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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR PROGRESS REPORT

Jan - Mar 2026

MALAYSIA

Current Statistics
Parliamentary Symposium
Protection & Social Cohesion
Women Empowerment

GLOBAL

Middle East Crisis

- Iran
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Afghanistan

Photo Cover:

Negara Nazari, 2025 UNHCR Nansen Award Asia-Pacific Winner, an Afghan refugee and former DAFI scholar, co-founded the Ariana Learning Centre **to provide education for young Afghan refugees without access to schooling.**

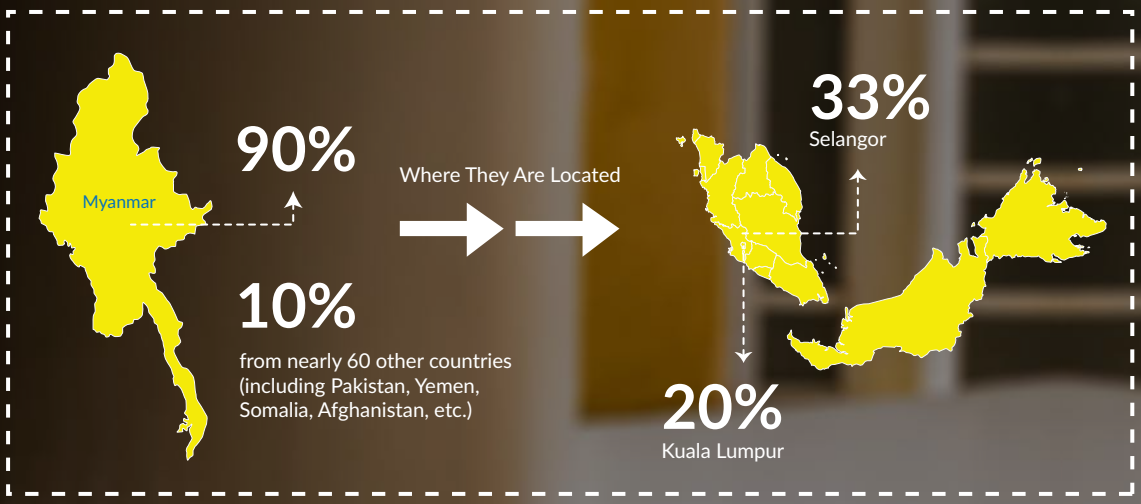
Malaysia

Current Statistics:

218,268 total displaced population in **Malaysia**



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UNHCR serves as the **lead agency** in advancing **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways** and facilitating **Voluntary Repatriation** for refugees, guiding strategic efforts to expand access to protection and durable solutions.

From January 2026 to March 2026, 577 refugees in Malaysia resettled through the following pathways:

323
Departed via UNHCR Resettlement

226
Departed via Complementary Pathways*

28
Departed via Voluntary Repatriation

The number above making up a total of 129,056 refugees who have departed Malaysia through durable solutions since 2005.

Data as of March 2026

*Complementary pathways are other ways refugees can move to a third country – for work, study or family reasons. Some are programmes that have been created just for refugees, while others are existing options for migration that may have been adapted for refugees. For more information on complementary pathways, please read here:
Complementary pathways for admission to third countries | UNHCR

Parliamentary Symposium

Advancing Refugee Access to Education and Legal Work



Seated (from left): Louise Aubin, UNHCR Malaysia Representative; YB Wong Chen, Member of Parliament for Subang; YB Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Johari Abdul, Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat; YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin Tuanku Muhriz; YB William Leong Jee Keen, Member of Parliament for Selayang; and Dato' Seri Mohd Hishamudin Md Yunus, Chairman of SUHAKAM.

On 7 February 2026, a Parliamentary Symposium at the Parliament of Malaysia brought national attention to **improving access to legal employment and education for refugees.**

"Today's symposium invites us to reflect on how allowing refugees to work legally and ensuring that refugee children have access to education can significantly contribute to our nation's growth"

(Datuk Johari Abdul, Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat)

The Symposium marks an important step in **advancing refugee protection in Malaysia,** bringing together approximately 300 policymakers, parliamentarians, government officers, human rights organisations, refugee representatives, civil society, and the international community.

By convening these stakeholders, it fosters constructive dialogue and collective action to **identify practical pathways to strengthen protection and expand opportunities for refugees.** This momentum contributes to **UNHCR's ongoing efforts to advance inclusive policies and strengthen protection for refugees in Malaysia,** positioning refugee inclusion as a shared priority.

