

ATHEIST REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Annual Report 2026

PROTECTING THOSE PERSECUTED FOR THEIR NON-BELIEF

www.atheistrefugeesturkey.com

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

ATHEIST ALLIANCE INTERNATIONAL · CFI CENTER FOR INQUIRY · CFI CENTRE FOR INQUIRY Canada · COMMUNITY ATHEISTS MINNESOTA ACTIVISM EDUCATION · Ateizm Derneği · Ateizm Dernegi INTERNATIONAL · THE DAVID P. SILVERMAN CHARITABLE FUND

THE YEAR IN BRIEF

2026: A Year of Firsts

2026 was a landmark year for the Atheist Refugee Assistance Program. Operating in Türkiye — the country hosting the world's largest refugee population — we completed our first resettlements to Canada, relocated The LightHouse to central Istanbul, expanded our mandate, and grew our partner alliance from 3 to 7 organizations.

60
SERVICES DELIVERED

52
CASES HANDLED

2
RESETTLED IN CANADA

ZERO DEPORTATIONS IN 2025 AND 2026

Every accepted case remains protected.

2026 MILESTONES

MARCH
The LightHouse relocates to a 330 m² facility in central Istanbul

JULY
First ARAP cases resettled in Canada: documentary filmmakers Ramin Saberi Jafari & Anahita Morovvati

AUGUST 7–10
ARAP tables at the World Humanist Congress of Humanists International, Ottawa

AUGUST
Mandate expanded: ARAP now serves non-believers who have fled to and from Türkiye

THROUGHOUT 2026
Partner alliance grows from 3 to 7 organizations

About this edition: This is the public edition of ARAP's 2026 Annual Report. To protect the people we serve, some names, locations and photographs are withheld.

WHAT WE DELIVERED

60 Services, One Mission

Every service is delivered free of charge, by case managers who speak the applicant's own language. In 2026, ARAP delivered 60 services across five categories.

35
Guidance Services
Mental health support, educational guidance, and financial guidance

9
Legal Aid
Pro bono lawyers and legal process support

8
Letters of Support
Recommendation and verification letters to UNHCR and immigration authorities

7
Accommodation
5 sheltered at The LightHouse + 2 placed in long-term housing

1
Employment
CV translation, job applications, interview guidance

= **60**
Total services, 2026

Counting note: figures reflect services documented in the Arabic- and Persian-desk 2026 case reports. Direct English-language cases are distributed across both desks.

WHO WE SERVE

As of August 2026, ARAP serves all non-believers facing documented persecution who have fled to and/or from Türkiye — regardless of nationality.

Our Arabic and Persian case managers serve applicants in their mother tongues.

The program does not provide direct financial support.

WHO WE ARE

Our Vision & Mission

VISION

The Atheist Refugee Assistance Program (ARAP) grew out of the work of Ateizm Derneği, a humanist NGO based in Türkiye with 600+ members — the first and only legally recognized atheist human rights organization in the Muslim world, recognized by the United Nations and the Council of Europe as the legal representative of the nonbelievers in Türkiye. Today, ARAP is run entirely and independently from Canada by the Ateizm Derneği International Foundation.

ARAP began offering services — letters of support and accommodation solutions — in 2019, and was formally structured as a program in August 2020, inspired by the Atheist Support Network of Atheist Alliance International and the Secular Rescue program of the Center for Inquiry Transnational.

MISSION

Our mission is to assist refugees who have fled religious persecution and are seeking to build a new life. We specialize in navigating the complex Turkish immigration system, where discrimination against non-religious applicants is common.

Sometimes an atheist asylum seeker must visit 10+ different immigration offices in various cities just to submit their initial application. Our team guides applicants to the right offices and supports them through every step.

