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Asylum Seekers, Refugees, and IDPs in Azerbaijan: Issues and Perspectives

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Introduction

As early as twenty years ago, no one in Azerbaijan knew about refugees or people in similar situations who were forced to flee their homes due to various circumstances such as conflict and deportation. However, over the past 20 years these forced migration processes have reached such a magnitude in Azerbaijan that it has become part of the current Azeri reality, a kind of trademark which literally affects all spheres of life for this young state. However, these processes, as well as the plight and status of forced migrants have had their own characteristics and particularities at various times.

Forced Immigration to Azerbaijan from Post-Soviet Countries as a Result of Ethnic Conflicts

Azerbaijan became the first republic in the USSR to face problems with refugees, who at that time were still Soviet citizens who had become victims of ethnic conflict: in November 1987, several hundred Azeris fled to Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, to escape the conflict erupting in the Kafan area of Armenia.¹ However, the main stream of refugees started after the official start of the conflict in February 1988. As a result, by early 1989 there were 190,356 officially registered refugees from Armenia.²

One year later, the Meskhetian Turks, who had become victims of pogroms in Uzbekistan in 1989, started to arrive in Azerbaijan. Thus migration processes were dynamic in nature: some were arriving and some were fleeing the republic. As a result, in September, 1990 the State Statistical Committee (Goskomstat) of Azerbaijan registered around 234 thousand refugees: 205 from Armenia (201 thousand Azeris as well as 2.5 thousand Kurds and around 1.5 thousand Russians) and 29 thousand Meskhetian Turks from Uzbekistan.³

The breakup of the USSR in 1991 and the declaration of the independence of Azerbaijan and Armenia brought the Karabakh conflict to the stage of inter-state confrontation. As a result of the fighting in the country, internal migrants appeared in the country, whose numbers varied in the range of 212-220 thousand people in 1992.⁴

The situation in Azerbaijan, with refugees and migrant populations fleeing conflict areas, changed dramatically in 1993, when almost 20 percent of Azeri territory in the Karabakh fell under control of Armenian armed forces. This immediately prompted a sharp increase in the number of IDPs. If in April 1993, the authorities officially stated that 243 thousand IDPs were registered, then by the beginning of December of that same year this number climbed to 778.5 thousand people; that is to say, in seven months their number grew by more than 535 thousand people. At this time, the leadership of Azerbaijan officially stated that there were more than one million refugees and IDPs in the country.

In May 1994, the conflicting sides signed a truce to halt the fighting on the front lines which holds to this day. This allowed Azeri authorities to stabilize the situation in the republic and to gradually take control of the refugee situation and especially for IDPs—to build camps and settlements, and to provide humanitarian aid. New figures from the State Statistical Committee (Goskomstat) emerged with data from January 01, 1998: in the Republic of Azerbaijan there were 233,683 refugees, of whom 29,015 were Meskhetian Turks from Uzbekistan and other countries in Central Asia. The remaining

¹ Thomas de Waal. *Black garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through peace and war*. – New York and London, 2003, pp. 18-19; Arif Yunusov. *Karabakh: Past and Present*. – Baku, 2005, pp. 65-68.

² Arif Yunusov. *Migration Processes in Azerbaijan*—Baku, 2009, p.23.

³ Ibid, p. 24

⁴ Ibid, p. 24-25

204,667 refugees were from Armenia: 201,069 Azeris, 2359 Kurds, and 1,239 Russians. At that time, 604,574 IDPs were registered.⁵

Thus, according to official data, on January 01, 1998, there were about 840 thousand refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan, which comprised about 11% of the Republic's population. However, this data was called into question by many international organizations. In particular, UNHCR agreed in general with Azeri government data, but at the same time noted that there were actually 551 thousand migrants within the country. And in total, according to UNHCR data as well as the IOM, there were approximately 750-780 thousand refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan in 1997.⁶

At the same time, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were streams of forced migrants to Azerbaijan from other Post-Soviet republics. According to data from January 01, 1997, there were 2,525 refugees registered from of number of CIS countries, mainly from Kazakhstan (1,556 people) and from Russia (960 people).⁷

But most Azeris were forced to flee their homes in Georgia in the 1990s. There is not exact data, but we are talking about several tens of thousands of Azeris , all

former citizens of Georgia.⁸ However, they did not end up on the lists of refugees, since they periodically returned home to Georgia as the situation stabilized.