A week-long exhibition at Parliament complemented the Symposium, highlighting refugee challenges and solutions, and reinforcing **a call to action for policymakers.**



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Building awareness of rights and responsibilities to foster respectful and harmonious communities.

Protection & Social Cohesion

Promoting Safe and Harmonious Coexistence Through Legal Awareness

On 9 March, a legal awareness session was conducted at an Alternative Learning Centre to **promote cultural adaptation and harmonious coexistence with local communities.**

Approximately 200 students, across primary and secondary levels, were reached through age-appropriate sessions.

In Malaysia's complex protection environment, refugees face heightened risks due to:

- Limited legal protection frameworks
- Exposure to misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech (MDH)
- Cultural differences and economic pressures

Without adequate awareness, these risks can lead to detention, exploitation, and legal vulnerability.

By strengthening legal awareness and understanding of social norms, the initiative **supports safer decision-making and fosters more constructive, respectful engagement between refugee and local communities.** Students are encouraged to share the knowledge gained is within families and communities, contributing to wider awareness and mutual understanding.

Legal Protection in Action

This session complements **UNHCR Malaysia's broader protection efforts, including:**

- Detention monitoring and intervention
- Legal representation in court for offences under the Immigration Act





Malaysia



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Women Empowerment

Strengthening Refugee Women-Led Organizations (RWLOs)

Building on efforts initiated in 2025*, and aligned with the spirit of International Women's Day (8 March), this programme supports Refugee Women-Led Organisations (RWLOs) to **strengthen community-led prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV),** while reinforcing women's leadership and role in community protection.

Beyond direct service delivery, the initiative advances women's leadership, fosters inter-ethnic collaboration, and strengthens community networks, enabling refugee communities to better **protect and support one another.**

1,674
individuals directly reached through community-led activities.

110
at-risk individuals received case management support.

253
individuals received in-kind assistance, including emergency cash.

67
participants trained through Training-of-Trainers (ToT).

652
participants attended workshops.

592
individuals reached through outreach and awareness sessions.

Middle East

Unfolding Humanitarian Emergency

Rising violence across the Middle East is forcing even more people to flee in a region already **hosting over *24 million forcibly displaced people and returnees.**

Many were already living in severe **economic insecurity, facing heightened protection risks, and unmet basic needs.**

Host communities, already under strain, are now absorbing new displacement amid **limited resources, overstretched services, and constrained funding.**

The rapid deterioration is **driving internal displacement** and raising concerns about **potential refugee outflows.**



Families displaced by escalating violence cross borders in search of safety, adding pressure to already overstretched communities and services across the region.

*Figure as of 31 March 2026

Global | Middle East Iran



Up to ***3.2 million** people temporarily displaced inside Iran due to escalating conflict.

Also affected are refugee families already hosted in Iran – a long-term host of ***1.65 million** people forced to flee, mostly from **Afghanistan.**

>42,000
Afghan refugees assisted
through helplines, financial assistance and psychosocial support.

3,500
helpline calls
responded to, providing critical information on support and legal assistance.

>1,000
calls per day,
mainly requests for financial assistance and health-related concerns.

*Figure as of 31 March 2026

Over *1 million people registered as displaced.

35% are children.

More than *136,000 people sheltering in 660 collective sites.

>73,000 people supported
in 442 collective shelters.

>47,000 people reached
with protection services, including psychosocial support and targeted assistance.

>3,600 people supported
with Emergency Protection Cash Assistance to help cover urgent needs.

>198,000 emergency relief items distributed including blankets, mattresses and solar lamps.



© UNHCR/Houssam Hariri

*Figure as of 31 March 2026

Global | Middle East
Syria



© UNHCR/Azad Bejou

Over *200,000 people have crossed into Syria

Includes approximately 180,000 Syrians and 28,000+ Lebanese

3 official border crossings
supported through operational response.

468 families supported
with legal assistance.

30,000 people supported
with access to clean water.

>600 vulnerable people
supported with relief items.

