



Photo: UNHCR/ Bektur Zhanibekov

UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

The escalation of violence on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in 2022 displaced more than 142,000 people. With support from the People of Japan, UNHCR provided families like Turdiev's with temporary housing units so they had a warm and safe home while their houses were being rebuilt.

Key figures as of 01 January 2023

15,135*



Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (1,150), the Kyrgyz Republic (946), Turkmenistan (13) and Uzbekistan (6)*.

37,740



known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (7,706), the Kyrgyz Republic (203), Turkmenistan (2,442) and Uzbekistan (27,389).

* In November 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan reported via mass media that 13,020 Afghan citizens had arrived in the country on short-term visas, of whom around 2,000 had valid visas as of mid-2022. Given the ongoing situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR considers that they may be in a refugee-like situation.

In 2023, UNHCR requires \$6.4 million to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.



Funded
38%

Unfunded
62%

As of 01 June 2023

SUB-REGIONAL



The Central Asian Senior Officials' Roundtable on Ending Statelessness brought together government and civil society representatives to explore redoubling of efforts to achieve the objectives of the #IBelong Campaign and the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

- On 13 April, UNHCR hosted a [sub-regional roundtable in preparation for the Global Refugee Forum 2023](#), gathering high-level delegations from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to take stock of past pledge implementation, and identify good practices to formulate new pledges.
 - Follow-up continues with relevant government entities across the countries, including ministries of Labour, Health, Internal Affairs, and Education to define and refine possible new pledges.
 - With the support of UNHCR, UN Country Teams in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan have submitted context-specific [Global Refugee Forum 2023](#) commitments – under the chapeau of the UN Common Pledge 2.0 – that promote and support inclusion of refugees and stateless people in national plans, budgets and service delivery systems.
- UNHCR colleagues from 20 Asian countries gathered in Almaty, 15 to 17 March, for a regional **youth education workshop**. Together with representatives of sister UN agencies, they shared good models of increasing refugees' access to higher education, overcoming barriers to girls' education, strengthening links between education and job preparation, and further options for providing refugees with livelihood opportunities.
- In the online **“For Equal Rights” media festival** on 30 March, UNHCR delivered a presentation to 24 journalists from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on the

importance of using correct terminology when covering refugee and migration issues in order to support protection of affected persons and ensure proper representation of their interests.

- From 28 to 31 May, UNHCR **Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Indrika Ratwatte**, visited **Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic**, advocating with key government, UN, civil society and development partners to strengthen cooperation in protecting and assisting refugees and stateless people. In Almaty and Bishkek, Mr. Ratwatte also met refugees, and in Astana, he officially opened the ‘UNHCR corner’ at the student library of KAZGUU university.

SEE ALSO

Political Will Is Key to Ending Statelessness Around World

in EDITOR'S PICKS, OP-ED, SOCIETY on 30 MAY 2023

Statelessness is a problem that affects millions of people around the world and leaves a person in a seemingly never-ending state of limbo, without nationality and often the most basic of rights.



Indrika Ratwatte

SEE ALSO: [Political Will Is Key to Ending Statelessness Around World](#), written by Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

- States, UNHCR and partners are accelerating efforts to implement pledges and achieve the goals of the 10-year global **#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness** by 2024 – including accession to the Statelessness Conventions. On 30 May, UNHCR convened a **Central Asian Senior Officials' Roundtable on Ending Statelessness**, bringing together 38 government and civil society representatives from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to explore redoubling of national efforts to achieve the objectives of the #IBelong Campaign and the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, and share practical experiences of successfully addressing statelessness. The event was opened by Aslan

Atalykov, Chairman of the Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Indrika Ratwate, UNHCR Regional Director for Asia Pacific.

The #IBelong campaign directly links to target 9 of Sustainable Development Goal 16: to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.



- With thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, two fully funded **International UN Youth Volunteers from the Republic of Korea** have joined the UNHCR Multi-Country Office in Almaty for 12 months.

KAZAKHSTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On 31 May, UNHCR convened a hybrid training for 15 project staff of NGO partners on procurement guidelines, programme issues, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and UN Code of Conduct. Participants also discussed and addressed gaps recently identified during standard project verifications.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- Following extradition of two asylum-seekers from Kazakhstan to their country of origin at the end of 2022 – in violation of national and international law – on 1 March the **Ombudsperson of Kazakhstan sent recommendations to the Ministry of Justice** to harmonize national legislation with international standards, and stipulate that foreign citizens will not be expelled to States where they face torture or other danger on religious, racial or political grounds. The Ministry of Justice and Prosecutor General's Office supported the initiative and agreed to make the proposed amendments in the course of legislative work.
- UNHCR Education colleagues from the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and headquarters conducted a two-day **DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) familiarization mission**, 13 to 14 March, meeting with representatives of academic institutions where DAFI scholars are studying. Currently 13 refugees – all from Afghanistan – in Kazakhstan are studying at tertiary level thanks to the DAFI scholarship programme. The delegation also met with the Departments of Employment and Social Programmes, Education, and Youth Policy of Almaty city, as well as private sector companies, to promote the rights of refugees in Kazakhstan, in particular, access to university grants and possible higher education pledges at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.



Photo: UNHCR/ Tom Joseph-Christensen

Currently 13 refugees – all from Afghanistan – in Kazakhstan are studying at tertiary level thanks to the DAFI scholarship programme.

- On 28 March, UNHCR participated in the first meeting of a **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population working group** focusing on aligning the norms of national legislation regarding granting access to socio-economic rights with the provisions of the 1951 Convention.
- Through two **guest lectures at the Law Enforcement Academy under the Prosecutor General's Office** on 20 April, UNHCR familiarized nearly 30 future prosecutors with international standards in the protection of refugees and stateless people. Since the beginning of the year, UNHCR has held four such lectures for students of the Academy.
- Between 15 and 18 May, UNHCR, together with representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MLSP), and NGO partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), conducted a joint mission to **monitor admission practices at two border crossing points** between Kazakhstan and Russia, and assess



their compliance with international standards. Sessions on the rights of asylum-seekers according to national asylum-related legislation, the 1951 Convention and other international instruments, were delivered to the Border Guards Service. UNHCR, MLSP and BHR held joint focus group discussions with asylum-seekers to assess their protection needs and identify and analyse trends.

- On 26 May, UNHCR Representative for Central Asia, Hans Friedrich Schodder, and **Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population, Duisenova Tamara, signed a Memorandum of Understanding** to further strengthen cooperation on refugee and asylum-seeker protection in Kazakhstan. The agreement builds on the existing joint workplan, signed in January 2023, which outlines shared activities to take place throughout the year to enhance the legal framework and align legislation with the Refugee Convention, enabling refugees and asylum-seekers to access due rights, including healthcare, employment, education and social assistance.
- From January to March 2023, UNHCR provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 89 very vulnerable asylum-seeking or refugee families (reaching 197 individuals) to support them to cover basic needs.

Ending Statelessness

- On 7 March, UNHCR and the **Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan signed a joint work plan** for 2023, outlining shared activities to enhance the legal framework for the protection of stateless people, and identify, reduce and prevent statelessness. The work plan includes aligning national legislation with the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, and other actions to support Kazakhstan to achieve the goals of the #IBelong Campaign.
- In March, through its partnership with UNHCR, NGO **Sana Sezim released a video to raise awareness about statelessness and assist people with undetermined nationality to obtain documentation.** Available in Kazakh and Russian languages, the video

is being widely circulated in public transportation in Shymkent city and Turkestan region, and has been published on the official Facebook page of the Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- From 11 to 13 May, UNHCR partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), together with the Aktobe City Police Department Migration Service, conducted **mobile consultations** in three districts of Aktobe region, counselling over 45 people with undetermined nationality, expired documents, and in need of help to obtain identity documentation. BHR will conduct similar consultations in more cities across Kazakhstan throughout 2023.
- On 30 May, at the Central Asian Senior Officials' Roundtable on Ending Statelessness, UNHCR presented the **third edition of its Statelessness in Kazakhstan publication** – available in Kazakh, English, and Russian languages – which provides an analysis of the compliance of Kazakhstan's National Legislation with international citizenship and statelessness standards.

