

# Crossing Borders

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## A Guide for Afghan Women/Human Rights Defenders

Relocation Guide  
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MADRE is a member of the Afghanistan Human Rights Coordination Mechanism (AHRM), a consortium of Afghan national human rights oriented CSOs and international organizations established to respond to the emerging challenges faced by Women/Human Rights Defenders post August 2021 in Afghanistan. The consortium members are Freedom House, Afghanistan Civil Society Forum, International Federation of Human Rights, MADRE, and Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization.

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MADRE would like to also thank Louise Hooper and Maha Sardar from Garden Court Chambers for reviewing the guide.

**MADRE would like to make a call to all individuals and institutions. If you are aware of any resources from non-governmental organizations or of humanitarian parole, resettlement, and other government programs currently available for women/human rights defenders, please inform us by emailing [advocacy@madre.org](mailto:advocacy@madre.org) so that we can include them in future versions of this guide. Thank you very much!**



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# PURPOSE

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Often, human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders (WHRDs), do not have time to plan or prepare before threats and risks mount to the point that they have little option but to cross a border to get to safety. This guide aims to enhance Afghan human rights defenders' understanding of the process of crossing borders in the current context. It also provides reliable resources for relevant information on crossing borders.

Section 1 addresses what documents may be relevant or useful when crossing a border and when staying in another country. Section 2 discusses how to avoid fraud and scams linked to crossing borders and immigration procedures. Section 3 provides information on how to protect electronic data when crossing borders. Last, Sections 4 outlines trusted possible resources for information and support for threatened Afghan human rights defenders.

The authors of this guide recognize that while some governments created programs to evacuate and relocate certain people fleeing Afghanistan starting in 2021, potential receiving countries are not opening their doors quickly enough for those at risk of violence or persecution. Transit countries' complex and changing visa and entry rules also create hardships. The situation is particularly challenging for WHRDs stuck in Afghanistan, since the Taliban's imposition of mahram (male guardian) rules add further barriers to leaving the country. Despite all these obstacles, human rights defenders will still need to flee. This guide is therefore meant to provide some basic information and resources for those who find themselves in that situation.

**This guide is not intended to provide legal advice. It is not a substitute for legal counsel. This guide is a compilation of publicly available information and is not intended to encourage or facilitate migration.**

# DOCUMENTS

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Human rights defenders in Afghanistan should consider what documents may be needed in the event they have to cross a border. If possible, it is important to carry all official documentation that will be requested by border authorities to help minimize problems with authorities at crossing points and afterwards. It is also key to store relevant documents in a safe place. As mentioned below, carrying documents can sometimes create a risk to individuals, so it is important to conduct a risk assessment in any determination regarding whether to carry these types of documents.

## WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE RELEVANT?

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### Identification and Place of Origin and Residence

For people who are planning to cross borders, bringing any sort of government-issued documentation that allows for their identification is very important. Most countries require people to show proof of their identity. Border officials ask for passports, but other documents such as national identity cards (known as Tazkeras in Afghanistan), or birth certificates can also be proof of identity for authorities.

Together with identity documents, documents showing place of birth and place of residence are very important.

Documents such as hospital cards, school cards, or membership cards for political, religious, or associations may also be helpful. They can corroborate someone's identity and place of origin or residence or even help to establish the identity and origin of a person when no other documentation is available. These documents are not considered official proof of identity when crossing an international border but may be relevant when applying for asylum or other types of legal residence in a foreign country.

It is important to note that paper documents are not the only way for countries to verify identity. Countries can also access biometric data or rely on people's life and context information. Sometimes, people will not be able to carry any documents with them and obtaining copies via governmental agencies may be impossible. Afghan women and girls in particular face heightened barriers to acquiring identity documents. People who are in transit may be able to approach the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for support regarding documentation and verification of identity (contacts below).

### Civil Status and Family Related Documentation

Documents regarding civil status and family relationships are also important. When family members are crossing a border together, national identity cards can be used as proof of relationship since people will have the father's name on the cards. Birth certificates and marriage certificates in Afghanistan can be produced upon request. These documents can also be proof of relationship. This helps authorities distinguish between legitimate families and possible smugglers or traffickers. Having this documentation is also very important for family reunification or other immigration related procedures. Family photographs may also be relevant to prove relationship. Again, a risk assessment is important in any determination regarding whether to carry these types of documents or photographs, with consideration to the safety of those named or pictured.

Death certificates may also be important to show family links or someone's date of death. This is mainly relevant when the person's death is linked to the decision to cross borders.

### **Proof of Prior Employment**

Other relevant documentation can be proof of prior employment. In the case of Afghanistan, there are abundant reports of human rights defenders, journalists, and others being persecuted because of their work. For those fleeing persecution, documentation of their prior employment may help corroborate their belonging to a group that is at risk.

