



## UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

Sisters Almas and Sharara are two of 15 refugee youth in Kazakhstan who will start the new academic year on 1 September 2023, studying at tertiary level, thanks to the DAFI Refugee Scholarship Programme. Almas is studying Medicine, and Sharara is studying International Relations. (Photo: UNHCR/ Isturgan Aldayev)

### Key figures as of 30 June 2023

**15,047\***



#### Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

in Kazakhstan (979), the Kyrgyz Republic (1,030), Turkmenistan (13) and Uzbekistan (5)\*.

**37,257**



#### known Stateless people

in Kazakhstan (8,266), the Kyrgyz Republic (227), Turkmenistan (3,351) and Uzbekistan (25,413).

\* In November 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan reported via mass media that 13,020 Afghan citizens were 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**  
**44%**

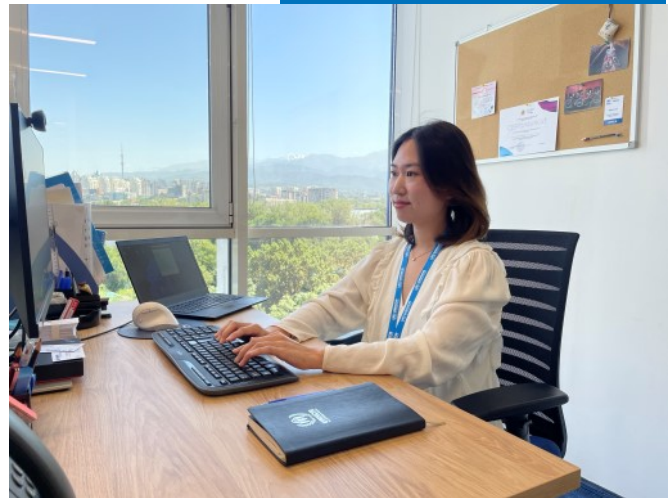
**Unfunded**  
**56%**

As of 31 August 2023

## SUB-REGIONAL

- In the lead-up to the [2023 Global Refugee Forum](#), in addition to UN Country Team Common Pledges, UNHCR has **developed and proposed country-specific pledges** that the governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan may like to make in December to advance protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people. Pledges range from acceding to the statelessness conventions, to facilitating local integration and naturalization of refugees.
- 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, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan on [help.unhcr.org/centralasia](http://help.unhcr.org/centralasia), in English, Russian and Dari.

## READ ALSO



**STORY:** [UN Volunteer’s path to humanitarian work: Naeun Lee shares her journey to becoming a humanitarian.](#)

## KAZAKHSTAN

### State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- On 6 June, UNHCR, jointly with UN Kazakhstan, UNFPA and UN Women, [launched a book of fairy tales written by Kazakh authors on themes related to UN work, including forced displacement](#). The compilation of stories targets children 5 to 12 years old, and tells inspiring stories about modern Kazakhstani children, in the Kazakh language, related to caring for nature, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, hospitality, equal and fair treatment of others, and family values.



Targeting children 5 to 12 years old, the compilation of stories in Kazakh language include themes related to forced displacement and statelessness.

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 6 June, UNHCR – together with its partner Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law (BHR), and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection – visited Pavlodar region to **monitor admission practices at the northern border** crossing point and assess compliance to international standards. Partners delivered a session to the Border Guards Service on the rights of asylum-seekers in line with national asylum-related legislation, the 1951 Convention and other international instruments. The existing information stand was updated with details on the asylum system for easy reference for any arriving asylum-seekers, and partners conducted a **focus group discussion with 10 Ukrainian asylum-seekers** to better understand their protection needs, identify risks and concerns, and analyse trends.
- On 12 June, UNHCR partner Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan (RCSK) conducted **free psychological support sessions** for 16 refugees and asylum-seekers in Almaty. Facilitated by a professional psychologist, the sessions aimed to meet the psychological and social needs of individuals, helping to facilitate communication, restore social support in the community, and equip people to respond to traumatic events.
- Marked on 20 June each year, [World Refugee Day](#) celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their homes to escape conflict or persecution. Each year, the day is marked by a variety of events around the globe in support of

refugees. This year, RCSK conducted first aid training for 11 refugees and asylum-seekers, and organized recreational activities for 98 refugee and asylum-seeker children and their parents at an amusement park in Almaty, with admission passes offered by the park administration at no-cost.