> *Refugee people are under double oppression. They are both displaced from their homeland and subjected to discrimination and threats within their communities because they are atheists.*
>
> **— Süleyman Karan, Chair of Ateizm Derneği Türkiye**

> *Thinking freely should never cost anyone their life.*
>
> **— Emir Onur Romano Çilek, President of Ateizm Derneği International Foundation (Canada)**

OUR SERVICES

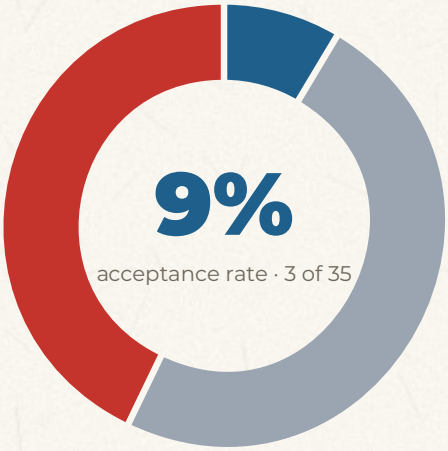
1. **Accommodation:** short-term safehouse accommodation at The LightHouse for qualified candidates; help finding long-term housing or roommates.
2. **Job Placement:** CV translation, job applications, interview guidance.
3. **Legal Aid:** pro bono lawyers and legal process support.
4. **Official Letters:** recommendation and verification letters to UNHCR and immigration authorities.
5. **Guidance:** mental health support, educational guidance, and financial guidance.

OUR PARTNERS

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE MISSION

Rigorous Vetting

In 2026, ARAP handled 52 case files: 35 new applications and 17 continuing cases from 2025 and earlier. After our rigorous vetting process to verify non-believer status and persecution claims, 3 of the 35 new applications were accepted into the program — an acceptance rate of 9% (3 ÷ 35 = 8.6%).



3 Accepted into the program

17 Denied — guidance still provided

15 Denied

Vetting is strict because partner resources must reach genuine, verified cases. Not every denied applicant receives consultancy; in 2026, 17 borderline applicants who narrowly missed the evidence threshold still received full guidance consultations at no cost — from court-procedure briefings to shelter referrals.

YEAR-END PORTFOLIO

52	7	12
CASES HANDLED IN 2026	FILES CLOSED IN 2026	ONGOING INTO 2027

Alongside the 35 new applications, ARAP continued serving 17 cases from 2025 and earlier. The 7 closures include 2 files closed at the beneficiaries' own request after their goals were achieved.

Deportation orders issued against accepted cases were challenged in court throughout the year — one lifted 24 hours before a resettlement flight, one pending final appeal — and no accepted case has been deported. Zero deportations in 2025 and 2026.

ARAP · 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Impact Stories

Three stories. One lifeline.

> *Today, we look toward a white, unwritten future. A future that has not yet been written, but that appears bright.*
>
> **— Ramin Saberi Jafari, resettled in Canada, July 2026**

IMPACT STORY · 01

From a Deportation Order to Canada

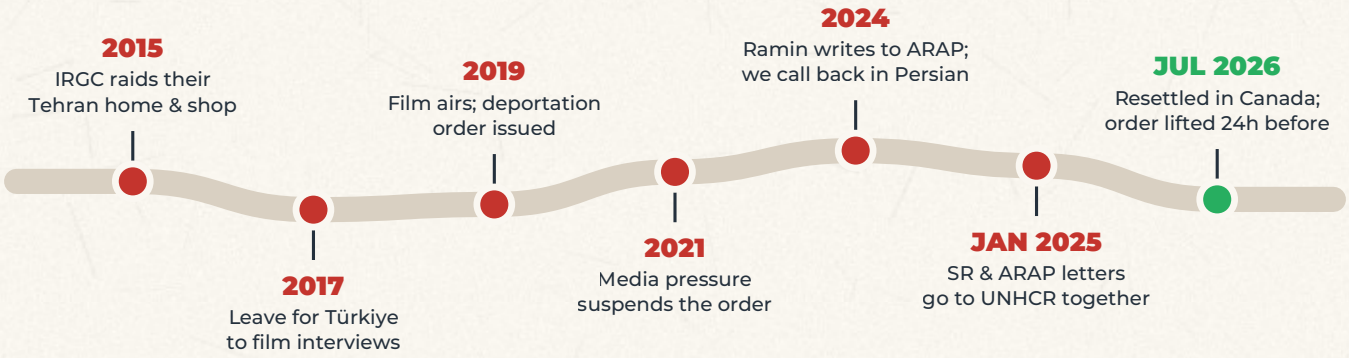
Ramin Saberi Jafari and Maryam Anahita Morovvati, documentary filmmakers from Tehran, fled Iran in 2017 after the Revolutionary Guard raided their home and shop over a film critical of the regime. In Türkiye — undocumented, unpermitted to work, surviving on workshop labour — they finished it anyway. *Iranian Holocaust* aired in December 2019 on Andisheh TV in Los Angeles; *Leaving the Land* followed on Voice of America Persian.