### **Membership Documents**

For people who are members of a political party, a religious congregation, or any kind of organization, documentation showing membership in such groups may be relevant when that membership is linked with their decision to cross a border.

### **Reasons to Flee**

Threats, abuse, and other human rights violations are among the reasons why people decide to flee their country. Documents or other materials that show why a person fled their country can help that person apply, for example, for asylum. Documents showing the threats received in writing, via email, via text, via phone message, or other ways, are important. If someone has been threatened because they belong to a particular group, any documents showing either threats against the group or the fact of their belonging to that group are also relevant. For example, if someone has participated in a protest and protesters have been harassed or abused by the authorities, news clippings on the protests are relevant because they show that the protests took place or that the protests were met with violence from the authorities. If you have any such documents, always try to keep the pages or portions of the documents that show the date. For example, if you have a news clipping from a newspaper, try to keep the entire newspaper or ensure that the clipping captures the date of the newspaper.

## HOW AND WHERE TO STORE DOCUMENTS

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Often, carrying some of the documents mentioned above may pose risks for people who are moving across borders. Border authorities or other parties may search people's belongings and seize or steal items like laptops or smartphones. They may also ask for passwords, or may ask for people to unlock fingerprint protected devices. It is therefore important to assess how safe it is to carry the documents and to implement a strategy to access them after crossing borders.<sup>1</sup> Chapter 3 of this guide covers some general strategies for mitigating digital security risks.

**When carrying such documents is unsafe, you can take photographs of them and store them in a protected cloud or send them from an encrypted email address to another encrypted email address. This will not grant access to the original documents but still may provide access to copies. If proceeding this way, here are some tips:**

- **Take as high-quality photos as possible. Make sure that the content of the document can be clearly read in the photo.**
- **Take color photos.**
- **Take photos of the front and back of the documents. If the document has several pages, take photos of each page or all relevant pages. Having a document in its integrity may help with the determination of authenticity of the document.**
- **Store or email the photos on the best possible resolution. When sending the photos by email, this may make the process more difficult because heavy files are problematic when attaching them to emails. Therefore, it may be that longer documents need to be sent in several emails.**
- **Encrypt access to the documents by giving them a password. Do not share the password with third parties and do not write it in any of the emails containing the photos.**

After storing the photos or sending them and verifying reception, delete all photos from your device prior to crossing a border.

Most countries only allow people to enter with a visa. The first step when planning to cross a border is to check if a visa is needed. Some countries allow people to obtain visas on arrival, meaning once the person is physically at the border or point of entry, like an airport. Unfortunately, as of the writing of this guide, very few countries issue visas on arrival to most Afghans, therefore it is recommended that even when visa on arrival is an option, people apply for visas in advance as this may provide a better chance of success crossing the border.<sup>2</sup> Today, most countries allow people to apply for visas online. Also, people can request visas at Consulates or Embassies.

You may hear conflicting information about where or how to apply for a visa, what documentation is needed, or what fees might be required. The best sources to obtain reliable information regarding visa procedures are the official websites from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Interior of the destination country. Many countries have dedicated websites on visa procedures. These sites usually show the emblem of the country. Other reliable sources are the Consulates or Embassies of the destination country. When safe, people can call or schedule an appointment with the Consulate or Embassy to obtain information.

### Official sites to request visas for countries in the region

- Pakistan: <https://visa.nadra.gov.pk/>
- Iran: <https://evisa.mfa.ir/en/>
- Tajikistan: Online Visas - <https://www.evisa.tj/index.evisa.html#/> ; Regular Visas - <https://www.visa.gov.tj/index.html#/> ;
- Uzbekistan: Online Visas - <https://e-visa.gov.uz/main> ; Regular Visas - <https://visa.mfa.uz/site/index?language=en>
- India: Online Visas - <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

Attempting to enter a country where visas are required without a visa or the documentation required by the authorities may have consequences. People fleeing from persecution should not be arrested or detained when they are crossing a border to safety. Unfortunately, governments' practices in this regard are not always consistent or clear and border authorities may reject entrance or deport those attempting to cross, even when those trying to cross the border are fleeing persecution.<sup>3</sup> Authorities may also accuse the person of trying to enter the country illegally, which might result in arrest and incarceration.<sup>4</sup> Attempting to cross a border without the documentation required by the authorities at the border may be dangerous.

## EXIT AND ENTRY STAMPS ON PASSPORT

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When crossing a border, if possible and safe to do so, leave through an official immigration point of exit of the country you are leaving and enter through an official

immigration point of entry of the destination country. When people leave or enter a country immigration authorities will generally stamp their passport. The stamps are proof that a person crossed a specific border and crossed it legally.

