due to continuing insecurity, poor development, and high unemployment, exacerbated by COVID-19. Insecurity and lack of services meant most recent returnees could not return to their places of origin. While numbers of deportations or spontaneous voluntary returns were trending upwards, the seizure of Kabul by the Taliban in August disrupted accurate tracking of returnees.”

UK Home Office, Country Policy and Information Note – Afghanistan: Humanitarian Situation, April 2022

“The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that there were 5.5 million IDPs in Afghanistan, 667,900 People displaced between 1 January – 28 November 2021 and 1,170,501 Undocumented Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan during the same period.”

UNHCR, Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan – 2021 Final Report, 31 March 2022

“In response to reports of forced returns to Afghanistan, UNHCR released a non-return advisory for Afghanistan in August 2021. It is estimated that 66 per cent of Afghans who have crossed into Iran will be or have been deported despite the non-return advisory. Government asylum procedures to assess individual protection needs are not systematic, transparent, and accessible to all asylum seekers, which may result in persons being held in transit/deportation centres not receiving information on access to international protection nor being screened for these purposes. The lack of unhindered humanitarian access to asylum-seekers and refugees, including those in detention, is also a significant challenge.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 January 2022

“As of November 28, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported that 1,150,004 undocumented Afghan migrants (spontaneous returnees and deportees) returned from Iran and 20,490 undocumented from Pakistan in 2021. Deportations have increased from Iran and Pakistan since summer 2021, despite UNHCR’s August 16 non-return advisory that called for a bar on forced returns of Afghan nationals, including asylum seekers whose claims were rejected.”

United Nations General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security; A/76/667; S/2022/64, 28 January 2022

“Between 1 August and 31 December, 485,621 undocumented Afghan migrants and 72 refugees returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, 20,871 undocumented Afghans and 12 refugees returned from Pakistan, and 10 refugees returned from other countries.”

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Needs Overview – Afghanistan – Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2022, 7 January 2022

“Cumulatively a total of 1,317 refugees have returned in 2021 as of 3 December, with the majority from Iran (838).

[...] Since January 2021, some 1.2 million deportees and undocumented returnees and 1,300 refugees returned to Afghanistan, mostly from Iran and Pakistan. According to IOM DTM, undocumented returnees and deportees from Iran and Pakistan returned mostly to Kandahar, Kabul, Hirat and Hilmand. While in some districts the majority of people returned voluntarily to their homes, like in Spin Boldak and Torkham, the number of involuntary returnees and deportees from Iran has increased since the beginning of the year, representing 71 per cent of cross-border returnees in November.

[...] Cross border movement will remain a significant humanitarian challenge in 2022 with a projected 785,400 undocumented returnees and refugees returning to Afghanistan, mostly from Iran and Pakistan, requiring humanitarian assistance. [...] IOM suggests that there will be 78,830 undocumented returnees from Pakistan directed towards Kandahar and Kunduz and another 606,570 people from Iran, mostly

towards Hirat, Kunduz, Nimroz and Takhar. IOM assessment data shows that 121,000 (20 per cent) of returnees from Iran will need humanitarian assistance.

Returnees crossing the border from Iran and Pakistan have little access to water, sanitation and hygiene services. Continuously high predicted returns will increase the need for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion support, not only at the cross-border points, but also when back to their households of origin or other places of settlement.

[...] With refugees in Iran and Pakistan being amongst the most impacted by economic shifts, return of refugees from both Iran and Pakistan are expected to increase. In addition, relative stability under the new authorities could lead to increased confidence, encouraging refugee returns at higher levels. At the same time, with refugees in Iran and Pakistan being amongst the most impacted by economic contractions due to sanctions (Iran) and the socioeconomic shock of COVID-19 (both Iran and Pakistan) coupled with potential additional waves of COVID-19 in neighbouring countries exacerbating economic pressures, return of Refugees from Iran and Pakistan increase. At the same time, the relative stability under the new authorities leads to increased confidence, encouraging refugee returns at higher levels.

[...] Among cross-border returnees, 90 per cent of undocumented returnees from Iran and Pakistan passing through border-crossings will need WASH services provided at zero points, transit centres or in their settlements. Additionally, 45 per cent of refugee returnees from Iran and Pakistan (documented) live in informal settlements or with host communities and will need WASH assistance."

