

# Azerbaijan

September 1, 2020

Since 1992, UNHCR has been supporting the Government of Azerbaijan to find durable solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless people in the country.

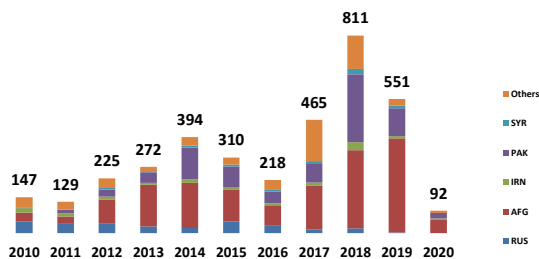
The majority of refugees do not have a clear legal status and are to a large extent depend on UNHCR for protection and assistance.

The inclusion of complementary protection into national legislation would increase the protection space by enabling persons of concern to secure a legal status and access to rights.

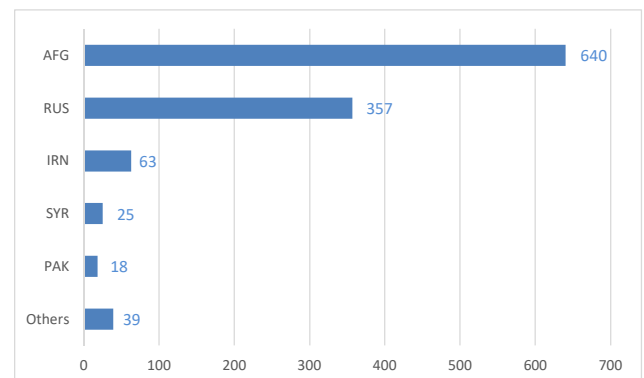
## POPULATION OF CONCERN

<b>Refugees</b> (Gov. and UNHCR 1 Sep. 2020)	<b>- 1,142</b>
<b>Asylum seekers</b> (UNHCR, 1 Sep. 2020)	<b>- 809</b>
<b>Internally displaced people</b> (Gov., 1 Jan 2020)	<b>- 652,326</b>
<b>Stateless people</b> (Gov., 2009 Census)	<b>- 3,585</b>

## REGISTRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS BY UNHCR (from 1 January 2010 to 1 September 2020)



## REFUGEES BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (1 Sep. 2020)



Refugees recognised by Government: 76 individuals (7% out of the total 1,142 refugees in the country)

## UNHCR PRESENCE

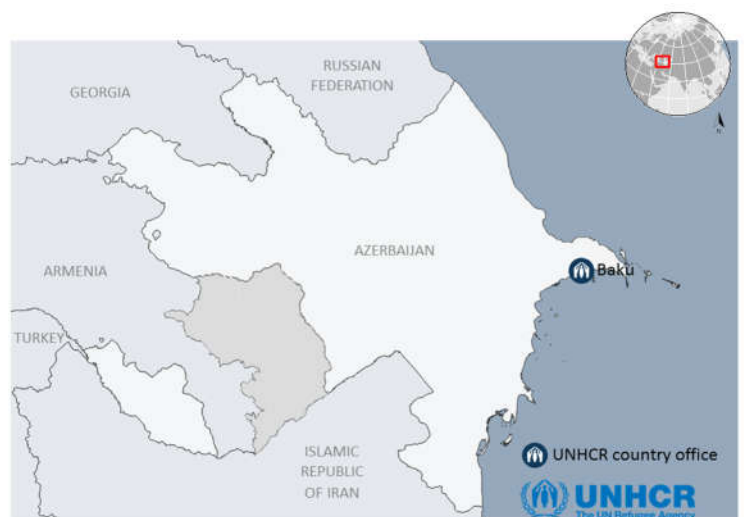
### Staff:

- 12 National Staff
- 4 International Staff
- 3 Affiliated workforce – national UNOPS

### Offices:

Country Office in Baku  
Winter Park Plaza, 4<sup>th</sup> floor,  
210, M.Aliyev Street.

Refugee Women and Youth  
Centre (RWYC) in Baku  
41, S.Mammadova Street.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

## Working with Partners

UNHCR works closely with other UN and international agencies, and several central government structures, including the Cabinet of Ministers Office, the State Migration Service, the State Committee for Affairs of Refugees and IDPs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, the Ministry of Education and the State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs. As part of the UN Country Team, UNHCR participates actively in the implementation of the United Nations – Azerbaijan Partnership Framework (UNAPF) and in the design of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda. Many UNHCR community-based activities for refugees, including those carried-out in the Refugee Women and Youth Centre, are supported by charitable/philanthropic organisations.

## Main Activities

### Protection

UNHCR advocates with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure compliance of refugee legislation with international standards, including the adoption of complementary forms of protection and universal access to refugee status determination procedures. UNHCR monitors access to asylum procedures and works to strengthen the quality of the Government's asylum process by providing guidance on implementing international protection standards and by undertaking regular capacity development activities, refugee status recognition rates by the governmental bodies has remained very low in spite of the fact that most asylum-seekers come from "refugee producing countries".

