

Since the 1979 Soviet invasion and the subsequent waves of violence that have rocked Afghanistan, millions of Afghans have fled the country, seeking safety elsewhere. The Islamic Republic of Iran boasts 5,894 km of borders. Most of it, including the 921 km that are shared with Afghanistan, are porous and located in remote areas. While according to the Government of Iran (GIRI), some 1,400-2,500 Afghans arrive in Iran every day, recently GIRI has indicated increased daily movements with 4,000-5,000 arriving every day. These people aren't necessarily all refugees, it is a mixed flow that includes people being pushed by the lack of economic opportunities as well as those who might be in need of international protection. The number fluctuates due to socio-economic challenges both in Iran and Afghanistan and also the COVID-19 situation. UNHCR Iran does not have access to border points and thus is unable to independently monitor arrivals or returns of Afghans. Afghans who currently reside in Iran have different statuses: some are refugees (Amayesh card holders), other are Afghans who possess a national passport, while others are undocumented. These populations move across borders in various ways. It is understood that many Afghans in Iran who have passports or are undocumented may have protection needs.

780,000

Amayesh Card Holders (Afghan refugees¹)

In 2001, the Government of Iran issues Amayesh cards to regularize the stay of Afghan refugees. Each year, refugees have to renew their Amayesh cards. However, more recently arrived Afghans do not receive an Amayesh card. The Government of Iran is in charge of refugee status determination and UNHCR can advocate for a handful of refugees to receive amayesh cards each year.

2.1 M

undocumented Afghans

Undocumented is an umbrella term used to describe various groups of foreign nationals residing in Iran including: those with an invalid passport and invalid Iranian visa; those who lost their Amayesh status for different reasons; those who hold a type of document, for example Tazkira, but no legal residence for Iran; and those who are not in possession of any type of document. They don't formally fall under UNHCR's mandate but we potentially can consider them as others of concern.

586,000

passport holders

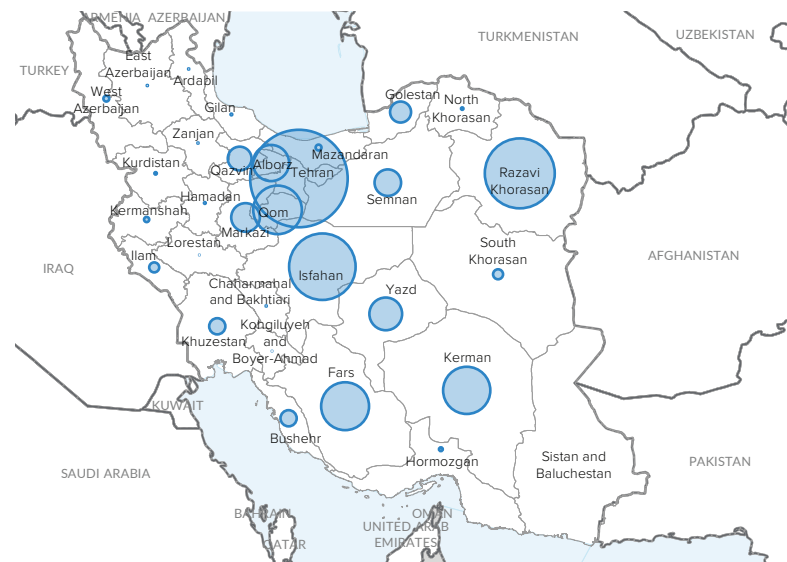
There are 275,000 Afghans who hold family passports and 311,000 who have passports with valid visas. The Comprehensive Regularisation Plan (CRP) introduced in 2010 allowed undocumented Afghans to register with the government of Iran, and receive an Afghan passport and a visa ("family passport"). The visas of those participating in the CRP have been extended at different intervals since 2012, often following high level visits by the Government of Afghanistan.

704

voluntarily repatriated in 2021

Covid-19 had a clear impact on the low VolRep trend due to internal movement restrictions, fear of spreading the disease/contagion during travel and better access to health services in Iran. Those who nevertheless opt to repatriate are those who have seen their livelihoods severely impacted in Iran and/or are willing to reunify with family members in Afghanistan. 64% of returnees are students for whom UNHCR facilitates repatriation to obtain student visas to pursue studies in Iran.

REFUGEE POPULATION PER PROVINCE



*This map shows the geographic distribution of refugees in Iran. The map uses the proportions from the 2015 Amayesh registration applied to data from 2020.

Disclaimer: the boundaries and names shown and the designations used on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

REPATRIATED BY LOCATION IN IRAN & INTENDED DESTINATION IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2021



¹(Afghan "prima facie" refugees. There has not been a prima facie decision or statement by the GIRI on prima facie recognition for this group. Technically Amayesh is a "temporary residency permit" and it does not specifically afford refugee status. According to the data received from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2020, on which consultations are ongoing, 800,000 refugee card holders reside in Iran, 780,000 of which are Afghans and 20,000 Iraqis..

