

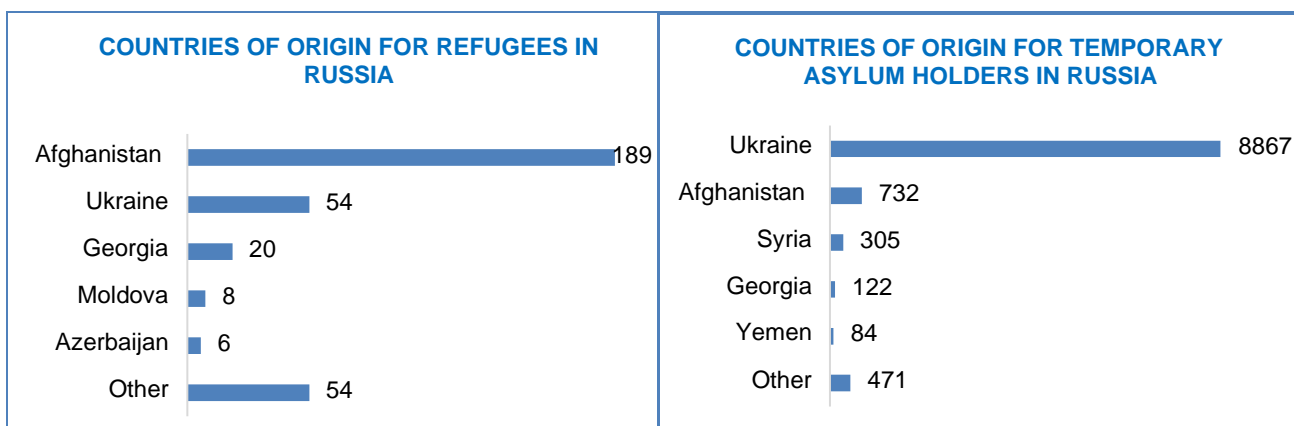
Russia

December 2021 – January 2022

Presence: The UN Refugee Agency works in the Russian Federation (RF) since 1992. It currently operates through a Country Office located in Moscow.

Legal Framework: The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol were acceded to in 1992. The national refugee law was adopted in 1993.

As of 31 December 2021, **331 refugees, 10581 temporary asylum (TA) status holders** and **540 asylum-seekers** from 70 countries were registered by the Russian Ministry of the Interior (MOI).



KEY INDICATORS

(as of 31 December 2021)

- **735,385** people were naturalized, including 375,989 from Ukraine, 1411 from Afghanistan, 602 from Syria and 111 from Yemen
- **3,521** stateless persons with residence permit were registered
- **1,135** stateless persons with temporary residence permit were registered
- **6,118** stateless persons received Russian citizenship

TOP FIVE REGIONS IN RUSSIA HOSTING THE BIGGEST NUMBERS OF REFUGEE AND TA STATUS HOLDERS

- Saint Petersburg and Leningrad region – 1689
- Kaluga region – 1340
- Voronezh – 700
- Moscow – 1222
- Sakha (Yakutia) – 540

Source: Ministry of the Interior, Russia



On 3 December 2021, UNHCR Russia organized an event for refugee women as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence global campaign. The event focused on support to refugee women in Russia, raising awareness on the planned projects of the Women's Committee of the Afghan Diaspora Center of Moscow and UNHCR, as well as the global campaign against gender-based violence. Presentation of the new SilSila foundation for women suffering from domestic violence was also a part of the event.

Photo credit: UNHCR / Maria VEDIKOVA

COVID-19 in Russia

- Persons of concern (PoC) to UNHCR, irrespective of their status, can avail themselves of basic medical assistance if they have symptoms or were diagnosed with COVID-19. State-run vaccination program for foreigners, including PoC, is available to persons with legal status and identity documents. UNHCR and partners disseminate information for PoC who wish to get vaccinated. Additional opportunities for vaccination are also offered by the Russian Red Cross.
- UNHCR Moscow has created a dedicated section of the [HELP web page](#) to ensure that refugees have access to up-to-date information on COVID-19 prevention measures. Partner NGOs conduct counselling by phone, hotlines, and ad-hoc WhatsApp chats. Due to the high level of cases reported in the country, during the last week of January, UNHCR made a series of posts on Facebook and Instagram to remind the community of basic instructions on how to respond to the current COVID situation, including awareness that respiratory symptoms need to be monitored closely and reminder of access to health services.
- On 17 December 2021, as part of the COVID-19 related response, UNHCR organized a training with partners that focused on mental health care while dealing with asylum-seekers and refugee cases, since the pandemic has caused increased stress within the PoC. UNHCR Representative ad interim to the RF Karim Atassi and the head of Civic Assistance NGO Svetlana Gannushkina made the opening remarks highlighting the importance of such trainings for the well-being of UNHCR staff, partners and persons of concern. The training was facilitated by an expert who provided useful information about personality disorders as well as how to achieve effective communication.