The State and Status of Forced Migrants from Post-Soviet Republics

Thus, by the mid-1990s there was a sizable population of refugees from republics of the former USSR, as well as IDPs from Western areas of the Republic occupied by Armenians.

And immediately, the issue of solving numerous social-economic and other forced migrant issues arose. After all, in the beginning they settled chaotically and mainly in the capital and other cities, which led to numerous conflicts. In Azeri society to this day, this is a problematic issue that impacts many political processes in the country.

Thus in the beginning, the attitude in Azeri society toward refugees, especially those from Armenia, was sympathetic and tolerant. They were seen as unfortunate and innocent victims of conflict. However, very soon relations between local residents and forced migrants changed dramatically. Refugees and IDPs were in desperate need of housing and work, and the authorities distanced themselves from solving these sensitive issues. Left to fend for themselves, refugees and IDPs began to solve these problems themselves.

In the early 1990s, an especially sensitive situation took place in Baku, the capital of the republic, where unauthorized and violent takeovers of apartments became widespread. It goes without saying that these violent acts by forced migrants could not but alienate residents of the capital.

After the fighting on the Karabakh front came to an end in May, 1994, it seemed that the situation should have improved. In the first half of the 90's, many citizens, especially residents of the capital, fled their apartments and houses for many reasons and left the country, preferring to wait out the difficult time in Russia or in other republics of the CIS. Only now, after the established truce on the

⁵ Ibid, p. 26

⁶ *Migration in the CIS: 1997-1998*, p. 24-25. According to UNHCR data, at the end of 1997 in Azerbaijan, there were 198,000 refugees from Armenia and 35,700 from Uzbekistan: *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR. 1997 Statistical Overview*. – Geneva, July 1998, p.27.

⁷ Refugees and IDPs- Journal "Ganun" (Baku), № 2, August 1997, p. 6 (in Azerbaijani); *Migration in the CIS: 1997-1998*. Report from the International Organization on Migration- Geneva, 1999, p. 30.

⁸ G. Svanidze, *Emigration from Georgia and its Reasons* – Tbilisi, 1994 p. 5; Khaladdin Ibragimli. *The Azeris of Georgia* – Moscow, 2006, p. 58; Z.N. Eminov. *The Population of Azerbaijan*. – Baku, 2005, p. 47 (in Azerbaijani).

front, many citizens, especially residents of Baku, started to return. However, the realities in Azerbaijan gave them yet another shock: while they were gone, refugees and IDPs had managed to occupy the majority of their empty apartments. Attempts to solve the issue through legal means turned against the rightful owners of the apartments: on May 09, 1994, the parliament of Azerbaijan passed the resolution 014/7-398, which prohibited the eviction of refugees and IDPs from their place of residence without the provision of alternate housing. In other words, this official document legitimized the violent takeovers by refugees and IDPs of apartments owned by citizens of the Republic. Moreover, on July 01, 2004, Ilham Aliev, the President of Azerbaijan, signed Decree number 298, which confirmed the resolution of the parliament, allowing refugees and IDPs to squat in empty apartments and houses. Article 2 of the decree states that refugees and IDPs cannot be evicted from houses in which they have been squatting from 1992-1998 “regardless of property rights”⁹. As a result, the rightful owners of the apartments, despite having all the necessary documents in their hands, could not return to their rightful homes, even through the courts.

The issue of the illegal takeovers of apartments by refugees became so widespread that it became one of the most popular themes in the national media. In addition, an NGO was even created soon after: the Committee of Homeless Bakuites. The problem was so serious and explosive that at the end of 2007, the authorities made a statement that the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan was searching for a legal solution to property rights of citizens whose apartments were occupied by refugees and IDPs. Of course this pertains only to Baku, where even now owners demand the return of almost 6 thousand apartments. At the same time, to violently and illegally evict the apartment squatters is legally prohibited, until there is a solution to the Karabakh conflict.¹⁰ The solution, in other words, takes us back to square one.

The housing problem artificially created by authorities further worsened native residents’ attitude towards refugees and IDPs, especially in Baku. Very soon after, other issues also came up, first and foremost—employment. It is true that here is a marked difference in the situation of forced migrants.: after Geidar Aliev came to power in 1993, the social-economic situation of refugees from Armenia noticeably changed for the better. Geidar Aliev and many of his circle had come from Armenia and from the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic adjacent to Armenia. Therefore many refugees could find good jobs. They even had NGOs and political organizations, and influence on the political situation in the country. But this later backfired, because they began to personify power and its politics, and this began to gradually irritate the community. Nonetheless, on the whole, the social-economic situation of refugees from Armenia was relatively better and they generally integrated into the Azeri host community.

