

Republic of Korea

October 2021

December 1992

Acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol

February 2001

Recognized its first refugee

July 2013

Enforced the Refugee Act of Korea

December 2015

Launched a pilot resettlement program for refugees

POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees & Humanitarian Status Holders

As of 20 October 2021, a total of 3,536 persons have been recognized as refugees or granted humanitarian status by the government of the Republic of Korea.

The majority of the persons holding humanitarian status are from Syria and Yemen.

Source: Ministry of Justice (MoJ), *Monthly Statistics*, published on 19 October 2021, available on MOJ website

FUNDING

2020 Fundraising results

Government: **USD 28,507,097**
Private: **USD 47 million**

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

- 23 National Staff
- 2 International Staff
- 41 affiliated staff (incl. fundraisers, interns)

Offices:

- 1 Office in Seoul



Working with Partners

- The role of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea is to engage with the government, judiciary, legislature, the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs, civil society and persons of concern to improve the domestic asylum system and the treatment of asylum-seekers and refugees, and to ensure respect for their rights, including the principle of non-refoulement.

Main Activities

Support to Korea's national asylum system

- The Republic of Korea acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1992 and began registering asylum-seekers in 1994. The numbers of new applications have slowly increased over the years with a total of 15,452 persons applying for asylum in 2019. For the year 2020, from January to October, 6,288 applications were received. A comprehensive Refugee Law, Presidential Decree and Regulations came into force on 1 July 2013. It is the first stand-alone refugee law in the Republic of Korea and represents a significant enhancement of refugee protection. UNHCR monitors the implementation and reform of the Act in line with the 1951 Convention and provides technical assistance.
- UNHCR advises and supports the Ministry of Justice and Immigration Offices, which handle asylum applications in the Republic of Korea, with a view to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with international standards.
- UNHCR establishes and maintains partnerships with a range of NGOs to improve support and services to asylum-seekers and refugees in areas such as legal aid, accommodation, employment, education and health services.
- UNHCR provides technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Korea on resettlement. The Office also advises government, non-government and private partners on solutions in the context of responsibility sharing and in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees.
- UNHCR is advocating with the Government of the Republic of Korea to establish statelessness determination procedures and to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, while at the same time to prevent statelessness by ensuring birth registration of children born to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Advocacy and fundraising activities

- UNHCR raises awareness and understanding on forced displacement issues with the general public. UNHCR attempts to make these issues more personal to Koreans by linking their own history of internal displacement during the Korean War to the plight of refugees. UNHCR also makes continuous effort to raise the public awareness about refugees and other persons of concern who have sought asylum in Korea and are in need of protection and support of the Korean government and its people.
- In 2020, the Government of Korea's financial contribution to UNHCR reached USD 28,507,097, representing a 10.3 per cent increase from 2019. The unearmarked core contribution was 9 per cent, amounting to USD 2,765,000 and the remaining includes MoFA's regular support to UNHCR, earmarked geographically for major humanitarian emergencies, and the Junior Professional Officer programme as well as the 2020 portions of multi-year support for the Sustainable Return and Reintegration of Afghan Refugees and Internally Displaced People, amounting to USD 20,661,187. The contribution also includes KOICA's multiyear support to various thematic areas of USD 7,845,910. RoK entered UNHCR's "20 million club" of donors since 2016, and has been continuously increasing its contribution to UNHCR ever since.
- UNHCR's efforts to mobilize moral and financial support from the private sector continued in 2020, raising over USD 47 million as of end-2020. UNHCR Korea launched its first private sector fund-raising activities in mid-2009 and Korea became one of the Top 10 private funding sources for the Agency since 2013. And over half a million individual donors including regular and one-off supported UNHCR's global operations in 2020 alone. In the context of the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR also strives to engage with the private sector, particularly corporate and foundations, for both financial and shared-value partnerships in support of global and domestic operational needs.
- UNHCR Korea appointed renowned South Korean actor Jung Woo-sung as its first celebrity supporter in May 2014, who was officially named as the agency's National Goodwill Ambassador in 2015. Jung has supported the works of UNHCR and helped raise the public-awareness of the plight of refugees around the world through numerous field visits and participation in advocacy campaigns and events. He went on field missions with UNHCR to Nepal in November 2014, South Sudan in May 2015, Lebanon in March 2016, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in June 2017, Bangladesh in December 2017, South Korea's Jeju Island in June 2018, Djibouti and Malaysia in November 2018 and Bangladesh in 2019. He is committed to supporting the works of UNHCR through a long-term relationship and is a valuable asset to UNHCR Korea.

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