22 AUGUST 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #56

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 16 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.

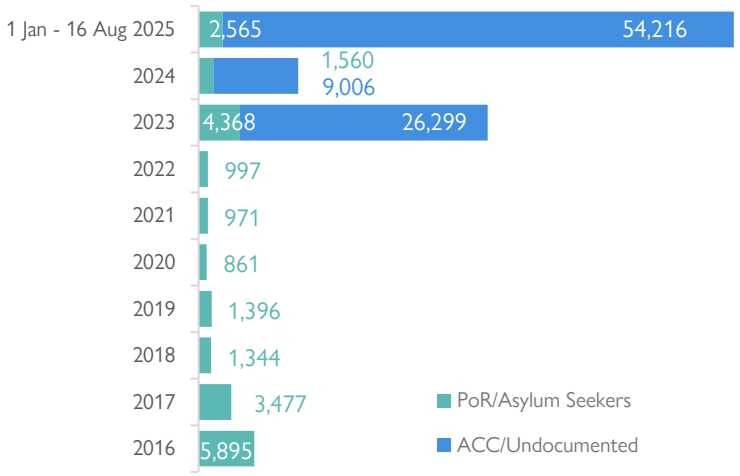
From January – February 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued a directive, requiring Afghan nationals in Pakistan to relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In response, on 5 February 2025, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press statement. Further 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

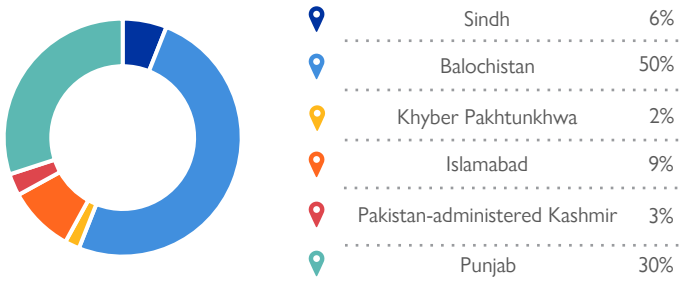
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (10 – 16 August), a total of 1,154 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a 63% decrease compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (10 – 16 August), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 96% of the total rate of arrest and detentions.
- During the reporting period (10 – 16 August), 53% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan, while 42% took place in Islamabad.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 16 August 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Islamabad, and Pishin (Balochistan).

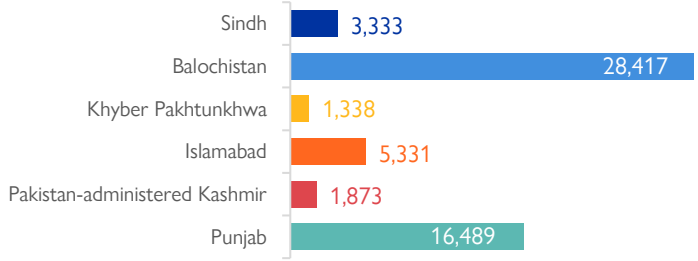
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



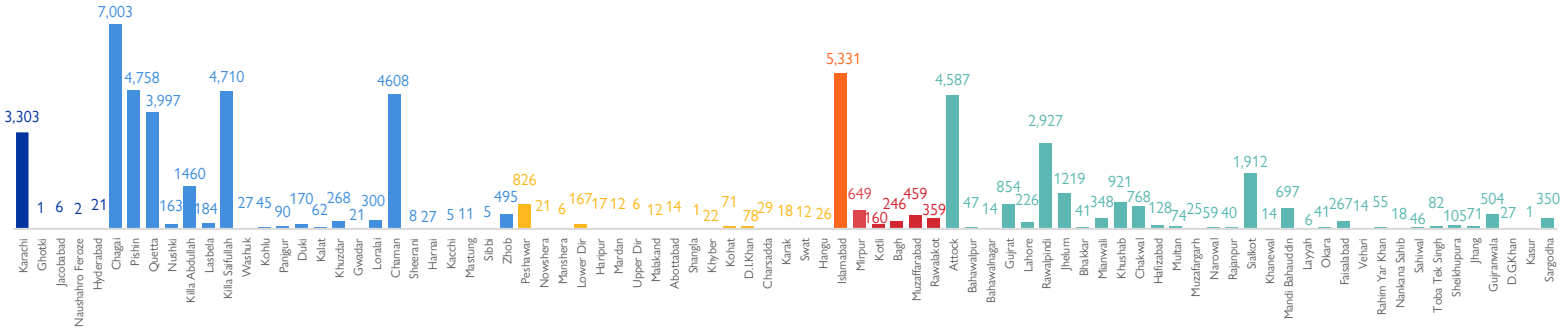
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 16 August 2025)



