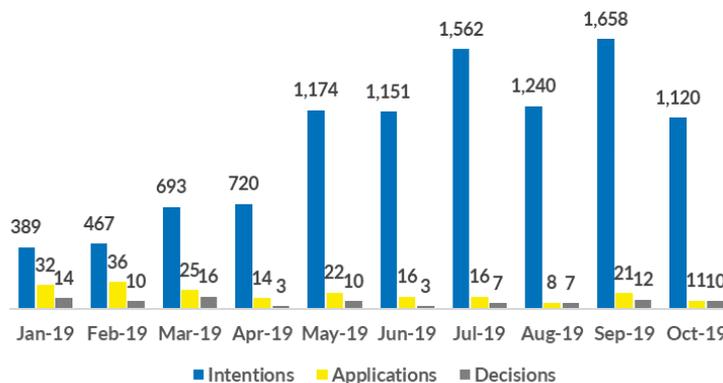


# SERBIA UPDATE

- Two men from Pakistan, accommodated in Principovac Transit Centre, tragically drowned while swimming in a lake near the centre on 1 October.
- UNHCR and partners counselled over **3,200** asylum-seekers at over thirty sites throughout the country. **279** unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) benefitted from guardianship under the UNHCR project.
- **1,120** foreigners registered their intention to seek asylum with the Ministry of Interior (MOI), while **11** lodged substantive **asylum claims** with the Asylum Office (AO), seven of which were represented by UNHCR project lawyers. In October, the AO adjudicated ten rejections but no recognitions, whereby the number of recognitions in the first ten months of 2019 remained at **32**. UNHCR and partners continued to assist the AO with interpretation, cultural mediation and psychological assessments.

Asylum intentions/applications/decisions



- UNHCR partner, the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), published [Right to Asylum in the Republic of Serbia Periodic Report for July-September 2019](#), which outlines the practices and decisions of asylum authorities as well as some challenges to the integration of refugees in Serbian society (no access to travel documents, naturalisation, driving licences, shortcomings of refugee ID cards, lack of court interpreters, costs of public notaries, etc.) along with an analysis of *Ayaz v. Serbia*, CAT, [Communication No. 857/2017 \(2019\)](#).
- BCHR alone counselled 80 refugees and asylum seekers on **local integration**, obtained ID cards for two and work permits for one, while UNHCR assisted the integration of 49 with cash-based interventions. The joint Local Integration Team of the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) and UNHCR conducted 15 home visits to refugees, while UNHCR conducted another three business visits related to livelihood activities.
- Marking World Mental Health Day, UNHCR partner PIN hosted a panel discussion with representatives of the SCRM, WHO, MOLEVSA, Institute for Public Health and UNHCR, presenting the findings of its 2019 research on the [Psychological Wellbeing of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Serbia](#).
- On 3 October, the Minister of State Administration and Local Self-Government, the Ombudsman and the UNHCR Representative signed a MOU strengthening cooperation to ensure that all new-borns, including those whose parents lack documents or legal status, obtain **immediate birth registration** and access to a nationality.
- On 8 October at UNHCR's EXCOM High Level Segment in Geneva, Serbia presented past progress in **eliminating statelessness** and the Government's continuing commitment to the Global Campaign to Eradicate Statelessness, including consideration to introduce **Statelessness Status Determination Procedures**.
- On 16 October, the SCRM convened a second meeting with five-Ministries to discuss possible **pledges for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF)** on 17-18 December in Geneva.
- Focus Group Discussions with refugee households in Lajkovac, Ub and Kikinda on 8 and 17 October collected views on the sustainability of village housing under the **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)**.

- UNHCR and partners surveyed **4,123** newly arriving asylum seekers and migrants, the highest number of new irregular arrivals in a single month since February 2016. Remarkable was a rising number of new arrivals (14%) from **Syria**, including families, who claimed to have spent less than a week in Greece before reaching Serbia through Albania or North Macedonia. 46% of new arrivals were nationals of Afghanistan, 13% of Pakistan, 10% of Iraq, etc. 78% were adult men, 4% adult women and 18% children, incl. **463** unaccompanied and separated children. 76% entered Serbia from North Macedonia, 14% from Albania and 7% from Bulgaria.



*New arrivals from Syria in South Serbia, ©UNHCR, October 2019*

- **Growing new arrivals** led to an acute overcrowding of Bujanovac Reception Centre (RC) by over 100% of hard shelter capacity. Authorities reacted by temporarily rerouting newly arriving families to Bosilegrad RC and starting to discuss a possible reactivation of Presevo RC which boosts higher reception and registration capacities.
- The number of asylum seekers and migrants counted at any one day in Serbia again increased by 23% to **4,185** at the end of October. **3,261** of them were accommodated in 16 Asylum or Reception/Transit Centres. 74% were adult men, 8% adult women and 18% children; 47% were citizens of Afghanistan, 9% of Iraq, Bangladesh and Pakistan each, 8% of Iran and 6% of Syria. Over **920** were observed sleeping rough, around 450 in Belgrade City and 470 near the borders with Croatia, Hungary or Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Continued high number of **1,145** asylum seekers reported **collective expulsion** from neighbouring countries (358 from Croatia, 288 from Romania, 287 from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 212 from Hungary). 72% of them alleged to have been **denied access to asylum** and 38% maltreatment by authorities of these countries.
- UNHCR Serbia compiled and issued monthly updates of its [Statistical Snapshot](#) and [Joint Site Assessments](#). With over 42,000 views, the latter remained a most popular and trusted information product.

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