It is important to always get both an exit and entry stamp when crossing a border. Some countries may require that a person's passport has exit and entry stamps for resettlement purposes. Stamps that prove legal crossing of a border can be required for people attempting to relocate to a third country from a neighboring country.

# AVOIDING FRAUD SCHEMES LINKED TO CROSSING BORDERS

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Some Afghans planning to move across borders have been victims of fraud schemes related to obtaining visas or other immigration or travel documents, or related to legal advice and representation.<sup>5</sup>

To avoid being victim of fraud it is important to obtain reliable information. When it comes to documentation to enter a foreign country, official government websites of the country of destination are often the best source of information. These sites offer information and usually provide a phone number and/ or email address so that users can contact them.

## VISA-RELATED FRAUD SCHEMES

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The following information may help you avoid scams regarding visa application processes:

- Issuing visas is an exclusive right of States. Brokers or travel agencies offering the service of arranging visas can never guarantee the issuing of visas.
- Before requesting support from brokers or agencies, obtain information on visa fees from official websites. Most countries provide information on visa fees on their official sites.
- Countries generally charge a one-time fee for visa processing. If asked to pay several times throughout the process of applying for a visa, check the application process on the official site to verify the requirements. Note that in some cases, depending on the time of visa, separate fees may be requested to undergo mandatory procedures in order to obtain a visa, such as fees for health-related, biometric, or other procedures.
- Fee payments are processed via official websites. Fee payments will never be processed by phone, text message, or email.
- When a visa request is denied, countries do not return the fees paid for the application. Do not trust anyone or any agency claiming that visa fees charged by the country are returned when applications are unsuccessful. This is different from fees charged by brokers or agents for fees charged for parallel mandatory procedures (such as medical exams) requested in order to obtain a visa. Always check with the brokers or agents as well as with the official representatives in charge of the parallel procedure.
- All communications regarding visas are via official channels. When receiving emails, always verify if the email you have received comes from an official government agency.

- When applying for a visa, individuals receive a visa application reference number. The same visa application reference number should appear on any official communication regarding the visa application process. If receiving any emails or messages regarding the visa application, always check if the reference number appears somewhere in the message.
- Never pay a bribe to anyone working for an official institution guaranteeing you will get a visa. Visa procedures are regulated and follow specific steps that require involvement of several departments. No one single individual can decide to issue a visa. Paying a bribe could also lead to any visa issued being cancelled at a later date.

Similar frauds regarding payment of fees or bribes may also happen with regard to passports,<sup>6</sup> other travel documentation, or family reunification procedures, for instance. The above information can be taken into account regarding other immigration-related procedures.

## **FRAUD SCHEMES RELATED TO LEGAL ADVISORS OR REPRESENTATIVES**

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Fraudulent actors may falsely claim to be able to provide legal advice or representation for people in transit. Lawyers and other legal representatives are normally on official lists that are publicly available. If someone claims to be a legal representative or immigration agent, check if they are in any official lists on available websites.

At official buildings such as consulates or embassies, provision of information should be free. Never pay any officials or others asking for money at consulates or embassies for providing information.<sup>7</sup>

# PROTECTING ELECTRONIC DATA WHEN CROSSING A BORDER

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In the process of moving across borders, authorities or others may take or confiscate electronic devices, such as phones, smartphones, laptops, or cameras. These devices can also get lost on the way, allowing others to potentially access any data stored on them. To prevent authorities or others from accessing this data, people can take steps to prevent access to the device's information; or they can delete any sensitive information stored in the devices.

To protect your information, ensure all your devices are password-protected, meaning that a password must be entered in order to access the device. Passwords containing a combination of lower-case and capitalized letters, numbers, and symbols are stronger. Avoid using predictable passwords such as 1234, 0000, or the date of your birth or that of a relative.

Avoid sharing the password via email, text message, or phone applications unless strictly necessary. If a password is shared via email, text messages, or other phone applications, it should only be done with a trusted person and any traces of the password should be deleted from the device.

To avoid having records accessed by others, minimize the information that you store in a device to that strictly necessary. Encryption of documents also prevents undesired access to data. Word and other documents can be protected with a password and access can be restricted to only certain individuals.

