8 AUGUST 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #54

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 2 August 2025)

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) decision of 26 September 2023 to enact an "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan", UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and IOM, the UN Migration Agency, have collated their data on the arrest, detention, and deportation of Proof of Registration (PoR) holders, Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, and undocumented Afghan nationals as well as on the outflows of Afghan nationals at the Torkham, Ghulam Khan, Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha border crossing points, to better understand the protection environment and movements of Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

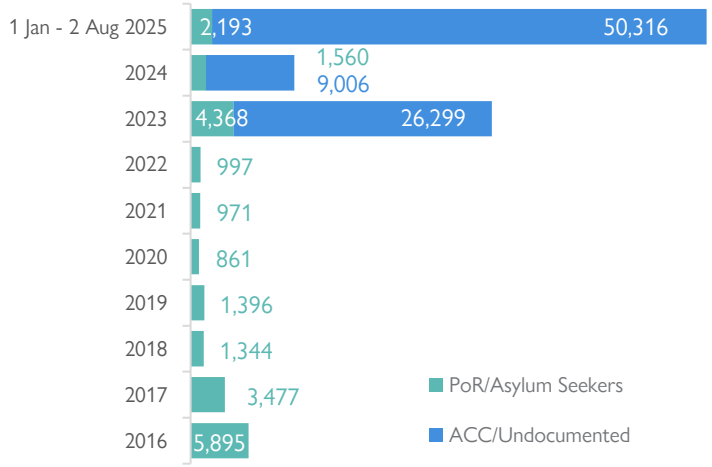
From January – February 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued a directive, requiring Afghan nationals in Pakistan to relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In response, on 5 February 2025, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press statement. Further announcements followed on the implementation of the second phase of the "IFRP", targeting ACC holders in addition to undocumented Afghans to return to Afghanistan. On 31 July 2025, the GoP issued a Statutory Regulation Order (SRO) directing the repatriation/deportation of PoR holders whose cards had expired in June 2025, declaring them illegal. This was followed by a notification sent on 04 August 2025 informing relevant government entities of a decision to delay the repatriation/deportation process of PoR holders until 1 September 2025, effectively giving the affected PoR holders time to decide to return on their own. The notification emphasized that Phase 1 and 2 of the "IFRP" are to be continued throughout the month of August. In response, on 5 August 2025, UNHCR issued press briefing expressing concern at the decision and urging the GoP to exempt Afghans with international protection needs or with particular vulnerabilities from involuntary return.

KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

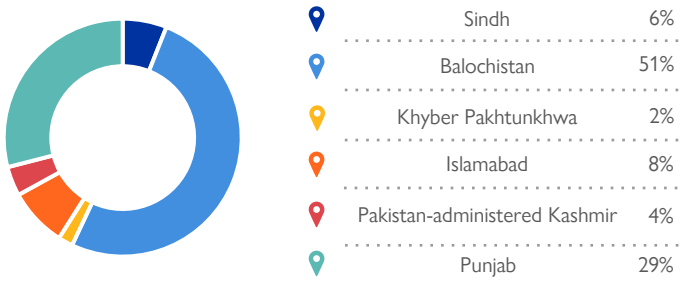
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (27 July – 2 August), a total of 1,209 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a 93% increase compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (27 July – 2 August), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 98% of the total rate of arrest and detentions.
- During the reporting period (27 July – 2 August), 41% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan, while 40% took place in Punjab.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 2 August 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Attock (Punjab), and Chaman (Balochistan).

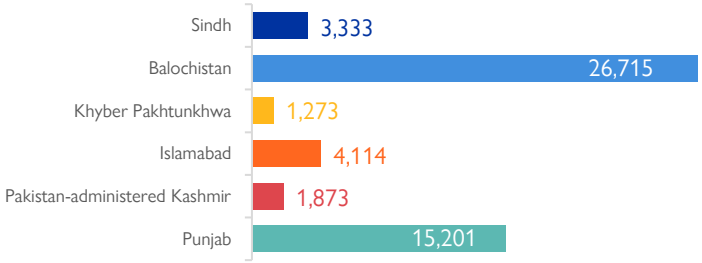
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