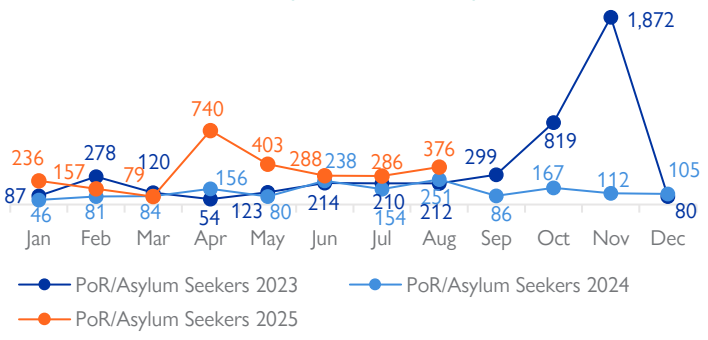
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 16 August 2025)



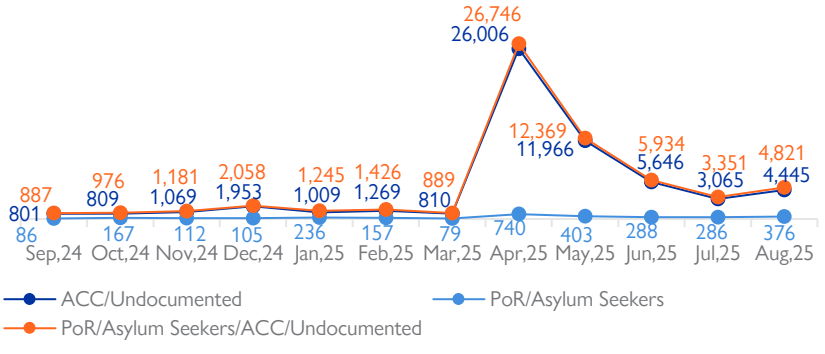
NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 January – 16 August 2025)



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



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2024 – 2025



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ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING | (15 September 2023 – 16 August 2025)

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

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 16 August 2025, 1,193,008 individuals have returned.
- During the period 10 – 16 August 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 15,641 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 stable, while deportations decreased significantly, (10 – 16 August; 15,641 and 1,102 deportations) compared to returns and deportations in the week prior to that (2 – 9 August; 15,571 returns and 3,051 deportations).
- For the returns from 10 – 16 August 2025, most of the returnees were PoR holders (57%), followed by undocumented (38%), and ACC holders (5%). Majority of the PoR returns are facilitated by UNHCR.
- For the deportees from 10 – 16 August 2025, most of the deportees were undocumented (79%), followed by PoR holders (20%) and ACC holders (1%).
- Since 1 April 2025, 338,975 Afghan nationals returned, of which 55,779 were deported.
- Since 1 April 2025, fear of arrest is the most common reason to return among undocumented/ ACC holders (92%) and PoR holders (53%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Islamabad (15%), Quetta (15%) and Rawalpindi (12%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Kabul (23%), Kunduz (18%) and Nangarhar (18%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