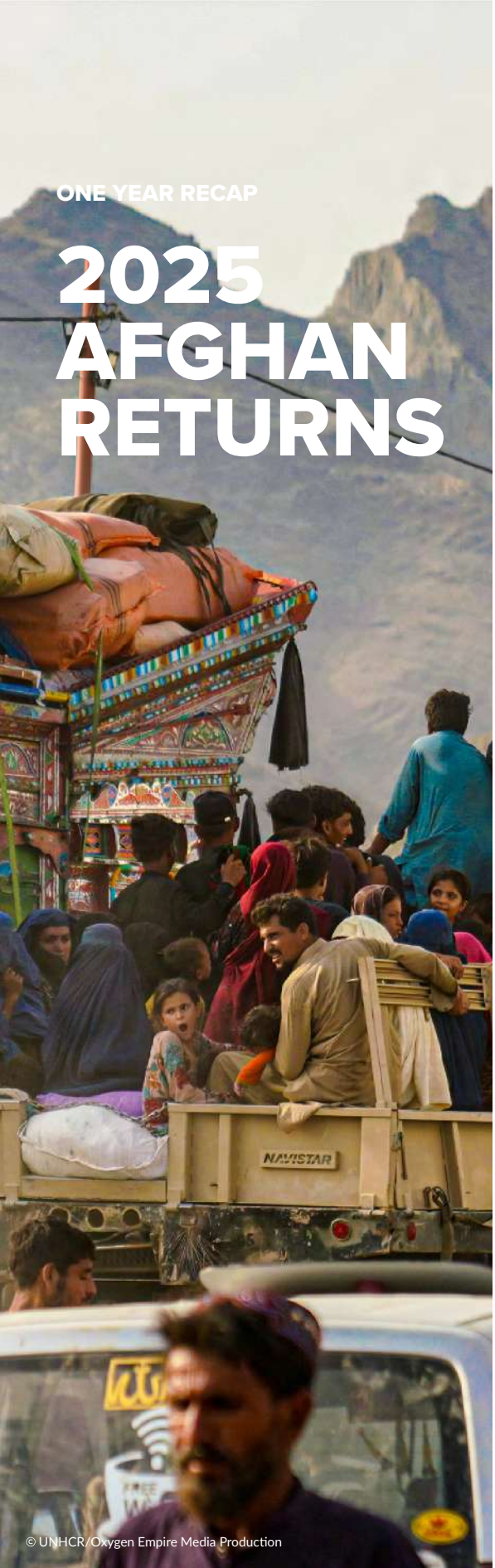
>3,550 people supported
with transportation to reach their destinations.

>20,000 returnees
supported through Community Centres with psychological first aid and referrals across eight governorates.

*Figure as of 31 March 2026

ONE YEAR RECAP

2025 AFGHAN RETURNS



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UNHCR Timeline: We stayed. We delivered.

29 January 2025
PAKISTAN: Government issues a directive requiring ACC holders and undocumented, to return to Afghanistan or risk deportation. In addition, starting late December 2024 and continuing in 2025, the Government of Pakistan directed Afghans regardless of status or documents to relocate out of the capital cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

7 March 2025
PAKISTAN: IFRP Phase 2 announced, covering all ACC holders and introducing a grace period (31 March) prior to deportations.

20 March 2025
IRAN: Headcount slips issued by the Government expire, affecting over 2 million Afghans who must undergo Government assessments to determine whether they are allowed to remain.

1 April 2025
PAKISTAN: IFRP Phase 2 enforcement actions commence.

12 June 2025
IRAN: 12-day conflict between Iran and Israel commences until a ceasefire on 24 June.

4 July 2025
IRAN: Some 40,000 Afghans returned from Iran in a single day. During July, total returns from Iran reached approximately 585,000.

30 June 2025
PAKISTAN: Proof of Registration (PoR) cards for Afghans refugees expire, affecting the legal stay of registered Afghan populations.

31 July 2025
PAKISTAN: IFRP Phase 3 was launched, designating all PoR card holders (1.4 million) as "illegal foreigners" and requiring their repatriation. On 4 August, the Ministry of Interior announced a one-month grace period.

1 September 2025
PAKISTAN: IFRP Phase 3 enforcement actions commence.

15 October 2025
PAKISTAN: Over 15,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan in a single-day. In October, total returns from Pakistan reached approximately 155,000.

IFRP: Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan
ACC: Afghan Citizenship Card

Document - 2025 Afghan Returns - One Year Recap

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"With the right support, families can shape a future for themselves and their communities" (Theo James, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador)

Your continued support brings hope and lasting impact.

Thank you for standing with us to protect the lives and dignity of the most vulnerable.

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