IDPs, who comprised the main core of the population of Azeri forced migrants, did not have all of this. Their attempts to find work in the capital, where there were many Western companies (oil and others) —and meaning there was a chance to find work—failed. In Baku in the 90’s, five so called “slave markets” (in Azerbaijani, “gul bazari”) even sprang up—four for men and one for women, a kind of illegal labor exchange, where dozens of unemployed people, the majority IDPs, were prepared to do any work for hire. And then in the 90’s, many of the IDPs went to work in Russia and other CIS countries. They comprised the main portion of migrant workers from Azerbaijan to the Post-Soviet areas.

From the end of 1999, the IDP situation worsened further as the majority of international humanitarian organizations stopped providing food aid to Azerbaijan and left the country. Therefore in 2001-2002, desperate IDPs periodically blocked the roads and demanded that the authorities improve their situation. These acts of protest by IDPs immediately came onto the radar of the opposition, as it could have implications for the authorities. Since the number of IDPs was enormous, they could become support for the opposition. Only after this, the authorities decided to take the issue seriously

⁹ *Nagorno-Karabakh: Viewing the Conflict from the Ground*. International Crisis Group Europe Report N 166 – 14 September 2005. – Tbilisi/Brussels, 2005, p.21.

¹⁰ Arif Yunusov. *Migration Processes*, p. 72-73.

and all the more so, because the republic began to receive profits from the sale of oil and gas. In 2003, this made it possible to begin the process of relocating the IDPs from 28 tent camps near the front to newly built settlements in various areas of the country, where each relocated family was given a three-room house. At the beginning of 2010, this process was fully completed and at present all tent camps have been liquidated. About 90 thousand IDPs relocated to 76 settlements in various areas, mainly along the front line.¹¹

After this, authorities set about improving the situation of IDPs in other areas of the country as well, beginning with the building of new settlements. The first step was made with regards to IDPs residing in the capital, where in 2010, numbers had reached 216 thousand people. The process will proceed in stages and started with the relocation of 7 thousand IDPs to a specially constructed settlement not far from the capital.¹²

All this, of course improved the situation of a portion of Azeri IDPs. However, with uncertain and inconclusive conditions surrounding the resolution of the conflict with Armenia over the Karabakh, the lives of IDPs still remain extremely complex. Although a certain portion of IDPs were able to rebuild their lives anew in the new place, the overwhelming majority of them are still directly dependent on assistance from government of Azerbaijan. IDPs have to make great efforts to gain access to normal housing and to livelihoods and services necessary to live, such as health care and education. The IDPs who do not live in the new settlements built by the authorities, have to live in crowded quarters without heat or ventilation, which increases the risk of disease. Medical care for many of the IDPs is very expensive and therefore inaccessible or simply inadequate. Meanwhile, many IDPs need additional assistance from psychiatrists or social workers. While searching for work, many IDPs left their families and moved from places where they were settled to major cities, where they had to face the problem of registering in a new place, and as a result, did not have the opportunity to officially find work and receive assistance from the government, as well as benefits and services.

Obtaining education is a serious problem for IDPs. Some IDP students have had to quit school because of poverty, the need to move away with their family, or early marriage. About half of IDPs continue to live in difficult conditions in converted housing or in collective housing centers (sanatoriums, holiday homes, and others.) Elderly IDPs have serious health problems, compounded by the difficulties of adapting to a new environment with low incomes in the families.

In contrast to refugees and IDPs who became victims of the Karabakh conflict, the Azeris who escaped from other Post-Soviet countries were in a different situation, ending up sidelined by government institutions. Furthermore, the authorities often did not register them as refugees, since Azerbaijan was not in a state of conflict with any one of these countries. So residents of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Georgia often arrived in Azerbaijan as foreign nationals. They appeared in the media, talked about their problems and about emerging conflicts with the local population during the post-Soviet period. But they were not treated as refugees or as victims of conflict. As such, they were deprived of the social and economic benefits granted to refugees. These forced immigrants, as a result, had to solve their own problems with housing, find employment, and adapt to their historic home, which they had left during the Soviet period. Not all were able to solve their problems, and as a result, a certain portion left for countries in Europe or elsewhere.