- On 11 and 12 July, accompanied by RCSK, four asylum-seekers and four refugees in Pavlodar, Petropavlovsk, Almaty and Shymkent cities **attended a meeting with parliamentarians** from the Lower Chamber Mazhilis to voice ongoing challenges related to their stay in Kazakhstan.
- On 12 July, two asylum-seeker families (four people) attended an open day in Pavlodar organized by the governing political party and, supported by UNHCR partner BHR, attended a meeting with two Lower Chamber Mazhilis parliamentarians, representatives of local akimat (municipality) and the Migration Department. The asylum-seekers shared their challenges with lack of medical care, and difficulties with residence permits, family reunification, extending refugee status, and employment.
- On 18 and 19 July, UNHCR held a two-day online **Country of Origin Information training session** for 25 representatives of local departments of social protection, responsible for carrying out refugee status determination. The training aimed to build a common understanding of the role and relevance of Country of Origin Information in refugee status determination procedures, and included discussion on the [UNHCR Guidance Note on The International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan](#), [UNHCR Position On Returns To Ukraine](#), and [Guidelines on International Protection No. 10: Claims To Refugee Status Related To Military Service Within](#)

[The Context Of Article 1a \(2\) Of The 1951 Convention and/or The 1967 Protocol Relating To The Status Of Refugees.](#)

- On 28 July, UNHCR announced the [Call for Applications](#) for the 2023 **DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative)** scholarship programme in Kazakhstan, receiving 10 submissions from refugees and asylum-seekers. A selection panel – comprising representatives from UNHCR, RCSK, and the Embassy of Germany in Kazakhstan – selected six students to receive scholarships to study Dentistry, Management and Computer Science. Fifteen students in total – all from Afghanistan – will start the new academic year on 1 September, thanks to the DAFI scholarship programme.
- UNHCR partner RCSK visited the homes of nine refugee and asylum-seeker families in Aktoobe, from 24 to 27 July, and 12 asylum-seeker families in Kostanay region, and six refugee and asylum-seeker families in North-Kazakhstan region from 22 to 25 August, who had applied for cash assistance. RCSK consulted them on **questions related to medical and legal assistance**, and procedures in obtaining the cash grants. Refugees and asylum-seekers highlighted high prices of rent and essential items, lack of employment opportunities, and need for psychological support.
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 238 asylum-seeker and refugee families (reaching 361 individuals) in need, to support them to cover basic needs. Due to a lack of funding, cash assistance could not be provided to 63 other vulnerable families who applied for assistance.



Fifteen refugee students in Kazakhstan – all from Afghanistan – will start the new academic year on 1 September, thanks to the DAFI scholarship programme. Areas of study range from Marketing and Interior Design, to Dentistry and General Medicine. Like in past years, most DAFI applicants and recipients are women. (Photo: UNHCR/ Isturgan Aldayev)

## Ending Statelessness

- On 30 May, UNHCR partner BHR, jointly with the Migration Service office of the Kostanay City Police Department, **provided legal counselling** to eight families with undetermined nationality, expired documents, and in need of help to obtain identity documentation.
- With the support of UNHCR, the Deputy Chairperson of the Migration Service Committee of the Kazakhstan Ministry of Internal Affairs, participated in the **Regional High-Level Conference on Statelessness** on 6 July in Baku – organized by UNHCR Azerbaijan and the State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Deputy Chairperson shared Kazakhstan’s experiences and progress in preventing and reducing statelessness, including improvements in birth registration procedures, introduction of Statelessness Determination Procedures, and the [country-wide identification and documentation campaign to map and resolve statelessness](#).
- Together with partners Sana Sezim and BHR, on 7 July, UNHCR conducted an online **workshop on the reduction of statelessness** and international standards in the protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people, for 16 regional representatives of

the Ombudsperson, with participation of the Migration Service Committee of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Healthcare of Kazakhstan. The workshop was delivered as part of the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, signed in 2022.

