



## **International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR)**

Organisation No. 802400-9261

---

Open letter from the International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR) to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Geneva:

# **The situation of Iranian refugees in Turkey requires your immediate attention**

7 September 2021

This is to bring to your attention that:

1- The catastrophic situation for refugees in Turkey has put the lives of thousands of Iranian refugees on the brink of a social disaster. Neither the UNHCR nor the Turkish Government has responded to this grave social problem. It is not clear when the slave-like conditions to which the Iranian refugees and asylum seekers have been subjected is supposed to end. The UNHCR in Turkey behaves as if they have played no part in the creation of these appalling conditions for Iranian refugees and asylum seekers. Indeed, they must have been very well aware of the tragedy awaiting the refugees by handing over the responsibility for their affairs to the Turkish Government.

2- The UNHCR in Turkey knows well that Turkey has never been a safe country for Iranian refugees. They cannot be unaware that every day and every week Iranian asylum seekers are detained by the Turkish police and then deported to Iran. They know that the Turkish Government has repeatedly breached, and keeps breaching, international laws and conventions on the protection of refugees; nevertheless, the UNHCR shows no reaction to this blatant violation of the rights of Iranian refugees.

3- Unemployment and lack of work permit and health insurance are two major issues facing Iranian refugees. The high cost of health care and medicines has meant that the refugees are rarely able to access health care centres for medical care and treatment. Various illnesses have now become commonplace among refugees. The same applies to childcare, education, housing, utilities and other everyday costs. Neither the UN nor the Turkish authorities provide any financial support to the Iranian refugees, with many finding it increasingly difficult to afford a regular meal a day. Lack of any prospect to escape from this situation is creating serious mental health issues for these refugees.

4- Covid restrictions, police brutality, verbal abuse and sexual harassment by employers have led to depression and serious psychological issues for many women refugees.

5- Despite numerous complaints by the refugees to the UNHCR and other international bodies, no authority appears to be paying attention to their plight.

6- In 2018 the handling of refugee affairs in Turkey was transferred to the Turkish authorities, with the UNHCR retaining the responsibility to oversee the process of selection of a third country for the asylum applicants. However, the processing of the cases has become so lengthy, arduous and complicated that even the slightest hope for the refugees to escape from their current predicament has vanished.

7- Many asylum applicants whom the UNHCR had previously recognised as refugees according to international standards, are now having their refugee status withdrawn by the Turkish immigration authorities. The criteria employed by the Turkish authorities in the processing of the cases do not comply by recognised international standards and protections, with the interviewers often including their personal views and prejudices in the decisions on the cases. Thus, LGBTI+, Christians, Bahá'ís, atheists and many others seeking asylum and protection on grounds of belief and sexual orientation face ill-treatment and abuse during their interviews with the Turkish immigration authorities.

8- Iranian refugees are rarely recognised as refugees by the Turkish authorities. The waiting times for interviews can be from 4 to 5 years and the number of refusals is very high. Those who have their cases rejected are often unable to afford a lawyer to challenge the decisions, so their cases are closed permanently putting them at risk of detention and deportation to Iran.

9- Refugees in Turkey are deprived of the right to organise and protest about their conditions, and refugee organisations are not permitted to intervene in the affairs of the refugees. The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR), working with refugee activists on the ground, has endeavoured to raise awareness about the current plight of Iranian refugees in Turkey to bring about concrete changes in their situation. However, the IFIR itself does not have the financial means or the powers to move Iranian refugees to a safe third country.

The International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR), on behalf of thousands of Iranian refugees in Turkey, submits this formal complaint with the UNHCR in Geneva, urging that organisation, in compliance with its duty of care and in accordance with international laws and conventions on the rights of refugees, to take immediate steps to put an end to the irresponsible behaviour of the UNHCR in Turkey towards Iranian refugees and asylum applicants.

### **International Federation of Iranian Refugees (IFIR)**

<b>IFRS</b> Box 11103 404 23Gothenburg	<a href="http://www.hambastegi.rorg">www.hambastegi.rorg</a> PlusGiroet 200974-4	Oldin Twistman Tfn: 0739-809339 twistman@gmail.com	<b>Abdollah Asadi</b> Tel: 0046737-178819 asadiabe@gmail.com
--	---	--	--