If the applicant is considered to be in need of international protection, UNHCR provides legal counselling and representation. Refugees recognized under UNHCR's mandate, but not by the Government, are tolerated and generally protected from *refoulement*, but do not enjoy formal legal status. Refugees and asylum seekers have access to free primary & secondary education and primary health care. Despite the lack of a proper legal status, thanks to UNHCR advocacy and governmental goodwill, these refugees can now conclude labour contracts following the successful implementation of the pledge made by Government in the first Global Refugee Forum held in Geneva in December 2019. Only those identified with specific needs that are not addressed through existing programmes are supported by UNHCR through Multi-Purpose Cash Grants.

According to governmental estimates there are still some 652,326 IDPs in the country. During the 1990s, along with emergency relief assistance, UNHCR implemented large-scale shelter, education, healthcare, water supply and sanitation programmes targeting mainly IDPs in partnership with other UN agencies. As the country experienced economic growth from the mid-2000s and the Government significantly increased investment in addressing the needs of IDPs, UNHCR gradually reduced its direct relief assistance to IDPs and reoriented its operations towards legal counselling, monitoring and advocacy for durable solutions. During the first half of 2020 some 743 IDPs received legal assistance and counselling on issues such as personal documentation, social benefits and property rights. UNHCR also conducts capacity-building activities to prevent domestic and gender-based violence among IDPs.

UNHCR advocates with the Government to fully implement the Statelessness Conventions and to improve the existing legislation related to citizenship. As part of the UNHCR Global Campaign to End Statelessness, SMS launched a nationality determination campaign in 2016 to identify and document stateless persons. In 2019, the Government of Azerbaijan made a pledge at the High-level Segment on Statelessness to ensure the naturalization of the registered stateless persons within the next three years. In February 2020, 343 persons were granted with Azerbaijani citizenship by the Presidential Decree out of which 86 were stateless.

Following UNHCR's advocacy with the Cabinet of Ministers aimed at establishing a Working Group on Statelessness, on 5 June 2020, UNHCR received a confirmation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcoming UNHCR's proposal. The confirmation also indicated that the SMS, MFA, Office of the Ombudsperson, MIA, and Foreign Intelligence Service would be the members of the WG. The overall coordination of the establishment of the WG will be carried out by the State Migration Service. The primary objectives of the WG will be monitoring of the implementation of the pledge made by the Government and exchange of information on relevant activities in the area of prevention and reduction of statelessness with key state stakeholders.

The office also provides individual assistance to stateless persons eligible to obtain documentation. During the first half of 2020, UNHCR assisted some 28 stateless persons through its Legal Assistance Project for stateless persons.

UNHCR supports the enhancement of national child protection systems through capacity building and direct support to unaccompanied minors and separated children including through access to guardianship and other services guided by the principle of the best interest of the child.

Since March 2020 UNHCR had to reduce its physical reception and social activities at the Refugee Reception Centre as preventive measures against COVID-19 outbreak for public health purposes in line with the ongoing measures

taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, as well as recommendations from World Health Organization. Instead, the Office introduced counselling lines on protection and social issues, remote enrolment of asylum seekers as well as electronic documentation with asylum certificates and refugee protection cards.

### **Education**

UNHCR's education programme monitors and facilitates access of children from refugee and asylum seeker families to pre-school, primary and secondary education provided by the Government. As of March, all schools were closed in Azerbaijan as part of the measures against COVID-19 outbreak. The cooperation with the Azerbaijani Red Crescent Society, which offers regular language courses at the Refugee Women and Youth Centre for refugee and asylum seeker children, in order to enable them to be enrolled in public schools and attend classes, was also suspended until further notice. UNHCR provides support to tertiary education of talented young refugees, through the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Initiative) Scholarship Programme, funded by the German Federal Government. UNHCR provides support to refugees and asylum seekers to enable them to benefit from online education services during the Covid-19 crisis period.

### **Health**

UNHCR interventions in the provision of primary health care are limited to monitoring of public health facilities to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to services as locals. The results of the monitoring activities showed that newly arrived asylum seekers face a language barrier, need special attention and support to pass registration, be able to express their complaints and receive necessary treatment. Pregnant women also need additional support from UNHCR to receive free access to gynaecological consultations. Provision of essential drugs is handled through a contracted pharmacy.

UNHCR provides free secondary health care services to registered refugees and asylum seekers through contracted service providers. The scope of services includes access to secondary care, psychological services, provision of drugs, voluntary HIV testing and awareness-raising on health issues. Persons of concern suffering from oncological diseases are entitled to benefit from the free of charge blood test services through the specialized national healthcare facility. As of 1 September, ten cases of COVID-19 had been reported/identified among the refugees and asylum-seekers in Azerbaijan out of which 9 had recovered and 1 passed away.

### **Cash Based Interventions (CBIs)**

UNHCR's CBI programme in Azerbaijan ensures that basic needs of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers are met by having access to sufficient food, housing and utilities. Taking into consideration that the vast majority of refugees enjoy limited livelihood opportunities mainly due to lack of right to legal employment, refugee and asylum seeker households receive Multi-Purpose Cash Grants from UNHCR on the basis of socio-economic vulnerability which are identified through regularly conducted household surveys. Owing to budgetary considerations and in order to promote self-reliance and assumption of greater responsibility by the Government, the targeting criteria were revised based on specific protection needs and the percentage of beneficiaries was substantially reduced at the beginning of 2020.