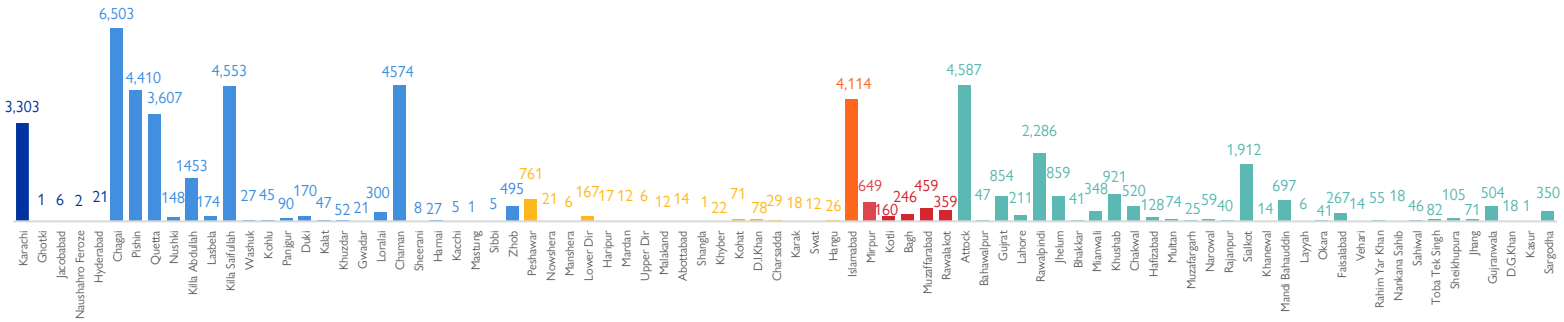
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 2 August 2025)



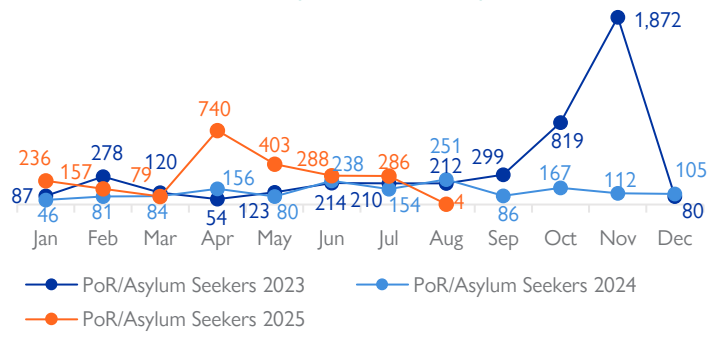
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 2 August 2025)



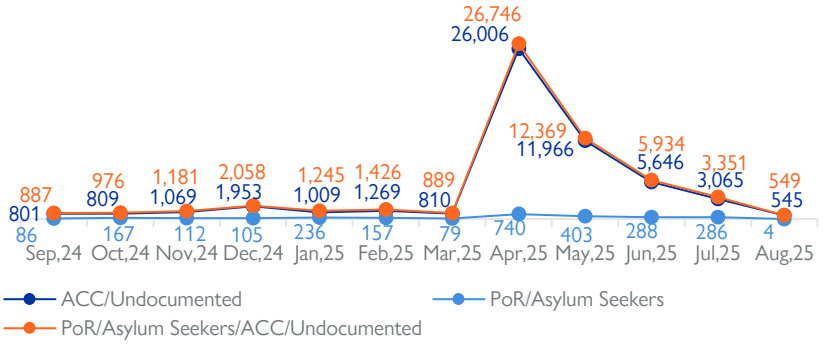
NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 January – 2 August 2025)



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION TRENDS 2023 – 2025 (PoR HOLDERS)



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2024 – 2025



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IOM border monitor conducting an interview at Chaman border. [IOM Pakistan 2025]

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 2 August 2025, 1,161,796 individuals have returned.
- During the period 27 July – 2 August 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 8,303 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- The number of returns remained relatively stable, while deportations increased significantly, (27 July – 2 August; 8,303 returns and 1,182 deportations) compared to returns and deportations in the week prior to that (20 – 26 July; 7,945 returns and 519 deportations). Returns increased by 5%, and deportations by 128% compared to the last week (20 – 26 July).
- For the returns from 20 – 26 July 2025, most of the returnees were undocumented (68%), followed by PoR holders (22%), and ACC holders (10%). Majority of the PoR returns are facilitated by UNHCR.
- Since 1 April, 307,763 Afghan nationals returned, of which 51,626 were deported.
- Since the beginning of April, fear of arrest is the most common reason to return amongundocumented/ACC holders (92%) and PoR holders (42%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Quetta (16%), Karachi Central (12%) and Islamabad (11%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Kabul (23%), Kunduz (18%) and Nangarhar (16%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