UNHCR Rep a.i. to the RF Karim Atassi and UNHCR Protection Associate Tatiana Bershachevskaya with the head of Civic Assistance NGO Svetlana Gannushkina
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UNHCR and Partners

- UNHCR continues to support its persons of concern through local NGOs. In 2022, UNHCR will continue its partnership engagement with organizations that provide legal, psycho-social and medical assistance to asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. Our partner NGOs are Health and Life Foundation; Centre for International Cooperation of the St. Petersburg Red Cross; Institute for Human Rights; Faith, Hope and Love; Civic Assistance Committee. Through its partners UNHCR can count on a network of approximately 50 lawyers to advocate for the rights of PoC in Russia.



PROTECTION

- **Expert knowledge sharing with partners. Interviewing techniques:** One of the main tasks of UNHCR in the Russian Federation is to conduct training and share knowledge to assist more effectively persons of concern in the country. As part of these activities, during the month of December, UNHCR together with Civic Assistance NGO, facilitated an interview learning seminar in Moscow for organizations working with refugees and asylum-seekers. During the training an overview of the PEACE model of interviewing and updated UNHCR policy documents focusing on Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen were presented and discussed.
- **Access to legal remedies and representation:** Refugees and asylum-seekers have access to legal remedies and representation through lawyers from partner organizations. Until the third quarter of 2021, 2753 refugees and asylum-seekers received legal assistance, 9355 have received legal

counselling. Stateless persons also receive access to legal consultations, for the same period, 769 stateless persons were legally assisted, 5840 counselling sessions were provided.

- **Training and workshops:** A hackathon for students and young lawyers on "Statelessness, refuge, asylum: how to help" was held in Nizhny Novgorod. The event was organized jointly by UNHCR, the Center for the Development of Legal Clinics and the Higher School of Economics and brought together 57 participants from 15 regions of Russia and 20 universities. During the event, the participants got acquainted with challenges in the cases of stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers.
- **Winter allowance for vulnerable categories of refugees and asylum-seekers:** At the end of December 2021 UNHCR jointly with partners initiated the allocation of winter allowance for vulnerable categories of PoC in Moscow. The allowance prioritized children (aged 0 to 6 years, children of school age, unaccompanied minors, children from single parent households), PoC aged 60+, victims/survivors of sexual-gender-based violence, as well as applicants with serious health problems (including COVID 19). The assistance continued in January and 401 persons have received the winter allowance.
- **New draft law on asylum posted for public discussion:** On 25 January 2022 a draft law on asylum was published on the official governmental portal for draft legislation and was open for comments until 8 February 2022. The draft law lists four forms of asylum: refugee status, temporary asylum, political asylum, and temporary protection (new form in response to masse movements). The draft also includes a unified one-step procedure for consideration of asylum application. The publication of the draft asylum law came one month after the publication of the draft law on nationality on 29 December that contains provisions on acquisition of nationality by stateless persons and other persons based on residency in Russia.



