



# South-West Asia

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## Recent developments

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In a landmark development, Afghanistan acceded, in August 2005, to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, paving the way for the establishment of a national legal framework for the protection of refugees and persons of concern in Afghanistan.

By September 2005, nearly half a million Afghans had returned to their homes, bringing the total to over four million since 2002. For the fourth consecutive year, this is the world's largest repatriation movement. No pattern of discrimination against returnees has been observed, although the human rights and security situation in some parts of the country continues to cause concern.

In 2005, return movements from Pakistan have been larger than during the same period last year. This is due in part to the closure on security grounds of camps in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Some Afghans chose to relocate within Pakistan; however, the majority chose to return to Afghanistan. In contrast, return movements from the Islamic Republic of Iran were smaller than in 2004. It is believed that any Afghans able to make a relatively straightforward and unencumbered return will already have done

Afghanistan

Islamic Republic of Iran

Pakistan



so, and that it will therefore be a challenge in the future to maintain the previously high rates of voluntary return.

While voluntary repatriation will remain the preferred solution for the majority of the remaining Afghans, there is an increased understanding that solutions other than repatriation may have to be identified for some of them.

In February and October 2005, UNHCR convened strategic consultations on population movements to and from Afghanistan with Governments in the region, key international institutions, interested States and international organizations. These meetings were hosted jointly by UNHCR and the European Union in Brussels, and by UNHCR and the United States Government in Geneva respectively. Their aim has been to build consensus on a range of solutions to the protracted situation of Afghans in the region.

## Strategic objectives

A key objective for UNHCR is to advance understanding among concerned States of the need for a broader vision and a more comprehensive approach to the Afghan situation. Such an approach would not merely tackle a refugee and humanitarian problem, but would also address more complex population movements and the important dimensions of poverty and migration. This more comprehensive approach aims to support Governments to identify and explore a range of approaches to resolving the protracted situation for all Afghans in the region.

Whilst remaining fully committed to voluntary repatriation, UNHCR will continue to assess the political, economic, and security conditions in parts of Afghanistan. For some Afghans, these present serious impediments to return. Monitoring the situation of returnees and respect for the voluntariness of return will therefore remain a primary focus. An equally important objective will be to bring more stability to the situation of the

Afghanistan: Some 40 displaced families in Zari Dasht camp in Kandahar are moved back to their homes in the north of the country. UNHCR / T. Irwin

remaining Afghan populations in the neighbouring countries and to preserve asylum.

The Governments of the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan will face the challenge of coping with substantial numbers of Afghans still remaining, not only for economic reasons, but also due to strong cultural ties. An additional challenge will be the regular movements of many individuals in both directions, to and from Afghanistan. These challenges need to be addressed with the sustained support of the international community. Overall, population movements are continuing to normalize. UNHCR stands ready to support the concerned Governments in meeting these new challenges and in further reducing the instability associated with displacement from Afghanistan.

UNHCR will not secure progress alone. Building strategic and enabling partnerships with a range of actors in the region will prove vital to advancing the process of finding solutions for Afghans. A broader framework for managing population movements has yet to be assembled and will be the subject of continued reflection.

Each country chapter outlines country-level activities which have been designed to support the comprehensive solutions approach.

## Operations

UNHCR's operations in **Afghanistan**, the **Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Pakistan** are described in separate country chapters.

Budget (USD)	
Country	Annual Programme Budget
Afghanistan	60,978,721
Islamic Republic of Iran	16,411,128
Pakistan	23,327,170
Regional activities <sup>1</sup>	589,242
<b>Total</b>	<b>101,306,261</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes repatriation of Afghans from various countries and scholarships for refugee students.