### **Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance**

UNHCR maintains communication with persons of concern to raise awareness on their rights and duties and on available services and to ensure their access to the necessary information for taking informed decisions affecting their life. Considering that refugees now have legal access to the labour market, UNHCR will pursue all available livelihood opportunities in order to allow refugees to achieve self-sufficiency and shall continue advocacy to ensure full access to social, economic and cultural rights.

### **COVID-19 emergency interventions**

Following the introduction of a series of measures by the Government aimed at mitigating the risk of spreading COVID-19 in Azerbaijan, UNHCR and State Migration Service (SMS) discussed a number of measures aimed at maintaining protection space for Persons of Concern (PoCs) in line with international law and standards. UNHCR developed a Business Continuity Plan to ensure that all essential services such as protection counselling, legal assistance, enrolment and extension of protection documentation to PoCs is maintained through online and phone during the strict quarantine regime. SMS also introduced online services to ensure documentation of asylum-seekers, enabling rejected asylum-seekers to lodge administrative appeal applications through its website or by email. UNHCR and SMS introduced electronic documentation and exchange of electronic copies of protection letters and refugee cards in order to be registered electronically in the migration system. UNHCR is in regular contact with SMS and closely monitors the application of the newly introduced measures by the Government. The Head of SMS assured UNHCR that nobody under UNHCR's mandate will be expelled because of lack of renewed documentation. All relevant information about the new modus operandi and contact details has been communicated to the State Migration Service and refugee community leaders.

As a result of UNHCR advocacy interventions, governmental structures, civil society organizations, private sector companies and benevolent individuals in Azerbaijan started to donate food and other daily consumables to UNHCR Azerbaijan for distribution to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. Throughout March-August 2020, 824 vulnerable refugee and stateless families benefited from such assistance and in total 1,643 parcels of food and other daily consumables had been distributed by 1 September 2020.

UNHCR received assurances that refugees and asylum-seekers will be included in the governmental health response to the COVID-19 emergency, as part of the primary health care.

UNHCR has also written to the Government appealing to include refugees and asylum-seekers in whatever measures will be adopted to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 situation.

UNHCR has initiated a reprioritization of funds to provide emergency and time-limited financial assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers who were largely relying on the informal sector for their livelihoods which was disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 emergency.

### **Durable Solutions**

Together with the Government and partners, UNHCR works towards the integration of refugees in Azerbaijan by advocating access to legal employment and self-employment. The recommendations for a Roadmap to Refugee Integration Policy in Azerbaijan were presented during a workshop to members of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Socioeconomic Integration of Refugees. UNHCR will work with the Working Group to implement the recommendations of the Roadmap and to help to build the capacity of the local authorities by proposing an integration model. UNHCR has also developed a socio-economic strategy for refugee integration in Azerbaijan which aims at building human capital and resilience among refugees, particularly youth, through fostering livelihood opportunities and skills training in partnership with development agencies. UNHCR also advocates for durable solutions for IDPs, including the right to return on a voluntary basis.

### **External / Donor Relations**

UNHCR seeks to use strategic communication to support persons of concern and to create a more receptive host environment. This is done through raising awareness of UNHCR's protection and solutions mandate in various media, including social media, and by means of public information products and community outreach.

UNHCR relies almost entirely on voluntary contributions from governments, UN and pooled funding mechanisms, international financial institutions and the private sector. It works all year round to raise funds for its programmes and addresses new emergencies as they occur.

In 2020 the overall budget of USD 2.79 million had initially been distributed among the different programmes: 2.0 million (72%) allocated to refugees and asylum-seekers, USD 693,461 (25%) for IDPs and USD 81,215 (3%) for stateless people. In the course of the actual implementation in light of the newly emerged needs due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent special quarantine regime in the country, the budget was modified in favour of refugees and asylum seekers which had the share of 89% by reducing the share for IDPs down to 8% while the allocation for the stateless people remained as 3%.

UNHCR highly appreciates the critical support provided by donors who contributed to this operation with un-earmarked and (softly) earmarked funds in 2019 and expresses its special thanks to the governments of the **United States of America, European Union, Sweden, Germany, United Kingdom, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, France, Switzerland, Italy, Finland** and private donors of **Australia, Germany, Italy, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan**.

### **CONTACTS**

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### **LINKS**

UNHCR global website: <https://www.unhcr.org/>

UN Azerbaijan website: [http://unazerbaijan.org/en/un\\_agencies/united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/](http://unazerbaijan.org/en/un_agencies/united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/unhcr.azerbaijan/](http://www.facebook.com/unhcr.azerbaijan/)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/unhcr\\_azerbaijan/](http://www.instagram.com/unhcr_azerbaijan/)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AzerbaijanUnhcr>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOZLvTQq3yVgrUuy9QcgIIMA/about>