The broadcasts made them targets. The IRGC threatened their family inside Iran; a desperate attempt to reach Greece ended in detention at the border; and a deportation order to Iran — for 2 documented atheists, a death sentence — was issued without a lawyer present. International media pressure suspended it in 2021, but for 3 more years they remained trapped.

In 2024, after 7 years of unanswered emails to organizations across 3 continents, Ramin wrote one more — to ARAP. Our Persian-speaking case manager called him back and spoke to him in his mother tongue. ARAP arranged counselling for the couple and connected them to Secular Rescue at the Center for Inquiry Transnational — Secular Rescue's and ARAP's detailed letters of support went out to UNHCR together at the end of January 2025 — and in early 2026 ARAP opened a sustained letter-writing campaign with UNHCR for third-country resettlement.

In July 2026, UNHCR resettled Ramin and Anahita in Canada. Even then, pending administrative cases meant the old deportation order threatened to ground them — working with our lawyers, it was lifted 24 hours before their flight. They landed first in Halifax and are building their new life in Vancouver today. And the story does not end there: Ramin has already referred ARAP's newest accepted case to us.

THEIR JOURNEY



> *Ateizm Derneği helped us with counseling, guidance, and financial support. CFI helped us through its written support and timely advice. Together, these interventions mattered.*
>
> **— Ramin Saberi Jafari**

Their story is told in full in Centre for Inquiry Canada's *Critical Links* series: **The Film That Cost Them a Country** and **The Lie at the Hospital**.

OUR PARTNERS

IMPACT STORY · 02

The Poet in the LightHouse

ARAP's newest accepted case — referred to us by Ramin himself — is an internationally recognized Iranian poet, author and activist whose name we withhold for his safety.

11
PUBLISHED BOOKS

6
BANNED IN IRAN

800
PAGES IN HIS LATEST WORK

Think of him as another Salman Rushdie: 11 published books, 6 of them banned by the Iranian government, and prison time served for the criticism of religion in his books — a "blasphemer" and apostate by the Islamic Republic's definition.

Five years ago, his asylum file in Türkiye was cancelled over a late provincial transfer, and his appeals were exhausted. He lived undocumented, cut off from every service — no identity card, no health care, no legal existence. He lost all of his teeth. Untreated thyroid disease cost him part of his vision. He had, in his own words, lost his health and his hope.

In 2026, a member of our network reached him with emergency financial aid. ARAP placed him in The LightHouse, compiled his life's published work into a case portfolio, facilitated his application to the Center for Inquiry Transnational, and secured funding from several organizations to begin his dental and vision treatment. Our lawyers are now evaluating every remaining legal avenue.

Today he lives in The LightHouse — safe, in treatment, and writing again. His latest work is underway: an 800-page book titled *Sexiology of Islam*.



Illustration: writing again — a study at The LightHouse. Photographs withheld for safety.

OUR PARTNERS

IMPACT STORY · 03

Arman's 1,000-Kilometre Walk

Arman, an elderly Iranian case accepted years ago, held approved refugee status in Türkiye — but his third-country resettlement stalled for years. ARAP did not advise him to leave Türkiye; despite our warnings about the risks involved, he made his own decision in 2024: living alone, ill, and in deep hardship, he set out on foot, walking more than 1,000 km over several months, and reached the Netherlands.