¹¹ IDMC. *Azerbaijan: After some 20 years, IDPs still face barriers to self-reliance*. A profile of the internal displacement situation. 10 December, 2010. – [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/FB99F03DAB636905C12577F5004F432D/\\$file/Azerbaijan_Overview_Dec2010.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/FB99F03DAB636905C12577F5004F432D/$file/Azerbaijan_Overview_Dec2010.pdf); *Information about Ethnic Cleansing in Armenia and about the Emergence of more than One Million Refugees and IDPs, as a Result of the Occupation by Armenian Armed Forces of 20 Percent of Azerbaijan's Territory (1998 – 2011)*. – Baku, 2011, p. 53 (in Azerbaijani).

¹² *216 thousand IDPs Reside in the Capital of Azerbaijan*. Dec. 19, 2010 – <http://azerbaijanfoundation.az/ru/migdestiny/1228-v-stolice-azerbajdzhana-prozhivajut.html>

At the same time, forced migrants who were victims of conflicts in post-Soviet areas had additional problems related to their status.

On July 06, 1993, Azerbaijan ratified the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and its Protocol from 1967, the Geneva Convention from 1949, and other legal documents to improve the lives of refugees and IDPs. The status of refugee and IDP gives the holder many privileges such as receiving humanitarian aid as well as others in the social-economic sphere. But there was a difference: in contrast to IDPs, refugee status does not allow the holder to officially take part in elections in Azerbaijan.

In 1998, on the eve of the presidential elections, the issue was raised and subsequently, in October 1998 the government of Azerbaijan passed the draft legislation “On Citizenship.” According to this document, all refugees who were expelled from Armenia as a result of the Karabakh conflict and came to Azerbaijan prior to January 01, 1992 automatically became citizens of the country. This law pertained to Meskhetian Turks as well.

As a result, the large population of refugees (who, by the time the law was passed numbered 221,616 people, including 188,400 from Armenia and 33,216 Meskhetian Turks¹³) in 1998 received the right to participate in elections and other political activities. At the same time, counter to all international norms and documents relating to the status of refugees, the Azeri authorities passed a special law “On the Status of Refugees and IDPs” in April 1999, under which refugees from Armenia retained the status of...refugees! This legal case was made so that international humanitarian organizations would still provide assistance to these refugees. However, international organizations started to leave the country and in several years stopped providing aid to victims of the conflict.

In the beginning, the Azeri authorities did not pay attention to the case of status for refugees from Armenia. They became alarmed only in April of 2006 when during the Spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe there was a discussion about the issue of refugees in the South Caucasus. And it turned out that the UN, the Council of Europe, and other international organizations did not officially consider Azeris expelled from Armenia as a result of the Karabakh conflict or Meskhetian Turks to be refugees. This was a shock for the authorities of Azerbaijan and for the entire society. An attempt was made to return again to refugee status, during which the authorities of the Republic began appealing to relevant international organizations. But they did not manage to correct their mistake. As a result, today in Azerbaijan those Azeris who were expelled from Armenia, as well as Meskhetian Turks, are still legally considered citizens and refugees at the same time. However, outside of the Republic they are not considered refugees.

Foreign Refugees and Asylum Seekers

In the mid-1990’s in the Republic, together with the refugees mentioned above (Azeris and Meskhetian Turks), there was a flow of forced migrants who were foreign nationals as well as victims of conflicts and repression. The largest flow of these refugees occurred in Russian territory and was related to the war in Chechnya. As a result of the first war (1994-1996), UNHCR’s Baku office registered about 4,700 Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan.¹⁴

Begun in 1999, the second Chechen war further strengthened the stream of Chechen refugees to Azerbaijan. In early 2001, there were already more than 10 thousand of them in the Republic. However, after the tragedy of September 11, 2001 in the USA, Chechen refugees’ situation in Azerbaijan began to rapidly deteriorate. The authorities of the country, seeing a convergence of US

¹³ UNHCR Global Report 1999 – Azerbaijan. - <http://www.unhcr.org/3e2d4d513.pdf>

¹⁴ A. Yunusov, *Chechen Refugees in Azerbaijan* – Compilation “*Refugees and IDPs: Ethnic Stereotypes (the Experience of Sociological Analysis)*” – Vladikavkaz, 2002, p.12-13.

and Russian positions on the war against terrorism, decided to demonstrate their “initiative” and launched a campaign of persecution against Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan. For Chechen refugees, the situation was very difficult, but they were afraid to return to Russia and tried to leave Azerbaijan for Turkey. More often they left for Western countries, mainly Canada, Sweden, Chile, and Norway. However, receiving refugee status from the UNHCR’s Baku office is very complicated. Chechen refugees’ situation was so difficult that in December 2001, they staged a series of protests, picketing in front of the Baku building of the UNHCR.