When it comes to data stored on smartphones or phones, you should consider deleting or renaming sensitive contacts which are saved on the phone or sim card. Also, consider deleting text messages or chat conversations that are sensitive. You may wish to send these conversations to a trusted email address or back them up to an encrypted cloud service before deleting. Deleting documents and photos is another recommended step when there is a risk that the device will be seized or lost.<sup>8</sup>

If your devices are taken or confiscated, authorities or others may ask you to give them access to the device or the content stored in the device by providing them with your password, requesting to unencrypt the data or so. Many jurisdictions do not allow such searches so if the situation and circumstances allow, searching for the applicable laws or getting legal advice is important. In cases where these options are not available, it is important to remain calm and, if possible, try to understand the reasons why access is being requested. In some jurisdictions, not cooperating with the authorities may lead to the confiscation of the devices, detention, or denying entry to the country, and the best alternative may be to cooperate. In this case, it is always best for the owner to be the one entering the password rather than giving it to the authorities. In cases where the password

has to be disclosed, it is important to change it immediately after the authorities give the device back.

# TRUSTWORTHY INFORMATION SOURCES FOR THREATENED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

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The lack of adequate legal pathways to leave Afghanistan has forced some to take drastic measures, including seeking help from smugglers who often ask for excessive payments<sup>9</sup> or put those fleeing in danger.<sup>10</sup> Others have tried to leave on their own and have been exposed to extortion and violence by different actors, including by border guards at crossing points<sup>11</sup> and by traffickers.<sup>12</sup> Conditions when crossing a border alone may be extremely harsh.<sup>13</sup> International and local organizations may provide support to people on the move. Mapping those resources before starting the journey is important.

This chapter offers trusted possible resources for information and support for threatened Afghan human rights defenders.

## RESOURCES FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Some official and non-governmental entities have created programs to support Afghans who are looking for resettlement in third countries. Some programs are exclusively designed for human rights defenders and others such as journalists who are at risk. Below is a list of resources.

### Afghan Pro Bono Initiative

As part of this initiative of NGOs Refugee Legal Support and Safe Passage in partnership with international law firms, volunteer lawyers offer legal representation for Afghans seeking to enter the UK, including through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme and family reunion. Afghans seeking such advice can contact: [cases@afghanprobono.org.uk](mailto:cases@afghanprobono.org.uk). For more information on this initiative, visit: <https://www.safepassage.org.uk/news/2022/3/8/launch-of-the-afghan-pro-bono-initiative>

### Alliance Française Pro Bono pour les Afghans

This collaboration between NGO Safe Passage and international law firms offers volunteer lawyers to work on humanitarian visa and family reunification applications for Afghan individuals and families seeking a legal pathway to France. Afghans seeking such advice can contact: [m.albert@safepassage.fr](mailto:m.albert@safepassage.fr)

## Deutsches Bündnis für Afghanische Flüchtlinge

This collaborative project offers pro bono legal support to Afghan refugees seeking resettlement in Europe following the Taliban insurgency in August 2021. As part of this project, volunteer lawyers from international law firms work on family reunification applications and other legal pathways to Germany for Afghan individuals and families. Afghans seeking such advice can contact: [Melina.Garcin@rescue.org](mailto:Melina.Garcin@rescue.org)

## European Legal Network of Asylum Index

The European Legal Network of Asylum Index lists organizations and individuals providing legal services and other forms of support to refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. To access the Index, visit: <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ELENA-Index-Update-February-2022.pdf>

## Exile Helpline

This is a helpline funded by the European Union and other INGOs in cooperation with the Pakistani firm Law and Policy Chambers. It offers legal assistance for Afghan human rights defenders or journalists in Islamabad, Pakistan, in need of legal assistance. To access the helpline, call +92 308 0037755.

**Exile Helpline!**

If you are an Afghan Human Rights Defender or a Journalist, currently residing in Islamabad, Pakistan and need any legal assistance

**Call +92 308 0037755**

The Law and Policy Chambers, a legal firm based in Islamabad will provide you all possible legal assistance.

Logos: European Union, Sida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, and another organization.

## International Refugee Assistance Project

The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) provides free legal help to some refugees and displaced people. IRAP has a dedicated site for Afghans that can be

accessed in the following link: <https://support.iraplegalinfo.org/hc/en-us/sections/4405949372948-Resources-for-Afghans>

IRAP has a special webform to support Afghans who have applied for Special Immigration Visas (SIV). They accept a maximum number of requests every month. The webform opens on the first day of every month at 6:30pm Kabul time. You can access the webform in the following link: <https://internationalrefugeeassistanceproject.org/web.html>

### **Italian Pro Bono Collaboration for Afghan Refugees (CIPBRA)**

Collaborative project between the NGO Coalizione Italiana per le Libertà e i diritti civili (CILD) and international law firms engaging volunteer lawyers to support with family reunification applications and other legal pathways to Italy for Afghan individuals and families. Afghans seeking such advice can contact: [fabi@cild.eu](mailto:fabi@cild.eu)