EDUCATION

- **Tertiary education:** UNHCR supports access for refugees to tertiary education. In the academic year 2021/2022, 14 students received scholarships through UNHCR from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to continue their university studies.
- **Vocational training for refugees:** UNHCR and "Health and Life" foundation conducted a special commission to select refugees to receive short-term vocational courses. This activity aims to engage refugees in training opportunities that regularly last between three to four months, so they can obtain formation in employable skills, which facilitate their integration in Russia. In December, three applicants started their studies: an Afghan refugee from Moscow and a Congolese from the Tambov region entered driver courses, another Afghan refugee living in Moscow is participating in an informational security course online on the platform "Geekbrains". Thanks to the grant from the Swiss Embassy in Moscow, which sponsored vocational courses for refugees, 10 of 15 grantees found an official job after completing their studies in 2021.
- **Support for children to stay in school:** During the academic year 2020-2021, 189 children received a "school allowance" to facilitate the start of the school year and assist with continuing their education. More than 60 students were assisted with school enrollment.
- **Russian language classes:** An important component to integration in Russia is learning the language, UNHCR partners with Russian Red Cross in St. Petersburg, Health and Life/Etnosphera and Pereletniye Deti/Kovcheg offer online and offline classes.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- Integration:** In the Russian Federation, UNHCR focuses on developing the conditions to achieve local integration for refugees and naturalization as per the legislation. Very few cases are considered for resettlement, however, UNHCR maintains a permanent dialogue with the refugee community to disseminate key messages and to correct misinformation regarding resettlement activities.
- Voluntary Repatriation:** Most of the refugees present in the Russian Federation have limited prospects for voluntary repatriation (Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria), however 7 persons were assisted in 2021. The country office also provides counselling to PoC who express their interest in returning to their home countries.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- Community outreach activities:** UNHCR maintains an active outreach program for the two-way Communication with Communities (CwC). The team provides refugees and asylum-seekers with information about services provided by UNHCR and partners and encourages feedback.
- Group discussions with Afghan Women:** UNHCR and the Women's Committee of the Afghan Community Center of Moscow maintain a dynamic and fruitful relationship. In December, a discussion with members of the Afghan community was hosted to inform of projects planned by the Women's Committee and UNHCR. Women present expressed their concerns and were able to ask questions on matters of high importance to them and their families. Health and Life Foundation, a partner of UNHCR, presented their programs for women and children hosted at the refugee reception center. The head of the Women's Committee of the Afghan Diaspora Center organized psychological training for participants. The event was broadcast online.
- Social media management training for young refugees:** Refugees who were selected to undergo a short-term course on managing and developing social media accounts (SMM) received certificates on the course completion. The certificates indicate their name and a unique certificate number, which might be added to professional qualifications of participants. 11 refugees took part in the course and successfully completed all tasks put forward by the trainer, some of the participants are former DAFI students.
- Manizha, UNHCR GWA in Russia, travels to Central Asia to familiarize with refugee situation:** In December, Manizha visited two Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – to familiarize with the situation of refugees, supported by UNHCR Central Asia. She also met with UN Women, social media influencers and other key actors, to gain knowledge on the situation of women and girls in refugee like situations and how to support them.

Highlights

- Internship for PoC at IKEA:** UNHCR, in partnership with IKEA, provides refugees with internships to create skills and transferrable abilities. This programme impacts the lives of interns and supports refugees. Refugees and TA status holders can be legally employed in the Russian Federation and this sign of trust invites other companies to support refugees to achieve local integration. Yasin, a refugee from Afghanistan, has recently completed a 6-month internship at IKEA. Like Yasin, hundreds of refugees



Yasin at an IKEA store in Moscow © UNHCR / Ruslan Altimirov

need support to become familiarized and capable of working in the context of the Russian Federation. Access to gainful job and training opportunities are crucial for refugees to exercise their rights and obligations. Read the full story [here](#).

- **Stalker Human Rights Film Festival and UNHCR photo exhibition:** The XXVII Stalker International Human Rights Festival was held in Moscow in December 2021. The UNHCR Representative ad interim to the RF addressed the event with a pre-recorded video message. Traditionally, CO Moscow grants an award to a movie on topics related to refugee issues, fight against xenophobia, or tolerance-building actions. In 2021, UNHCR Russia's award was given to Ekaterina Velikhova's film "Are we alike?" about a woman of African descent who is living in Russia for most of her life but is still perceived as a person from an exotic country, a "foreigner". On the sidelines of the film festival, UNHCR Moscow office organized an exhibition outlining the scope of the UN Refugee Agency's work in Russia and abroad, projects implemented in the RF as well as the role of GWAs and Special Envoys in promoting UNHCR topics and advocating for the rights of PoC.
- **Meeting between UNHCR Representative and the Russian Red Cross:** UNHCR Representative ad interim in Russia, Mr. Karim Atassi, met with Mr. Pavel Savchuk, Chairman of the Russian Red Cross, the meeting explored areas of cooperation and potential joint activities such as counselling, learning initiatives, projects on assistance to persons of concern to UNHCR and facilitation of their integration.



UNHCR Rep a.i. to the RF Karim Atassi and UNHCR Russia Programme Officer Tatiana Anisimova meeting with the Russian Red Cross Team: Chairman Pavel Savchuk and Head of International Department Anastasia Teneta
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