

Iran launches new scheme to entice Afghans home

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The new plan comes two weeks after Iran began a major drive to expel Afghan workers without papers that has already seen tens of thousands kicked out of the country.

Under the offer, worked out with the Afghan government and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, if a family returns home, some of its members will be allowed to return to Iran and work for a limited period.

"Those Afghans can benefit from the voluntary repatriation programme including a work permit in Iran, and a 100 dollars cash aid for a family of up to five members each," said the advertisement.

"If the family consists of nine members, two members of the family will receive the Iranian work permit, and also they are given a form to evaluate them to see whether they are eligible for a piece of land back home," a UNHCR spokeswoman said.

Afghans with proper working papers are estimated to form half of the two million Afghans who fled the conflicts in their home country and still live in the Islamic republic.

Iran wants all its Afghan refugees to return home in the coming years and Interior Minister Mostafa Pour Mohammadi has said Tehran wants one million Afghans to be repatriated by next March.

The forced repatriation efforts in recent weeks have sparked protests from ordinary Afghans in the streets of Kabul and also concern from the Afghan foreign ministry, which said it could not afford to house the newcomers.