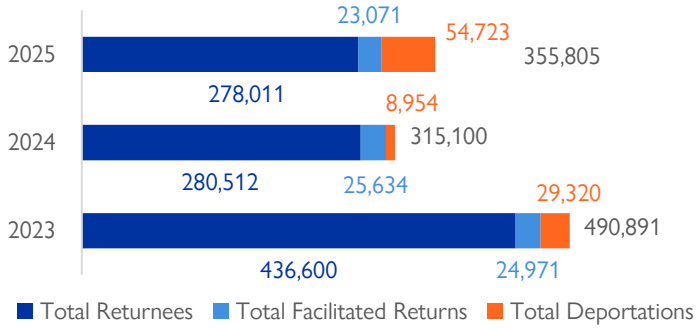
1,161,796 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

995,123 (86%) TOTAL RETURNEES

73,676 (6%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

92,997 (8%) TOTAL DEPORTATIONS

Period	Total Number of Returns	Total Returnees	Total Facilitated Returnees	Total Deportees
15 Sep – 31 Dec 2023	490,891	436,600	24,971	29,320
1 Jan – 31 Dec 2024	315,100	280,512	25,634	8,954
1 Jan – 2 Aug 2025	355,805	278,011	23,071	54,723
Total	**1,161,796**	**995,123**	**73,676**	**92,997**



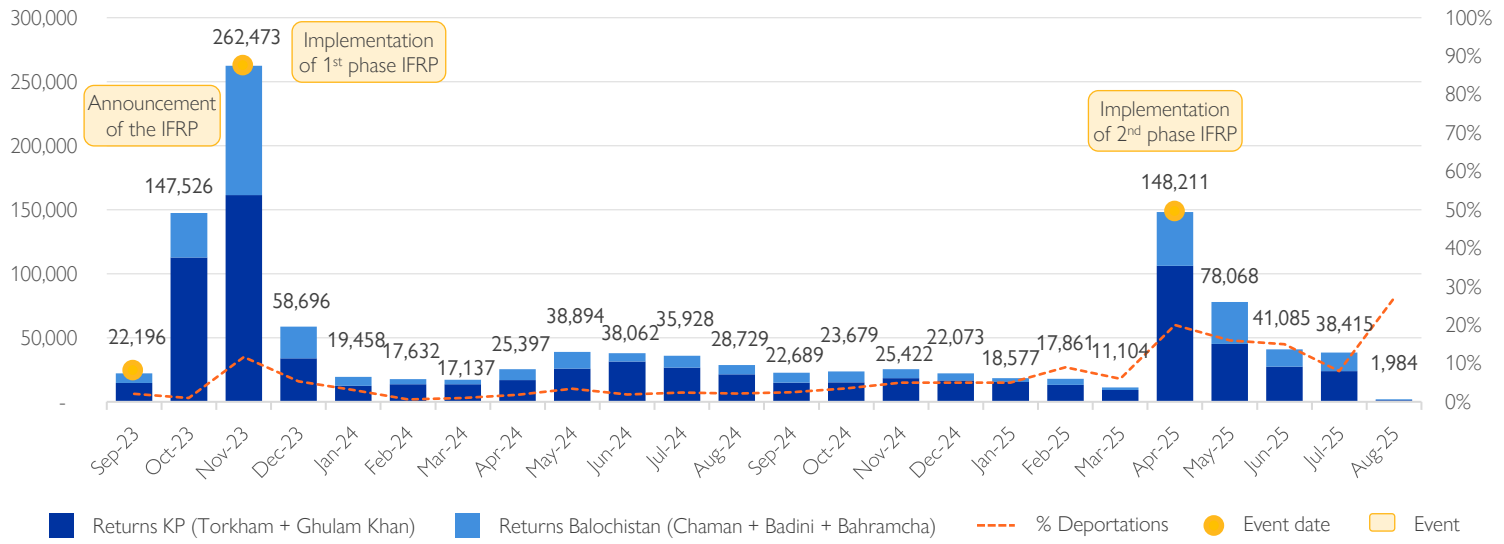
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	985,064 (85%)
PoR holder ***	119,391 (10%)
ACC holder	57,341 (5%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented	90,401 (97%)
PoR holder ***	2,596 (3%)

TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 2 AUGUST 2025



* This number includes returnees who received post-arrival assistance by the IOM-led Border Consortium in Afghanistan at Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points.
** The number refers to facilitated PoR returns through VRCs who crossed the border during the reporting period.
*** This figure refers to PoR holders based on interviews conducted with returnees in Afghanistan.