### **Protect Defenders and Front Line Defenders**

Protect Defenders offers a 24/7 helpline run by Front Line Defenders and has a secure contact form for human rights defenders. They can be contacted via phone at +353 (0) 1 21 00 489, via email at [contact@protectdefenders.eu](mailto:contact@protectdefenders.eu), or using the following contact forms: <https://protectdefenders.eu/emergency-contact/> ; <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/secure/comment.php?l=en>

### **Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO)**

Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization offers psychosocial support services for women and human rights defenders across Afghanistan. To seek support, email: [info@srmo.org](mailto:info@srmo.org) and [srmon.afg@gmail.com](mailto:srmon.afg@gmail.com)

### **The Canadian Bar Association**

Individuals who have an application in process with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or who have received an invitation from the Government of Canada, may seek free assistance from the Canadian Bar Association. For more information, visit: <https://www.cba.org/For-The-Public/Pro-Bono-Initiatives/Pro-Bono-Initiative-Crisis-In-Afghanistan/Pro-bono-Afghanistan-Form>

### **U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants**

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants helps Afghans with SIV applications. For contact details, visit: <https://refugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/PALS-OnePagerDraft-ForRefugeesV1.pdf>

## INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES INVOLVED IN REGISTRATION OF AND SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

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### United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) offers support to Afghan individuals and human rights defenders. This support differs depending on the individuals' location. These are some links to the UNHCR websites for Afghanistan and neighboring countries:

- Afghanistan: UNHCR Help Desk for Afghanistan can be accessed here: <https://help.unhcr.org/afghanistan/support/>
- Iran: UNHCR Help Desk for Afghans in Iran: <https://help.unhcr.org/iran/en/arrival/>  
For information on restrictions for Afghans to access certain areas in Iran, visit: <https://help.unhcr.org/iran/en/what-are-the-movement-restrictions-for-afghan-and-iraqi-nationals-in-iran/>
- Pakistan: UNHCR Help Desk for Afghans in Pakistan: <https://help.unhcr.org/pakistan/>
- Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: UNHCR does not have dedicated Help Desks for Afghans in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. To access the generic UNHCR sites for these countries, visit: <https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia/>

For more information on how to seek asylum in Tajikistan, access UNHCR's brochure here: <https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia/wp-content/uploads/sites/81/2021/08/Brochure-for-Asylum-Seekers-English.pdf>

UNHCR in Tajikistan works with several NGOs offering legal and social assistance. The contact for UNHCR and partner NGOs can be found here: <https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia/tajikistan/>

UNHCR in Turkmenistan works with several NGOs offering legal counselling on asylum matters. The contact for UNHCR and partner NGOs can be found here: <https://help.unhcr.org/centralasia/turkmenistan/>

UNHCR does not have an office in Uzbekistan. The regional office in Almaty Kazakhstan is the UNHCR office responsible for supporting people in Uzbekistan. To contact UNHCR for Uzbekistan call the Hotline +77019512343 or email at: [KAZAL@unhcr.org](mailto:KAZAL@unhcr.org)

- Turkey: UNHCR Turkey does not have a dedicated Help Desk for Afghans. To access the generic UNHCR Turkey site, visit: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/>

UNHCR Turkey has a counselling line for refugees and asylum-seekers. Asylum seekers can receive counselling in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and English. Counsellors speaking French, Urdu, Kurdish, and Somali are available upon request. The counselling line can be reached by phone at 444 48 68. The line operates from 9.00 to 17.00 on Mondays to Thursdays, and from 9.00 to 16.00 on Fridays. Alternatively, the counselling line can be reached by email at [turan@unhcr.org](mailto:turan@unhcr.org).

UNHCR in Turkey works with many NGOs offering assistance to asylum seekers. The contact information for partner NGOs can be found here: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/how-to-seek-help/> For information on legal aid for asylum seekers in Turkey, visit: <https://help.unhcr.org/turkey/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2021/10/Legal-Aid-Leaflet-English.pdf>

## International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supports Afghans outside Afghanistan and provides a variety of services. Here are the links to the IOM sites in countries neighboring Afghanistan:

- Iran: <https://www.iom.int/countries/iran-islamic-republic>
- Pakistan: <https://pakistan.iom.int/iom-pakistan>
- Tajikistan: <https://www.iom.int/country-office/tajikistan>
- Turkey: <https://turkiye.iom.int/iom-turkiye>
- Turkmenistan: <https://turkmenistan.iom.int/>
- Uzbekistan: IOM Uzbekistan leads on coordination of IOM Central Asia sub-regional support to Afghanistan, which will support capacity strengthening of government and civil society in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan where Afghan migrants are present and in need of timely assistance. To access their site, visit: <https://www.iom.int/countries/uzbekistan#>

## Registration of Asylum Seekers in Iran: Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) - Iran

According to the UNHCR website, Iran's Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) is responsible for registering asylum-seekers and determining refugee status. Procedures for new arrivals are still being determined by the Government of Iran. For more information on the BAFIA and how to register as an asylum seeker in Iran, visit: <https://bafia.ir/استانداری-ها>

## Registration of Asylum Seekers in Pakistan: SHARP and SEHER

SHARP and SEHER are Pakistan's UNHCR partners. SHARP is a non-profit, non-political NGO promoting human rights in Pakistan. SEHER is a national NGO committed to addressing human misery with a special focus on vulnerable segments of society. These organizations support UNHCR with registration of Afghans who want to apply for asylum at their offices. Note that Pakistan may not permit registration of refugees, in which case these organizations supply other forms of documentation.