SEE ALSO



UN News/ Kulpash Konyrova

See also: [В Казахстане мужчина более 30 лет жил без документов](#) (In Kazakhstan, a man lived without documents for more than 30 years) on UN News.

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- Within the ongoing legal inventory, in 2022, UNHCR **submitted 27 comments to six draft laws which impact the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people**, promoting alignment with international standards. As of May 2023, 13 out of 27 proposals have been adopted. Advocacy work

continues regarding the Law on External Migration (non-refoulement during expulsion procedures), Criminal Procedure Code and related laws (non-refoulement during extradition, access to asylum from detention and protection of confidentiality), Law on Education (access of refugees to education equally with citizens).

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 9 March, **UNHCR issued a public statement expressing alarm over the extradition of an asylum-seeker** from the Kyrgyz Republic, despite threats to the individual's life, strong opposition from human rights groups, and interventions from UNHCR and OHCHR. The extradition of an asylum-seeker to any country where the individual faces serious harm constitutes a violation of the principle of non-refoulement which prohibits States from returning a refugee or asylum-seeker to territories where there is a risk to life or freedom. UNHCR has since submitted and is advocating for changes to legislation and practice on extradition in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- On 2 May, the Kyrgyz Republic signed an amended **Refugee Act into law** which **removes obstacles for people in need of international protection** to register asylum claims, and – in line with the country's 2021 Global Refugee Forum pledges – grants refugees access to health care, social protection and education on par with citizens, as well as Refugee Travel Documents. Inclusion of these changes in the law marks significant progress towards refugees being able to access due rights and services in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- From 6 to 7 March, UNHCR partner Adilet delivered two **seminars on international and national legislation in the field of asylum, citizenship and statelessness**, to 41 officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Committee for National Security – entities responsible for combating extremism and illegal migration.
- On 13 March, UNHCR partner Adilet held a seminar **on protection, and refugees' and asylum-seekers' right to access education**, for 20 senior managers and social workers from schools across Bishkek.
- On 31 March, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic granted citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic to 1,704 people, including 11 refugees.
- On 27 April, UNHCR partner Adilet conducted separate seminars for 24 men, women and children asylum-seekers on **prevention of family and gender-based violence**.
- On 15 May, UNHCR and the Office of the Ombudsman of the Kyrgyz Republic **signed a joint workplan outlining shared activities** to be delivered in 2023 to facilitate asylum-seekers' and refugees' access to employment, education, medical and social services, as well as to build capacity of the staff of the Ombudsman's Office on asylum-related topics.
- As part of an EU-funded Border Management Programme in Central Asia (**BOMCA**) **workshop for authorities in the Kyrgyz Republic on preparedness to and prevention of mass influx arrivals** of irregular

migrants, on 18 May UNHCR delivered a presentation on "International standards of provision of international protection".

- On 29 May, Enactus – a global organization which aims to educate, inspire, and support young people to use innovation and entrepreneurship to solve world problems – delivered a **design-thinking workshop for 12 members of the Refugee Youth Group in Bishkek**.
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 19 vulnerable refugee or asylum-seeking families (reaching 91 individuals) to support them to cover basic needs. One family was also provided with an education grant, supporting one boy with school-related expenses.

Ending Statelessness

- On 10 March, the **new law "On Citizenship of the Kyrgyz Republic"** entered into force, which included most of UNHCR's recommendations, including: bringing the definition of a stateless person into full compliance with international standards; safeguards against statelessness in citizenship renunciation; guarantees of acquisition of citizenship at birth to avoid a situation of statelessness.
- On 12 May in Bishkek, and 26 May in Osh, UNHCR Partner Adilet conducted **seminars for 120 employees of the Department of Population Registration under the Ministry of Digital Development** – entities responsible for processing citizenship and documentation procedures – on international and national citizenship and statelessness legislation.
- On 30 May, at the Central Asian Senior Officials' Roundtable on Ending Statelessness, UNHCR presented the **second edition of its [Statelessness in the Kyrgyz Republic publication](#)** – available in English and Russian languages – which provides an analysis of the compliance of the Kyrgyz Republic's National Legislation with international citizenship and statelessness standards.