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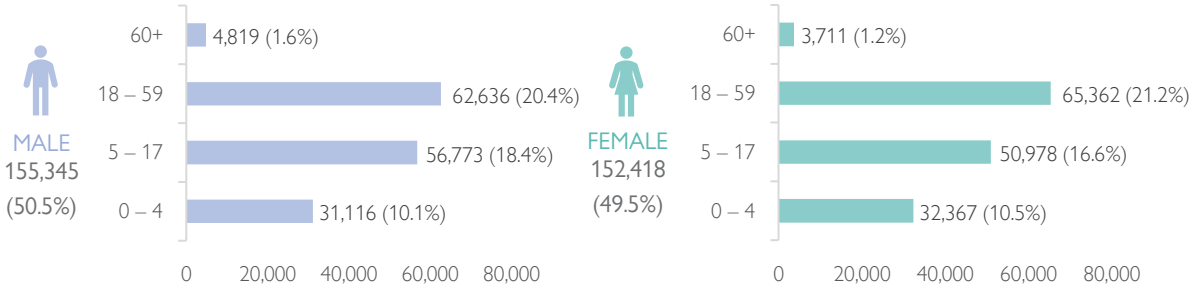
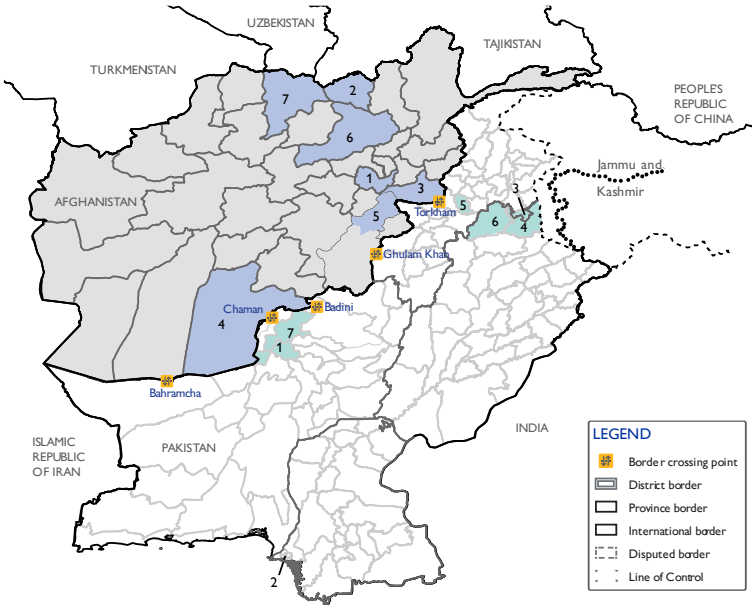
ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (1 April – 2 August 2025)

AGE AND GENDER****

307,763
TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS SINCE 1 APRIL 2025



DISTRICT OF ORIGIN IN PAKISTAN AND PROVINCE OF DESTINATION IN AFGHANISTAN*****



DISTRICT OF ORIGIN (TOP 7)

1. Quetta	16%
2. Karachi Central	12%
3. Islamabad	11%
4. Rawalpindi	10%
5. Peshawar	9%
6. Attock	8%
7. Pishin	5%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Kabul	23%
2. Kunduz	18%
3. Nangarhar	16%
4. Kandahar	13%
5. Paktya	7%
6. Baghlan	6%
7. Balkh	4%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

(Expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of vulnerable persons)

- 3,941 (47%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 2,423 (29%) Elderly (60+)
- 939 (11%) Female Widows
- 537 (6%) Pregnant Women
- 306 (4%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 284 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 13,034)

Fear of arrest	92%
Financial debt	30%
No employment	11%
Communal pressure	4%
Unable to pay house rent	3%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

(Expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of vulnerable persons)

- 652 (50%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 320 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 167 (13%) Women at Risk
- 153 (12%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 2,252)

Fear of arrest	42%
High rate of inflation	18%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	11%
Strict border entry requirements	9%
No added protection value of PoR card	5%

**** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 40 per cent (123,064 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 60 per cent, no age/gender disaggregated data is available.

***** Disclaimer: Dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. This document was produced jointly by IOM and UNHCR. The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM or UNHCR. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

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