European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), [Afghanistan Country Focus – Country of Origin Information Report](#), January 2022

"According to an IOM Afghanistan Situation Report comprising the data until 3 November 2021, around 1 077 600 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan since 1 January 2021, including around 1 063 400 returnees from Iran and about 14 220 from Pakistan. In the period between 28 October and 3 November 2021, IOM reported on 32 366 undocumented Afghan returnees: 31 609 returnees from Iran and 757 from Pakistan. According to media reports in the beginning of October 2021, around 600 families, who were displaced during clashes between the Taliban and the previous government, were reported to have returned to Badakhshan from Tajikistan, as stated by the governor of Badakhshan."

Danish Immigration Service, [Afghanistan: Recent Event](#), 13 December 2021

"UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) stated that 1,146,750 undocumented Afghans have returned to Afghanistan during 2021 of which 1,100,203 have been returned from Iran [...]."

UNHCR, [Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran](#), 8 December 2021

"Official borders between Afghanistan and Iran remain closed for asylum seekers. UNHCR estimates 65% of all newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the government."

UNHCR, [Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran](#), 2 November 2021

"[...]The Government of Iran continues to return Afghans who are apprehended while trying to enter Iran, despite advocacy by UNHCR to provide asylum to those fleeing conflict. UNHCR's sub-office in Mashhad received reports that there has been an increase in the number of persons deported back to Afghanistan, with 1,600 individuals deported per day in the last week. On 16 August 2021, UNHCR issued a non-return

advisory for Afghanistan, which remains in place. UNHCR is seeking further clarity and reiterating the principle of non-refoulement to the Government.”

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 October 2021

“[...] As of September 9, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported that 858,956 undocumented Afghan migrants (spontaneous returnees and deportees) returned from Iran and 7,933 undocumented from Pakistan in 2021.”

Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre Landinfo, Afghanistan: En humanitær krise, 13 October 2021

“I tillegg er det mange som returneres fra nærområdene, særlig fra Iran. Per september har mer enn 880 000 afghanere uten lovlig opphold i Iran blitt returnert til Afghanistan i løpet av året. Om lag halvparten er deportert, som betyr at de har blitt pågrepet av iranske myndigheter og sendt ut av landet. Den andre halvparten har valgt å returnere til Afghanistan «frivillig», antagelig fordi livet i Iran har blitt for vanskelig for afghanere som oppholder seg i landet uten noen rettigheter (IOM 2021).”

Google Translate: “In addition, many are returned from the surrounding areas, especially from Iran. As of September, more than 880,000 Afghans without legal residence in Iran have been returned to Afghanistan during the year. About half have been deported, which means they have been arrested by Iranian authorities and deported. The other half have chosen to return to Afghanistan "voluntarily", probably because life in Iran has become too difficult for Afghans living in the country without any rights (IOM 2021).”

UNHCR, Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran, 20 September 2021

“UNHCR's Doharoun office continues to observe an estimated average of 2,000 persons being returned per day, based on observations of 50 to 60 buses to the border every day, each carrying 40-50 persons. UNHCR is concerned that some of these returns may not be voluntary.

Of the 3,000 new arrivals reported by BAFIA in the second week of August, half were immediately returned, while others were temporarily hosted in sites by BAFIA. Most seem to have now returned and only small numbers remain hosted by BAFIA. “

Those attempting to enter irregularly are reportedly being particularly targeted. UNHCR observes mounting fears of deportation amongst Afghans – especially those whose visa is about to expire or who are undocumented. Typically, Amayesh cardholders, who are considered de facto refugees by the Government of Iran, have been protected from deportation, and there is no indication that this has changed.

“UNHCR issued a non-return advisory for Afghanistan on 16 August 2021, which remains in place. UNHCR reiterates its call for a bar on returns of Afghan nationals, including asylum seekers who have had their claims rejected. UNHCR is seeking further clarity and reiterating the principle of non-refoulement to the Government.”

United Nations General Assembly Security Council, The situation in Afghanistan and its implication for international peace and security, 2 September 2021

“Undocumented Afghans returned at record high levels, with close to 709,000 having crossed into Afghanistan between January and 5 August. Deportations of undocumented Afghans from the Islamic Republic of Iran exceeded 369,000 between January and the end of July. Refugee returnees remained small, with only 1,210 crossing into Afghanistan. Between 20 May and 1 August, 245,690 undocumented Afghan migrants and 152 refugees returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2,147 undocumented Afghans and 152 refugees returned from Pakistan, and 17 refugees returned from other countries.”

#### *Return of minors*

Danish Immigration Service, Afghanistan: Taliban’s Impact on the Population, 1 July 2022

“Concerning unaccompanied minors, IOM is not aware of returns from beyond the region, but from the Iranian border, many below the age of 18, return to their families in Afghanistan after seeking opportunities abroad. They seek work to help their families.”

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