

Resettlement of refugees living in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The refugee situation in Iran is protracted, with up to **3.6 million Afghans**, including refugees, undocumented Afghans and passport-holders, having been present for over 40 years. Not all of them have serious protection needs, but all need a durable solution to their situation – whether voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.

However, the prospects for large-scale **voluntary return** to Afghanistan are slim, especially in light of recent developments in the country and possible new displacement. In addition, the capacity of the Government of Iran to provide public services to refugees has been placed under considerable strain due to the ongoing economic downturn, as well as the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. These dynamics have further impacted on the prospects for durable **local integration** within Iran.

Many refugees live in unfavourable situations or have specific needs that cannot be addressed in the country where they have initially sought asylum. In such circumstances, UNHCR helps resettle refugees to third countries that have agreed to admit them as refugees. **Resettlement** therefore remains, at the moment, a critical durable solution for refugees in Iran.

In 1999, UNHCR started a **resettlement programme** for refugees living in Iran as a protection tool and a durable solution. The programme has been mainly focused on Afghan refugees, while a limited number of Iraqi refugees and some other nationalities have also been resettled. The profiles of resettled refugees, their quota, as well as final decisions on resettlement, are at the discretion of the receiving resettlement states.

Key messages

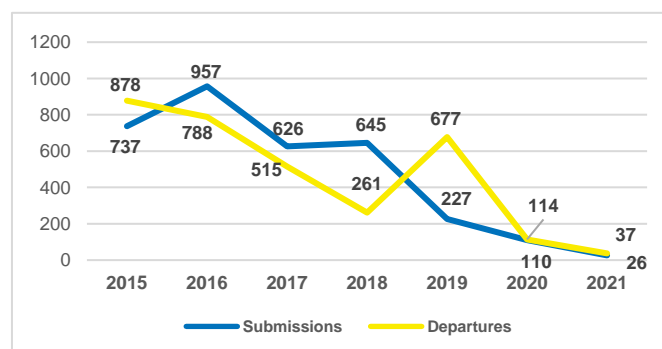
In 2021, at present, the allocated quota for refugees living in Iran is zero.

In 2020, only 53 spaces were allocated by third countries – an all-time low since 1999.

It is projected that in 2022, 80,000 refugees will need resettlement (10% of the refugee population).

Increasing the resettlement quota for Afghan refugees in Iran could help reduce the number of vulnerable refugees attempting secondary movement towards Europe, by providing them with legal pathways.

Resettlement is a tangible sign of international responsibility-sharing, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, helping to ease the Government of Iran's task in terms of hosting and protecting refugees.



The **COVID-19 pandemic** has delayed both departures and the processing of cases by resettlement countries. This means that many previously-approved cases have not been able to travel since February 2020, creating a backlog of pending departures.

When no quotas are allocated, UNHCR as a last resort submits cases to its **headquarters**, which may be able to match them to unallocated quotas.

UNHCR is grateful to the countries that provided resettlement quota for the Islamic Republic of Iran over the years



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