- SHARP office for Islamabad, Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir:
  - See website for more details: <https://sharp-pakistan.org>
  - For registration make an appointment calling at: +92 0512300811 or +92 0512300812
  - Phone number: +92 3341112004; +92 0512300809-10
  - Address: 26B, Street 687, G 13/3, Islamabad
  
- SHARP office in Sindh:
  - See website for more details: <https://sharp-pakistan.org/>
  - Phone number: +92 3341112008; +92 02134811571
  - Address: B-204/A, Block 10 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Karachi City, Sindh
  
- SEHER office for Baluchistan:
  - See website for more details: <https://seher.org.pk/>
  - For registration make an appointment calling at: +92 080099880
  - Phone number: +92 3337819143
  - Hotline: +92 03333512699; +92 3168606243
  - Address: [B#4, Bukhari Street near Arbab CNG](#), [Spini Road Quetta](#)
  - Email: [seher@seher.org.pk](mailto:seher@seher.org.pk)

## Registration of Asylum Seekers in Tajikistan: Department on Citizenship and Work with Refugees at the Passport Registration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

To apply for asylum in Tajikistan, contact the Department on Citizenship and Work with Refugees under the Passport Registration Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The address of the Department is 2 Abai Street, Dushanbe. To contact by phone call: 233 31 19, 233 31 12.

## Registration of Asylum Seekers in Turkmenistan: State Migration Service

To apply for asylum in Turkmenistan, contact the State Migration Service agency. This agency is located in the following provinces:

- Ashgabat: Ashgabat, 18 Bitarap Turkmenistan Ave; +993 12380011
- Mary Province: Mary city, 9 Mollanepes St; +993 52260291
- Lebap province: Chardzhev District, Gengeshlik Boyrabap, Hodzhamirsan village, 2 Ceyhun St; +993 42220810
- Akhal province: there are two offices in this province: 1) Ak Bugday District, Annau city, 16 Vellekov St.; +993 13733184; 2) Balkanabat city, Apt. 146, 42, Annaev St. +993 22260527
- Dashoguz province: Dashoguz city, 20 Al-Khwarizmi St.; +993 32255829

## HUMANITARIAN PAROLE, RESETTLEMENT AND OTHER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS - INFORMATION ON SOME PATHWAYS POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

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### Canada

Canada approved a special program for Afghan human rights defenders who assisted the Government of Canada. For information, visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/special-measures/immigration-program.html>

Canada also approved a special program for Afghan nationals in need of resettlement. This program supports government-assisted refugees and privately sponsored refugees. For information on government-assisted refugees, visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/government-assisted-refugee-program.html> For private sponsorship of refugees program, visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/refugees-information.html>

The Canadian Immigration can be contacted via [web form](#) or by phone at +1-613-321-4243.<sup>14</sup>

### Germany

The German government offers programs for local employees who worked for the German government from 2013 onwards and for Afghans who are at particular risk. For information on such programs, visit: <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/visa-service/konsularisches/afg?openAccordionId=item-2479618-2-panel>

### The United Kingdom

In April 2021, the Defense Secretary and Home Secretary launched the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This program offers relocation or other assistance to former Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan to reflect the changing situation in Afghanistan. This program remains open and people can apply by using the [online application form](#). People may apply from any country, including Afghanistan, and regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. For further information on ARAP, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

The United Kingdom also opened the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This program is opened for those who assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and for vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+).

This program has three pathways out of which pathway 2 is available as of September 2022. Pathway 2 is opened for referrals made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of vulnerable refugees who have fled Afghanistan for resettlement to the UK.

Pathway 3 is closed at the moment. This Pathway offers a route to resettlement for those at risk who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, as well as those who are particularly vulnerable, such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups. Pathway 3 was opened in June 2022 only for at risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni. This Pathway closed on 16 August 2022 and will be opened again in the upcoming year for other specific groups of Afghans at risk. For information on this pathway, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme-pathway-3-eligibility-for-british-council-and-gardaworld-contractors-and-chevening-alumni>

## The United States

For Afghan human rights defenders who were employed by/on behalf of the U.S. Government, the U.S. approved the Special Immigrant Visas program. For information on the program, visit: [Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans - Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the US Government](#)

For someone who has an approved petition for a Special Immigrant Visa, email [NVCSIV@state.gov](mailto:NVCSIV@state.gov) or call 1-603-334-0828.