### READ ALSO



**STORY:** [“Citizenship is what gives you pride, makes you glad, because it shows who you are, that you are part of this country”](#)

## THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

### State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

- Within the ongoing legal inventory in the Kyrgyz Republic, in 2022 UNHCR submitted 29 comments to six draft laws which impact the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people, promoting alignment with international standards. As of August 2023, **16 out of 29 proposals have been adopted**, and 13 rejected.
- Advocacy work continues regarding Laws on External Migration (non-refoulement during expulsion procedures), Education (access of refugees to education equally with citizens), State Guaranteed Legal Assistance (access to free legal assistance provided by state), Citizenship (prevention of statelessness and access to naturalization), Criminal Procedure Code and related laws (non-refoulement during extradition, access to asylum from detention and protection of confidentiality), as well as several by-laws, including Statelessness Status Determination Procedure, Citizenship Procedures and Regulations on issuance of travel documents for refugees.
- On 30 June, the Kyrgyz Republic adopted the Law on amendments to certain legislative acts in the field of migration (Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic) which **included three proposals made by UNHCR:** 1). Adopt statelessness status determination procedures; 2). Exempt refugees from the principle of reciprocity and from exceptional measures; 3). Classify refugees and stateless persons as permanently residing foreigners enabling them access to due rights.
- From 21 to 28 August, UNHCR conducted a **participatory assessment with 141 refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless people** in Bishkek and Osh, with the participation of representatives of the Office of the Ombudsperson of the Kyrgyz Republic. The assessment was carried out over five days, with participants divided into groups based on legal status, age, country of origin and gender. Based on the findings, representatives of the Ombudsperson’s Office will prepare a report on the situation of asylum-seekers, including ways to overcome barriers to integration

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- From 14-16 June, UNHCR, together with its partner Adilet, conducted a 3-day **seminar for 16 judges** in the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as three representatives of the General Prosecutor’s Office, Director of the National Center for Combating Torture and two

representatives of the Ombudsperson's Office. Representatives of the Supreme Court expressed willingness to continue studying the norm on refugee protection issues.

- As part of World Refugee Day celebrations, on 22 June, [UNHCR opened an art exhibition “Hope Away from Home”](#) in partnership with the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts, promoting the inclusion and integration of refugees and honouring the hospitality of host communities. The two-week exhibition was opened by the Minister of Labor of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the UN Resident Coordinator, with attendance of the Minister of Emergency and representatives of other state entities, UN agencies, international organisations, the refugee community, youth and media. The exhibition welcomed 1,417 visitors over 14 days.
- In collaboration with the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic, UNHCR supported **renovation and refurbishment of the reception facility at the Osh International Airport** to ensure asylum-seekers and refugees have an appropriate and decent space in which to wait while their asylum applications are referred to relevant asylum authorities.
- Established in July 2023, the **UN Youth Advisory Board** in the Kyrgyz Republic includes a young refugee from Afghanistan, Salma, who aims to ensure refugee voices are included in the board’s work to promote meaningful youth engagement, bridge the gap between the UN and the country’s young population, and provide advice on how to make the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 more effective in responding to youth aspirations. All 13 members of the Youth Advisory Board participated in the Central Asian Youth Forum, held 10 to 11 August, discussing strategies for enhancing youth empowerment and representation in governmental and societal initiatives in the region.