ARAP backed him the whole way — a reference letter to the Dutch immigration authorities setting out his story, financial support arranged through a partner organization in the Netherlands, and the case file that let him apply for, and receive, refugee status there.

We never abandon a case. When Arman was hospitalized for months after a traffic accident in 2026, a member of our team travelled to his city to visit him. He has recovered — and we still speak every month.

1,000+ kilometres walked from Türkiye to the Netherlands — where Arman now holds refugee status.

MORE 2026 OUTCOMES

- ✔ An Iraqi woman detained at a removal centre was freed through our lawyers and won Conditional Refugee status at her interview; we then placed her in long-term housing outside the safehouse by finding her roommates. She closed her file this year with her goals achieved. *(Name withheld)*
- ✔ A Libyan student detained on her way to an Istanbul university she had earned a place at was released within 3 days by our lawyer — she is now studying in Istanbul. *(University name withheld)*
- ✔ A Syrian woman's deportation order was overturned in court; with counsel she obtained humanitarian residence, and we placed her in long-term housing by finding her roommates. She closed her file at her own request. *(Name withheld)*

Read more success stories →



ARAP · OUR SAFE HAVEN

The LightHouse

A safe haven in central Istanbul

DELIVERED ON SCHEDULE

A New Home

330 m²

In March 2026, The LightHouse relocated to a 330 m² (3,500 ft²) condominium in central Istanbul — the expansion announced in last year's report, completed on schedule.

10+	180	5	+2
BED CAPACITY	DAYS' MAXIMUM STAY	SHELTERED IN 2026	PLACED IN LONG-TERM HOUSING

- ✔ Central Istanbul location
- ✔ Better employment access
- ✔ Open to all eligible non-believers
- ✔ On-site director supervision

In 2026, The LightHouse sheltered 5 individuals, and long-term housing was secured for 2 more; a further case moves in this December. The LightHouse — ARAP's safehouse and women's shelter — is sponsored single-handedly by The David P. Silverman Charitable Fund since 2025.







Representative illustrations — not the actual LightHouse; photographs withheld for safety. 🔒 Location kept private. Operated by the Ateizm Derneği International Foundation.

OUR PARTNERS

SINCE 2019

Lifetime Impact

Offering services since 2019 and formally structured as a program in August 2020, ARAP has made a measurable difference in hundreds of lives.

418

SERVICES DELIVERED SINCE 2019

94	93	151
LEGAL AID CASES	LETTERS OF SUPPORT	GUIDANCE INQUIRIES

34	28	18
ACCOMMODATIONS	JOBS PLACED	WORKSHOPS

HOW YOUR SUPPORT WORKS

1. **Partner contributes**
2. **ARAP team acts**
3. **Lives saved**
4. **Transparent reports**

JOIN THE ALLIANCE

Become a Partner

Join us in protecting those persecuted for their non-belief.

ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP **$3,000 USD** / year

PARTNER BENEFITS

- ✔ Access to weekly ARAP coordination meetings (Türkiye team + international admins)
- ✔ Logo placement on the ARAP website and all program materials
- ✔ Frequent recognition in interviews, news, YouTube, and social media
- ✔ Financial and performance reports on demand

Scan to become a partner via our Zeffy portal

CURRENT PARTNERS

Atheist Alliance International · CFI Center for Inquiry · CFI Centre for Inquiry Canada · Minnesota Atheists · Ateizm Derneği · Ateizm Derneği International · The David P. Silverman Charitable Fund

international@ateizmdernegi.org.tr
www.atheistrefugeesturkey.com

ARAP
Atheist Refugee Assistance Program | Ateist Mülteci Yardım Programı
برنامج مساعدة اللاجئين للملحدين | برنامه کمک به پناهندگان الحاد

PUBLIC EDITION