SEE ALSO



- **UNHCR welcomed amendments to the Law on Acts of Civil Status**, coming into effect on 24 June, which will ensure that all children born in the country will be registered at birth, regardless of whether their parents are undocumented or stateless. Under the new law, even children already born to undocumented or stateless parents and who previously could not be registered will soon be issued with birth certificates. With these amendments, the Kyrgyz Republic fulfills two out of its four pledges made in 2019 at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness.

Responding to Emergencies

- Following the escalation of violence at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in September 2022, the Minister of Emergency Situations and the UN Resident Coordinator co-led the humanitarian response, coordinating 18 organizations to meet the affected population's priority needs. UNHCR led the Protection sector, and contributed to the Emergency Shelter/ NFI sector. With the emergency response period ending in February 2023, on 23 March UNHCR participated in the **Lessons Learnt workshop, presenting consolidated findings** from the 40+ Protection Sector members.

SNAPSHOT:

UNHCR RESPONSE TO THE INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT EMERGENCY

The escalation of violence in the south of the Kyrgyz Republic along the border with Tajikistan in September 2022, internally displaced 142,071 people from Batken and Osh provinces, and damaged or destroyed homes, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure throughout Batken province. Together with the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the UN launched an interagency Emergency Response Plan to help 77,800 people.

UNHCR led the Protection sector, and contributed to the Emergency Shelter/ NFI sector.

With generous support from the People of Japan, UNHCR and its partners:



Conducted

509

household assessments (representing 2,501 individuals) to identify and respond to protection risks and priorities, especially those with increased protection needs such as women and girls, people with disabilities, and the elderly.



Supported

504

people with legal advice to restore civil documents, including birth certificates, ensuring they have legal proof of identity to access social and health services, humanitarian assistance, and compensation and reconstruction programmes.



Provided

2,413

legal consultations to displaced and affected people, and returnees, and made referrals to available services.



Warmed

8,470

people with coal as winterization assistance.



Winterized temporary accommodation centres hosting

117

people – mainly women and children – to ensure safe, warm and dignified living conditions.



Provided

6,000+

people with essential relief items like kitchen sets and blankets.

TURKMENISTAN

State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol State Party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions

- On 14 April, **UNHCR and the Government of Turkmenistan signed a joint workplan** for 2023, outlining shared activities to be undertaken throughout the year to protect and promote the rights of people forced to flee and the stateless.
- From 17 to 20 April, UNHCR conducted its first post-pandemic **official visit to Turkmenistan**, meeting with high-level officials and NGO partners to explore solutions to challenges faced by refugees and stateless people in the country; discuss progress on 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledge implementation and participation in the upcoming 2023 event; and advocate for durable solutions for the remaining 13 mandate refugees.
 - In Ashgabat, UNHCR **met with four refugees and stateless people** who reported issues such as long naturalization process, lack of registration (propiska) which hampers access to other services (e.g. travel document, naturalization, education, employment), and limited access to social benefits for mandate refugees. UNHCR also held a Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and Code of Conduct training for its national partner, and an information session for 10 SDG Youth ambassadors and volunteers of the Red

UZBEKISTAN

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 16 March, the Ministry of Nature Resources, together with UNHCR, UNDP and UNECE, visited Surkhandarya region to review the results of the joint afforestation project **“Master planning and innovative financial solutions to support the implementation of the Yashil Makon Initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan”**, which engages citizens of Afghanistan and Uzbek residents in tree-planting activities through cash-for-work. By 31 March – the project end-date – 413 Afghan citizens (113 women, 300 men) and 337 members of the host community (162 women, 175 men) had benefited from the project.
- On 17 March, UNHCR and the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NHRC) **presented an Analytical Report on the legislation and practice of Uzbekistan** in the context of prospects for acceding to the Refugee Convention, at an event with representatives of government, academia, UN agencies, and diplomatic missions. The report was developed by UNHCR following a request by the Government of Uzbekistan to assist the country to implement its supported Universal

Crescent Society of Turkmenistan about the work of UNHCR in the country and across Central Asia.

Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- So far in 2023, UNHCR has **provided multi-purpose cash grants** to two vulnerable mandate refugee families (reaching five individuals) in Turkmenistan to support them to cover basic needs.