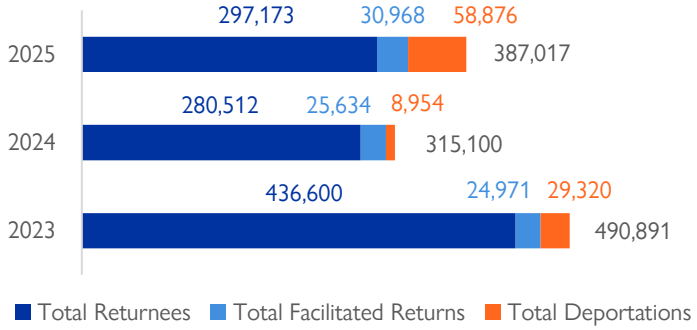
1,193,008 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

1,014,285 (85%) TOTAL RETURNEES

81,573 (7%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

97,150 (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 – 16 Aug 2025	387,017	297,173	30,968	58,876
Total	**1,193,008**	**1,014,285**	**81,573**	**97,150**



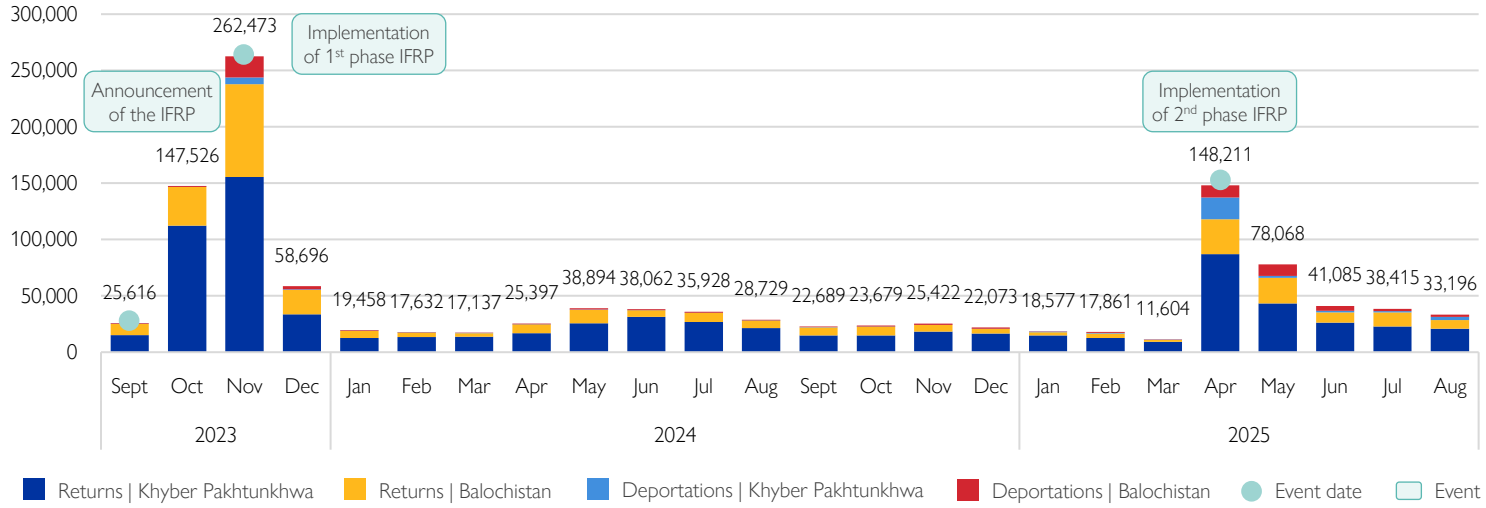
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	1,001,245 (84%)
PoR holders ***	132,473 (11%)
ACC holders	59,290 (5%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented (15 Sep 2023 – 31 Mar 2025)	39,333
Undocumented (1 Apr – 16 Aug 2025)	39,243
PoR holders *** (15 Sep 2023 – 16 Aug 2025)	4,054
ACC holders (1 Apr – 16 Aug 2025)	14,520

