



Asia Pacific Network of Refugees

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**Iran country report
Afghan Refugees Statement; Callout for support**

19th of March 2020

An overview of the corona situation in Iran and the refugee being affected:

As organizations deeply involved in programs and advocacy surrounding the COVID-19 response; our country colleagues; the Afghan refugees in Iran have wrote to us and shared their concern.

The COVID-19 outbreak in Iran first surfaced on Wednesday, when authorities said it claimed the lives of two elderly people in Qom, a Shiite holy city south of the capital. They were the first confirmed deaths from the disease in the Middle East. Iran has highest death toll outside China amid cover-up claims. Countries around Iran are closing their borders. Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Armenia have shut off access and have left many refugees on closed borders.

The Afghan refugee community has reported the lack of access to hygiene material including soap antiseptic gel and mask. According to the community's report; the majority of Afghan refugees in Iran are not registered with UNHCR and falls out of the support response by UNHCR. In Qom, most of the refugee families are involved with the disease, face lack of facilities for hospitalization. The community reported that within eight days of the first reported death in Iran, COVID-19 had spread to twenty-four of the country's thirty-one provinces. The number of cases has roughly doubled daily since then and the number of deaths among the Afghan refugees has been high that has remained unreported.

We remain particularly alarmed as many refugees are still undocumented and not necessarily part of the national response plan and have called out for support with

- Lack of Financial support: Afghan refugee advocate Fatima Qurbani said “the biggest issue refugees facing is the loss of jobs and income which has made quarantine even difficult as people go out for search of food. We have been able to support five families with \$200 with essential food/medicine needs and need more financial support”.
- Lack of access to health; Alcohol or antiseptic gel and mask are scarce that can be provided with a huge difficulty and cost, and it is not possible for refugees to prepare it. The health insurance available to some refugees still requires a high cost for treatment.



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- Lack of support for hospitalization; “A 25 years old refugee in Mashad, Golshahr lost his life as he was quarantined at home with no access to medicine or health support”. Reported by Mr. Islamzadeh .
- The closure of borders is not the solution; More than 1000 people are entering Herat soil from Dogharoun border. Most of these people are undocumented refugees escaping the COVID-19.
- Lack of Psychological and emotional support; Mental illness and distress caused by COVID-19 is increasing specially with unemployed refugees

In short, the community is dealing with an unprecedented funding shortage and seeking urgent assistance to provide support packages to vulnerable families with the following items:

- **Food in the form of small packages**, including necessary items to be employed and can maintain quarantine conditions and prevent them from being infected.
- **Training packages** including bilingual brochures or CD/ videos containing useful information of prevention and medical information for people who are infected.
- **Building data and** Identification of families suffering from COVID-19
- **Providing psychological and motivational training packages** to reduce stress and anxiety due to existing space

For further information; please contact

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