The “Hope Away From Home” art exhibition in Bishkek promoted inclusion and integration of refugees, and honoured the hospitality of host communities.

- On 20 July, UNHCR announced the Call for Applications for the 2023 **DAFI scholarship programme** in the Kyrgyz Republic, with an application deadline of 11 September.

## READ ALSO



**STORY:** [Refugee, DAFI scholar and future peacebuilder: Alina’s journey to bring people together](#)

- From 27 to 30 August, UNHCR held a **Summer Camp for 11 members of the Refugee Youth Group**, supporting participants to hone their skills in project planning and public speaking. Through team-building exercises and social media management training, participants also strengthened their social bonds and shared commitment to serving refugee youth and their host community .
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to 46 vulnerable refugee or asylum-seeking families (reaching 196 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 6 July, the Ministry of Digital Development posted proposed amendments to the Law on Citizenship on the official government website for public discussion. The changes included a proposal to exclude a norm – only recently introduced through UNHCR advocacy – to ensure children born in the country, who are not granted citizenship of their parents and would otherwise become stateless, have the right to Kyrgyz citizenship. **UNHCR submitted recommendations** on the draft law, protesting removal of this provision, and suggesting improvements in the naturalization procedures.

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



## SNAPSHOT:

### PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

As of 30 June 2023, the Kyrgyz Republic hosts:



**255**  
Refugees

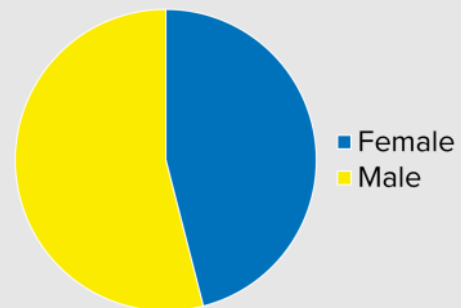
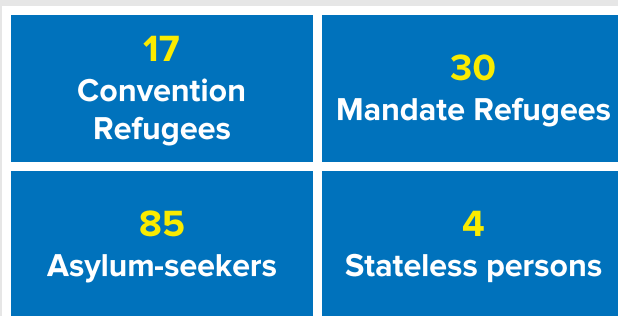


**775**  
Asylum-seekers



**227**  
Stateless persons

**141 people participated in the participatory assessment:**



**Among the refugees and asylum-seekers:**

**47%** are originally from Afghanistan, **6%** from the Syrian Arab Republic, **5%** from Ukraine, and **42%** from other countries.



19% have bachelor degrees

13% have graduate education

43% have completed secondary school

13% started secondary school, but we not able to finish

3% have only primary education

2% have no education at all

**Participants discussed questions related to 14 themes, including:**

- Documentation
- Integration
- Employment and livelihoods
- Healthcare
- Education
- Psychological, sexual and domestic violence
- Community participation
- Communication channels.

**Key challenges reported by refugees and asylum-seekers were:**

- Short-term of residency status and limited access to healthcare
- Quality and transparency of status determination and citizenship procedures
- Absence of legal right to employment for asylum-seekers and mandate refugees
- Increasing price of basic necessities, including food and rent
- Negative and discriminatory attitude of the host community towards them due to their nationality and legal status.

*All which prevent them from integrating in, and contributing to, their host communities.*



**Of the refugees, 89% have been in the Kyrgyz republic for more than 10 years**

**Key challenges reported by stateless people were:**

- Lengthy processing of applications for statelessness status
- Children born into statelessness due to mothers who are undocumented.