Afghan human rights defenders may also be eligible to apply for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). There are three categories of individuals who may access the USRAP, known as “priorities”:

- Priority 1: Individual cases referred by designated entities (an Embassy, designated NGO or the UNHCR) to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.
- Priority 2: Groups of special concern designated by the Department of State as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement. For information specific to P-2 program for Afghan nationals, please visit the [Refugee Processing Center's SIV/Afghan P-2 webpage](#).
- Priority 3: Individual cases granted access for purposes of reunification with family members already in the United States.

Once applicants receive access to the USRAP, they undergo the same processing steps, including extensive security vetting. For information on USRAP for Afghans visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/information-for-afghan-nationals>

For those who are in the program and have questions, email [refugeeaffairsinquiries@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:refugeeaffairsinquiries@uscis.dhs.gov).

The U.S. program for Humanitarian Parole for Afghan nationals is also an option for human rights defenders. Humanitarian Parole is authorized on a case-by-case basis and specifies the duration of the parole. Information on Humanitarian Parole for Afghans is available here: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-parole/information-for-afghan-nationals-on-requests-to-uscis-for-humanitarian-parole><sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This guide is not aimed to advise on digital safety and security. The tips included in this section are limited to strategies to access data after crossing a border.

<sup>2</sup> People carrying visas may also be denied access to a country as the authorities at the border have the final say on who can cross a border. See: Omar, *Afghans in limbo as Iran bans them from entering even with legal documents*, AL-MASQUAREQ (Jan. 11, 2022), [https://almashareq.com/en\\_GB/articles/cnmi\\_am/features/2022/01/11/feature-03](https://almashareq.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_am/features/2022/01/11/feature-03).

<sup>3</sup> RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, *Escaping Afghanistan: People – Smuggling Thrives On Bribes To Taliban*, GANDHARA (May 27, 2022), <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-people-smuggling-taliban-bribes/31872064.html>; Saqalain Eqbal, *Turkey Deports 136 Undocumented Afghan Migrants to the Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan*, THE KHAAMA PRESS (Jun. 25, 2022), <https://www.khaama.com/turkey-deports-136-undocumented-afghan-migrants-to-the-taliban-controlled-afghanistan-36723/>

<sup>4</sup> Correspondent, *Afghan nationals travelling on forged documents arrested at Islamabad airport*, THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE (Nov. 21, 2021), <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330440/afghan-nationals-travelling-on-forged-documents-arrested-at-islamabad-airport>; Editor, *Authorities ban without visa arrivals from Afghanistan at Torkham*, TRIBAL NEWS NETWORK (Apr. 6, 2022), [https://tnnenglish.com/authorities-ban-without-visa-arrivals-from-afghanistan-at-torkham/#:~:text=Pakistani%20authorities%20have%20banned%20the,been%20shuttered%20some%20days%20back;Chaheti Singh Sisodia, Illegal Afghan migrants deported to Afghanistan by Turkey, WION \(Jun. 26, 2022\), https://www.wionews.com/world/illegal-afghan-migrants-deported-to-afghanistan-by-turkey-491967](https://tnnenglish.com/authorities-ban-without-visa-arrivals-from-afghanistan-at-torkham/#:~:text=Pakistani%20authorities%20have%20banned%20the,been%20shuttered%20some%20days%20back;Chaheti Singh Sisodia, Illegal Afghan migrants deported to Afghanistan by Turkey, WION (Jun. 26, 2022), https://www.wionews.com/world/illegal-afghan-migrants-deported-to-afghanistan-by-turkey-491967)

<sup>5</sup> Kanika Gupta, *Afghan black market for visas thrives as embassies stay shut*, FINANTIAL TIMES (Nov. 17, 2021), <https://www.ft.com/content/72ab8c3d-fa23-47bd-a564-a9dfae30135c>

<sup>6</sup> Admin, *Taliban Passport Authority: Profiteers distribute fake passport booklets to people in exchange for money*, TOLQUN NEWS (May 23, 2022), <https://tolqunnews.com/2022/05/23/taliban-passport-authority-profiteers-distribute-fake-passport-booklets-to-people-in-exchange-for-money/>