TOTAL RETURNS AND DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 16 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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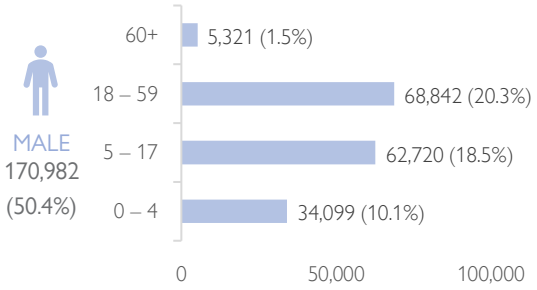
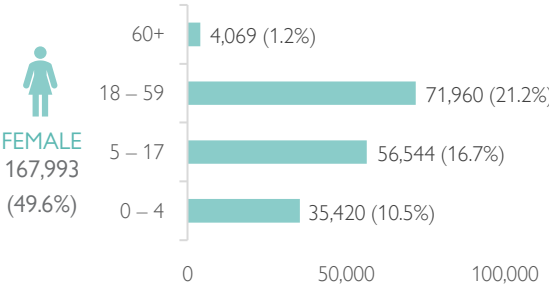
ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (1 April – 16 August 2025)

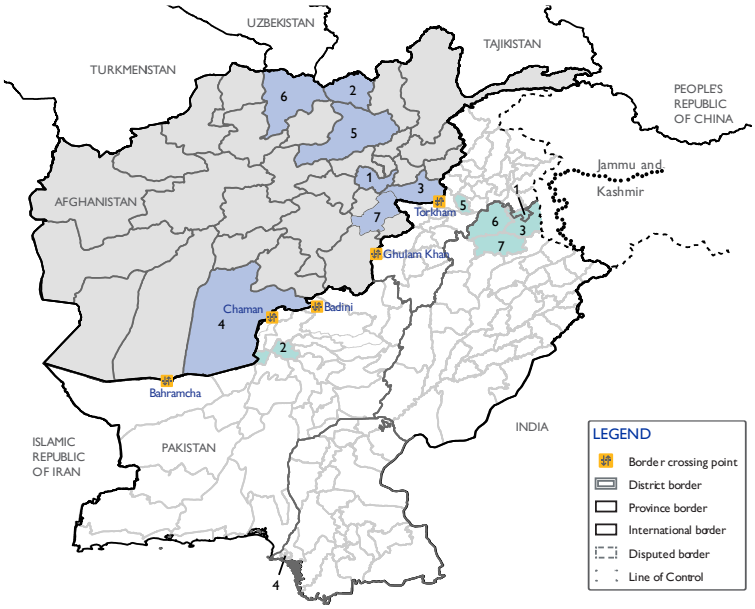
AGE AND GENDER****

338,975
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. Islamabad	15%
2. Quetta	15%
3. Rawalpindi	12%
4. Karachi Central	10%
5. Peshawar	8%
6. Attock	8%
7. Chakwal	7%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Kabul	23%
2. Kunduz	18%
3. Nangarhar	18%
4. Kandahar	12%
5. Baghlan	7%
6. Balkh	7%
7. Paktya	3%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 4,253 (47%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 2,605 (29%) Elderly (60+)
- 1,003 (11%) Female Widows
- 580 (6%) Pregnant Women
- 330 (4%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 297 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 13,952)

Fear of arrest	92%
Financial debt	28%
Family member deported	20%
No employment	12%
Communal pressure to return	4%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 889 (51%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 438 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 220 (12%) Women at Risk
- 203 (12%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 2,500)

Fear of arrest	53%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	12%
No added protection value of PoR card	11%
Deterioration in security conditions	8%
High rate of inflation	5%

**** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 41 per cent (137,808 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 59 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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