The situation remained so tense, that in March 2002, the UNHCR’s Baku office even closed for a while(!)¹⁵ Only after a change of its leadership in April 2002 did the work of this office in Baku resume. In early June 2002, it stated that there were 6,580 Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan. However, the Chechens themselves claimed there were actually no more than 4,700 people in the country at that time.¹⁶

The number of Chechen refugees registered at the UNHCR’s Baku office peaked in July 2003 at 7,603 people. In total, for the period from 1999 to 2005, there were 9,318 people registered, although according to Chechen diaspora data, connected to the war in Chechnya, more than 12 thousand Chechen refugees took refuge in Azerbaijan.¹⁷

Afterwards, the situation surrounding Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan clearly deteriorated. As a result, the number of those leaving Azerbaijan for Turkey and other countries exceeded the number arriving in the Republic from Russia. By the end of 2007, information was released that in Azerbaijan there were about 2.5 thousand Chechen refugees, of whom more than 2 thousand were registered in the Baku office of the UNHCR.¹⁸

But even this number has had a tendency to decrease. After all, the social-economic and legal situation of Chechen refugees in Azerbaijan is deeply dependent on political circumstances, first and foremost on Azerbaijan’s bilateral relations with Russia. When the Azeri-Russian relationship was bad, the Azeri authorities allowed an office in Baku to open for separatist forces that were receiving humanitarian aid from Arab countries. According to data from early 2001, the Mission of Chechnya spent more than 220 thousand dollars monthly on its own refugees. These monies went to pay for apartment rents, as well as assistance with groceries (one Chechen refugee was provided monthly with 3 kilograms of sugar, 5 kilograms of flour, and 2 kilograms of buckwheat).¹⁹

However in 2001, the Azeri authorities, under pressure from Russia, suspended the activities of representatives of the independent Chechen forces. The activities of all Arab humanitarian organizations in the country were halted, thereby stopping all aid to refugees from Islamic countries. At the same time, the authorities in Azerbaijan increased pressure on Chechen refugees. They became victims of abuses by law enforcement, who openly extorted money from them and, if they did not receive the required sum, arrested the men as “militants” and extradited them to Russia, where they then encountered far more serious problems.²⁰

Chechen refugees held out hope for UNHCR’s Baku Office, which for the most part, however, was trying not to be very active in providing aid to these refugees, even to those who were registered and had received aid (one refugee receives approximately 40 Euros monthly from UNHCR, and for a family of two, 60 Euros.) In the media, representatives of Chechen refugees and Chechen refugees themselves openly outline their problems. First and foremost is the issue of children and obtaining

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 19-20.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁷ Arif Yunusov. *Migration Processes*, p. 240.

¹⁸ P. Ibragimkhalilova. *The Stream of Chechen Refugees is Not Stopping*. – Magazine “Echo”, Dec. 19, 2007

¹⁹ R. Orujev. *What are the Chechens in Azerbaijan Living On?* – Magazine “Echo”, April 21, 2001

²⁰ A. Yunusov. *Chechen Refugees in Azerbaijan*, p. 19

education for them. On one hand, refugees cannot receive metrics or the birth certificate of their children because the authorities refuse to issue such a document. As a result, refugees have often appealed to local courts with the help of Azeri human rights defenders. However, even after this they refused to issue birth documents. The main argument by the authorities was to demand that they contact the Russian consulate first to receive the necessary documents. However, Chechen refugees are categorically denied access to the Russian consulate and so they turn instead to the UNHCR office. But they get the same answer there as well.²¹

Without a birth certificate, it is not possible to study in schools and universities. But even if they had these documents, they would still face serious problems obtaining an education. They also cannot receive the right to work unlike the rest of the population in Azerbaijan. In sum, many of them become part of the criminal world, which further reinforces the local population's negative attitude toward Chechen refugees.

All of this has led to the fact that Chechen refugees do not have the opportunity to integrate into the Azeri host population. A large number of them are destitute and many are connected to criminal structures or dream of leaving as soon as possible for European countries via Turkey.