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<sup>7</sup> For dedicated sites and resources on how to avoid fraud schemes and scams, visit: *Supporting Afghan Nationals: Avoid becoming a victim of immigration fraud*, GOVERNMENT OF CANADA (Jun. 3, 2022), <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/fraud.html>; *Fight Notario Fraud. Public Service Announcement: Tips to Avoid Immigration Scams*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, see video available in Pashto at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7hF0VpHL78&t=15s> and video available in Dari at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCIAWiseH8M>; *Internet Scams Warning*, US EMBASSY IN AFGHANISTAN: <https://af.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/scams/>

<sup>8</sup> For more information on safety and security of devices, visit: *How to delete your digital history*, HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST, <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/How%20to%20Delete%20Your%20Digital%20History%20-%20Updated%208.20.21.pdf>; *Steps to improve your online safety in Afghanistan*, ACCESS NOW (Aug. 17, 2021), (available in Dari and Pashto) <https://www.accessnow.org/online-safety-resources-afghanistan/> For help on digital security, visit: *Digital Security Helpline*, ACCESS NOW, <https://www.accessnow.org/help/>

<sup>9</sup> Esther Gómez, *Human trafficking gangs double their prices in Afghanistan*, ATALAYAR (Feb. 17, 2022), <https://atalayar.com/en/content/human-trafficking-gangs-double-their-prices-afghanistan>; *Human smuggling networks in Afghanistan: exploitation of citizens' search for peace*, AL-ESTIKLAL NEWSPAPER (Jan. 14, 2022), <https://www.alestiklal.net/en/print/11884/C7>; *Afghanistan Facing Famine. UN, World Bank, US Should Adjust Sanctions, Economic Policies*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (Nov. 11, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/11/afghanistan-facing-famine>

<sup>10</sup> *European police arrest 'high-value' smugglers accused of trafficking Afghans, Pakistanis, Syrians*, ARAB NEWS (Feb. 1, 2022), <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/2096021/pakistan>; RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, *Escaping Afghanistan: People – Smuggling Thrives On Bribes To Taliban*, GANDHARA (May 27, 2022), <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-people-smuggling-taliban-bribes/31872064.html>; Emma Batha and Bahaar Joya, *Afghan smugglers hike process, expand networks after Taliban takeover*, THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION NEWS (Feb. 14, 2022), <https://news.trust.org/item/20220211104838-5k7u4/>; Christina Goldbaum, *The Smugglers' Paradise of Afghanistan*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Mar. 10, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/08/world/asia/smugglers-afghanistan.html>; Sinan Tavsan, *Afghan refugees get cold welcome in Turkey after perilous journey*, NIKKEI ASIA (Oct. 1, 2021), <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Afghanistan-turmoil/Afghan-refugees-get-cold-welcome-in-Turkey-after-perilous-journey>; Alba Cambeiro, *Despite Turkey's Tough Stance, Afghans Refugees Flood In*, NEW LINES (Oct. 21, 2021), <https://newlinesmag.com/photo-essays/despite-turkeys-tough-stance-afghan-refugees-flood-in/>

<sup>11</sup> RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, *Escaping Afghanistan: People – Smuggling Thrives On Bribes To Taliban*, GANDHARA (May 27, 2022), <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-people-smuggling-taliban-bribes/31872064.html>; Maziar Motamedi, *What does the future hold for Afghan refugees in Iran?*, ALJAZEERA (Jun. 12, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/12/what-does-the-future-hold-for-afghan-refugees-in-iran>; Indrika Ratwatte, *UNHCR: Afghans struggle to seek safety as borders remain shut to most*, UNHCR (Dec. 1, 2021), <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/12/61a72ed34/news-comment-unhcr-afghans-struggle-seek-safety-borders-remain-shut.html>; *Afghanistan Facing Famine. UN, World Bank, US Should Adjust Sanctions, Economic Policies*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (Nov. 11, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/11/afghanistan-facing-famine>

<sup>12</sup> Rusen Takva, *Traffickers use refugees to smuggle drugs from Iran to Turkey*, AL-MONITOR (Jun. 1, 2022), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/05/traffickers-use-refugees-smuggle-drugs-iran-turkey>

<sup>13</sup> Abubakar Siddique, *'No Reason To Stay': Taliban Repression, Economic Collapse Accelerate Exodus From Afghanistan*, GANDHARA (Dec. 2, 2021), <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-exodus-taliban-repression-economy/31590988.html>; Deepa Parent, *'I had no hole left': Ex-NATO contractor forced to walk across Afghan border*, OPEN DEMOCRACY (Jan. 24, 2022), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/i-had-no-hope-left-ex-nato-contractor-forced-to-walk-across-afghan-border/>

<sup>14</sup> For more information on Canadian pathways and resources for Afghans in Canada, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/help/legal-services/afghanistan-resources.page>

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the US pathways and resources for Afghans in the US, visit: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/help/legal-services/afghanistan-resources.page>