# TURKMENISTAN

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

## Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- On 19 June, UNHCR met with partners in Ashgabat, conducting **Code of Conduct, data protection, and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse sessions** for eight of their staff. UNHCR also met with one stateless person and three refugees to hear and discuss their concerns.
- In meetings with UNHCR, refugees and stateless people shared their challenges related to the 'propiska' system in Turkmenistan which requires people to have a house or family in the country to register their residence. Many refugees and stateless people do not meet these requirements, and therefore cannot obtain travel documents or access public services, such as education or banking. This problem also affects their family members who are Turkmen citizens. UNHCR partner Keik Okara conducted advocacy interventions with State institutions to support eligible refugees and stateless people to enrol in universities and access public services.
- As part of World Refugee Day celebrations, on 20 June, UNHCR delivered a **guest lecture to 80 students** of the International University for Humanities and Development, the Turkmen State University named after Makhtumkuli, and the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan .

## Ending Statelessness

- On 21 June, UNHCR delivered an **information session on statelessness for the Ombudsperson's Office** in Ashgabat, aiming to strengthen their capacity to monitor and report on statelessness in Turkmenistan. Key topics covered statelessness legal framework, statelessness determination procedure and the importance of birth registration and statelessness statistics.
- Published on 3 July, the 2022 annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan mentioned statelessness in the chapter on civil and political rights, noting that **in 2022, 1,530 now formerly stateless people received passports.**
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has **provided multi-purpose cash grants** to two vulnerable mandate refugees in Turkmenistan to support them to cover basic needs.

## Responding to Emergencies

- As a country bordering Afghanistan, Turkmenistan is part of the **2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**, with activities seeking to support 5,000 Afghan citizens in Turkmenistan, and 2,500 members of the host community. RRP partners in Turkmenistan – IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and UNICEF – are only 17% funded.



As part of World Refugee Day celebrations, UNHCR delivered a guest lecture in Ashgabat to 80 students of the International University for Humanities and Development, the Turkmen State University named after Makhtumkuli, and the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. (Photo: UNHCR/ Sergiu Gaina )

## UZBEKISTAN

- On 11 July, in Tashkent, within its Joint Work Plan with the National Human Rights Centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan (NHRC), UNHCR presented to working groups assembled to prepare possible **pledges for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum**, and to discuss required actions for **drafting of national refugee legislation**.

### Protecting Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

- Two projects to support Afghan citizens and vulnerable members of the host community in Uzbekistan – vocational training and afforestation activities through cash-for-work – were concluded and could **not be extended due to a lack of funding**. The projects benefited 688 Afghan citizens (312 women, 376 men) and 419 members of the host community (224 women, 195 men).
- So far in 2023, 136 Afghan households (representing approximately 680 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.
- So far in 2023, UNHCR has provided **multi-purpose cash grants** to six vulnerable mandate refugees to support them to cover basic needs.

## 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

UNHCR is grateful for contributions directly to the UNHCR Representation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as donors of unearmarked and flexible funding, including:



UNHCR appreciates the important contributions of private donors in: Australia | Germany | Japan | Republic of Korea | Spain

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## Responding to Emergencies

- So far in 2023, the **Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub in Termez** has processed 35 trucks of relief items, supporting emergency responses in Afghanistan and Iran.
- From the 31 May to 4 June, a UNHCR delegation from headquarters and the regional bureau for Asia and the Pacific visited the UNHCR Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub to evaluate the **possibility of establishing a UNHCR Global stockpile in Termez**. Meetings were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN Resident Coordinator and Country Team, Deputy Governor of the Surkhandarya region and other key counterparts to assess existing potential and further support required. If the proposed concept is approved, UNHCR would maintain a global stockpile in Central Asia – the crossroads of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East – supporting network stability and responding to emergencies worldwide.
- As a country bordering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan is part of the **2023 Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP)**, with activities seeking to support 11,700 Afghan citizens in Uzbekistan, and 21,750 members of the host community. RRP partners in Uzbekistan – IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF – are only 4% funded.