In sum, the number of Chechen refugees continues to decline. In 2010, there were 1,200 of them registered, and a year later only 900 remained.²²

The number of refugees, as well as asylum seekers from other countries was considerably smaller. The majority were refugees from Afghanistan, as well as Iraq and Iran (Table 1).

Table 1. Refugees Residing in Azerbaijan, by Country of Origin²³

Country of Origin	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Afghanistan	90	104	108	125	149
Armenia	0	0	0	1	3
Congo	0	1	1	1	1
Iran	55	71	90	97	92
Iraq	19	3	29	55	37
Pakistan	1	1	1	1	1
Russia	2.828	2.425	2.110	1.770	1.334
Syria	1	1	1	0	0
Turkmenistan	3	3	3	3	3
Palestine	7	9	9	8	1
TOTAL	3.004	2.618	2.352	2.061	1.621

Source: UNHCR

They generally treat Azerbaijan as a transit country, where they hope to receive refugee status and then move to the USA, Canada, and countries in Western Europe. But not all manage to do this and as a result, even with refugee status, many of them live in Azerbaijan for more than a year.

As far as asylum seekers are concerned, their numbers in Azerbaijan have always been insignificant. Moreover, according to data from UNHCR, the total number of asylum seekers in Azerbaijan in the period from 2005 to 2009 decreased by 4.4 times (Table 2):

²¹ Pamella Ibragimkhalilova. *In Azerbaijan They Refuse to Issue Metrics to Children of Chechen Refugees*, 30/08/2010 - <http://vesti.az/news/51644>

²² Pamella Ibragimkhalilova. *Chechen Refugees Flee Azerbaijan*. April 09, 2011. - <http://vesti.az/news/70370>

²³ *Azerbaijan: Extended Migration Profile. 2010*. - http://www.pragueprocess.eu/fileadmin/PPP/Azerbaijan_Extended_Migration_Profile_EN.pdf

Table 2. Asylum Seekers, who Applied for Asylum in Azerbaijan During the Corresponding Year, by Country of Origin²⁴

Country of Origin	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Afghanistan	192	133	175	153	93
Algeria	1	7	0	0	0
Armenia	0	0	0	1	3
Bangladesh	2	0	0	0	1
Burundi	1	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	1	1	0	0	0
Central African Republic	0	0	0	1	0
Congo	2	1	0	0	0
Georgia	3	5	1	0	0
India	1	4	1	0	0
Iran	101	71	39	32	21
Iraq	14	28	43	28	6
Jordan	0	6	0	0	0
Kazakhstan	3	0	1	0	0
Kyrgyzstan	0	1	0	0	0
Laos	0	0	1	0	0
Liberia	1	0	0	0	0
Nepal	4	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	4	0	0	1	0
Pakistan	56	36	21	29	72
Russia	641	373	254	138	39
Syria	7	5	0	0	0
Tajikistan	7	0	0	0	0
Turkey	4	1	0	0	0
Turkmenistan	0	0	1	0	0
United Arab Emirates	0	1	0	0	0
Palestine	9	0	0	1	0
Yemen	0	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	1.054	674	537	384	235

Source: UNHCR

²⁴ Ibid.

According to the data from the State Migration Service, from 2008-2009, 208 foreigners petitioned for asylum in Azerbaijan. Among the applicants were citizens of Afghanistan (94 people, i.e. 45.2% of total applicants), Pakistan (77 people, i.e. 37%), Iran (29 people, i.e. 13.9%), Iraq (5 people, i.e. 2.4%). One petition each was also received from citizens from the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and Bangladesh. From 2008-2009, two asylum applicants received refugee status (in total 5 people together with members of their families.)²⁵

The situation of these refugees is not as difficult as that of Chechen refugees. But even they have difficulties and problems. And in many ways these problems are similar. The Republic's authorities refuse to issue documents for the birth of a child, or a passport, to refugees and asylum seekers. As a result, they encounter the same problems obtaining work and education. Refugees from Afghanistan have ended up in an especially complicated situation: many of them have been living in Azerbaijan for 10-15 years, but still do not have passports or other documents that verify their identity. As such, they cannot leave the country, they cannot sign a work contract, and they work only through oral agreements in low-paying jobs. But even there problems arise because employers often embezzle their salary.²⁶ As a result, a considerable number of them are connected to the Republic's criminal world.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ In Azerbaijan, the Salaries of Refugees from Afghanistan are Embezzled, June 07, 2010. <http://novostink.ru/sng/8184-v-azerbajdzhane-prisvai-vayut-zarplatu-bezhencev.html>