Ending Statelessness

- On 20 April, the Government of Turkmenistan and UNHCR co-organized a **roundtable on the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Statelessness** by 2024. Participants – including the Migration Service, Ministry of Justice and UNHCR partners – highlighted the need for increased cooperation and mutual support in obtaining confirmation of citizenship from foreign diplomatic missions.

Responding to Emergencies

- On 14 March, UNHCR **launched the 2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**, appealing for US\$2.01 million to support 5,000 Afghan citizens in Turkmenistan, and 2,500 members of the host community. RRP partners in Turkmenistan are IOM, UNFPA and UNICEF.

Periodic Review recommendations. The report compares national legislation related to refugee issues with international standards as well as Uzbekistan’s legal obligations, identifying gaps and best practices, and providing recommendations to guide future legislative changes and development of the national protection framework.

- On 14 April, the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NHRC) **signed the 2023 joint workplan with UNHCR**, outlining shared activities to be undertaken through the year to protect and promote the rights of forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- So far in 2023, 60 Afghan households (representing approximately 300 individuals) in Uzbekistan have approached UNHCR via its **emergency hotline**. UNHCR provided general counselling, including information on how to request political asylum, mindful of the challenges. Most callers reported issues relating to economic hardship, and lack of access to legal employment, medical services and rights, as well as problems with renewing their visa to stay in Uzbekistan.

- The UNHCR pilot project with NGO Barqaror Hayot to **improve the skills of Afghan citizens and members of host communities** in Surkhandarya region, bordering Afghanistan, was extended until 31 May 2023. Since the start of the project in August 2022, more than 200 Afghan and Uzbek women and men have completed vocational training courses on hairdressing, manicure, sewing or confectionary. The project also included 3-month Uzbek, Russian and English language courses for over 100 Afghan and Uzbek children. Project performance and financial verification is ongoing.
 - **Due to lack of funding, the project will be discontinued from 01 June.**
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to three vulnerable mandate refugee families (reaching four individuals) to support them to cover basic needs.

Responding to Emergencies

- On 14 March, UNHCR [launched the 2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan](#) (RRP), appealing for US\$10.7 million to support 11,700 Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan, and 21,750 members of the host community. RRP partners in Uzbekistan are IOM, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.
- On 24 May, UNHCR sent its **first convoy of core relief items from its Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub in Termez, to Iran**. The three-truck convoy carried 12x rubhalls, 1500 tarpaulins, 3000 sleeping mats, and 3000 thermal blankets. As of 31 May, UNHCR has processed 234 trucks and four airlifts of essential relief items through the hub, supporting emergency responses in Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

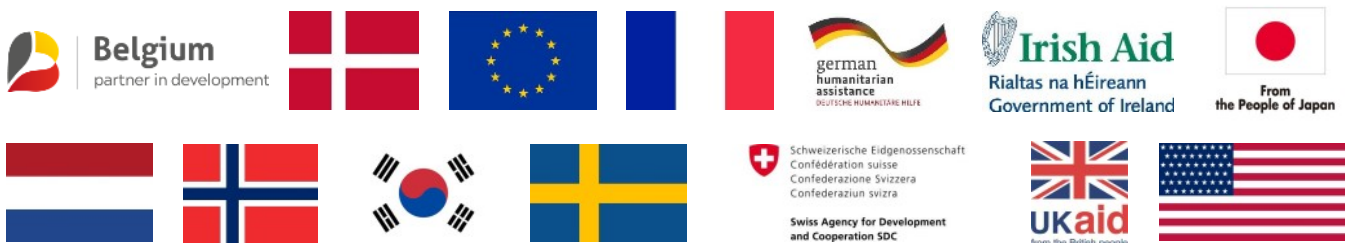
WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- As a member of all four UN Country Teams and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, UNHCR engages with governments, UN and development partners, international financial institutions and others across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to ensure refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people are not left behind in States' achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Thank you for the support

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VISIT THE UNHCR
CENTRAL ASIA WEBSITE

UNHCR maintains email and phone 'hotlines' across the four countries for anyone in need of information or consultation on refugee and asylum issues. People forced to flee can find key contacts and updated information about asylum procedures in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on help.unhcr.org/centralasia, in English and Russian languages.