

# Summary of Legal Assistance and Aid Programme

January–March 2018



<b>Legal Assistance</b> <b>10,563</b>	<b>Arrests &amp; detentions</b> <b>396 *</b>	<b>Interventions</b> <b>332 **</b>	<b>Releases</b> <b>388</b>
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## Key findings

Nine Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC) are operational in the main refugee-hosting areas of four provinces in order to provide free legal support to persons of concern: four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), one in Sindh and three in Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through partnership agreements with SHARP and one in Baluchistan run by SEHER.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2018, UNHCR and its partners provided legal assistance to a total of **3,236** persons of concern compared to 3,957 in February 2018. During the month, UNHCR and its partners intervened at police stations for **79** arrested/detained persons of concern and secured the release of all. In the majority of all cases, UNHCR and its partners managed to obtain the release of the arrested refugees by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) before the official lodging of charges against them which resulted in their release from detention within 24 hours. Additionally, ALAC partners provided court representations to **22** persons of concern charged under the Foreigners Act and other preventive laws subsequently resulting in their release by the orders of the courts.

ALAC teams and the Ministry of SAFRON continue to take proactive steps to mitigate the risk of detention, including enhanced advocacy, pre-emptively intervening at police stations to prevent arrests and enhancing the response capacity of partners. UNHCR has developed and disseminated additional awareness raising material on legal assistance programs available for refugees (ALAC posters, brochures & use of social media).

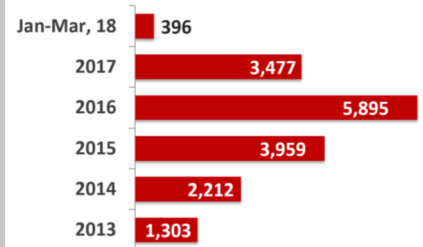
Arrest and detention of persons of concern decreased by **29%** in the month of March 2018 as compared to the month of February 2018. Additionally, **75%** decrease has been observed in the month of March 2018 in comparison with the arrest and detention figures of March 2017. The extension in the validity of PoR card until 30 June 2018 was announced in February 2018. However, the actual notification has been issued on 20 March which has been timely and widely circulated to the LEAs and refugee communities by UNHCR and partners.

<sup>1</sup>UNHCR funds 9 ALACs, through implementing partners. SHARP operates in KP, Punjab and Sindh. SEHER has implemented UNHCR funded ALAC legal aid services in Balochistan.

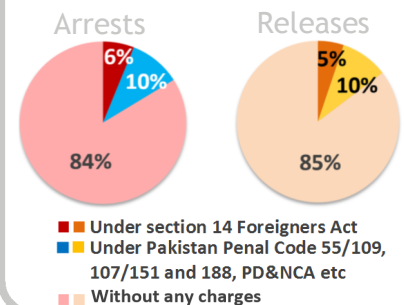
\* Actual numbers of arrests / detentions / \*\* Interventions made by ALAC at police stations to secure the release of PoCs.

Note: In January 2018, the Frontier Corps (FC) in Quetta undertook security operations that resulted in the apprehension of Afghans including registered Afghan refugees. Among those arrested, 40 PoR cardholders were deported to Afghanistan without due process.

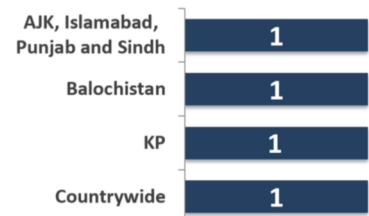
## Arrests and detentions by year



## Types of arrests and releases

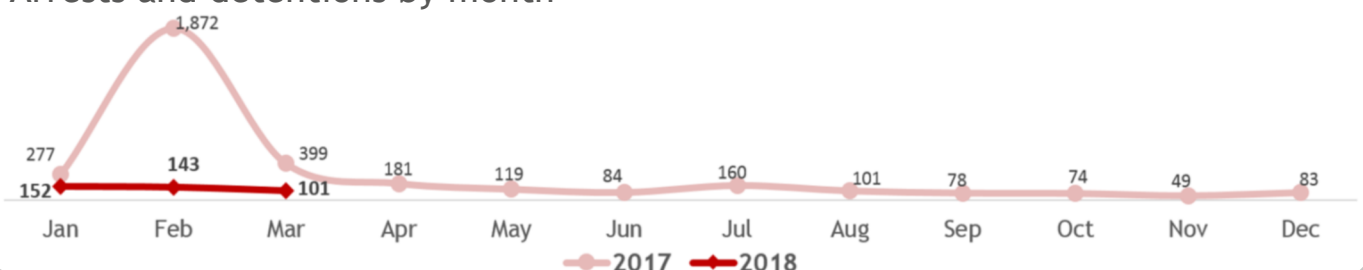


## Avg length of detention (days)\*



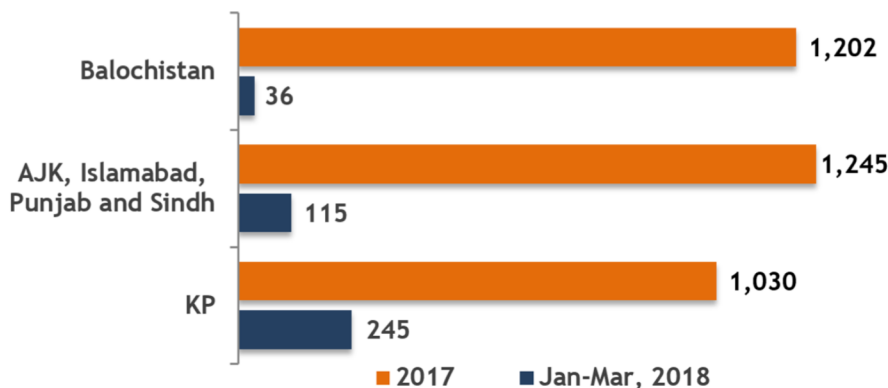
\*Weighted proportionally by # of arrests in each province

## Arrests and detentions by month

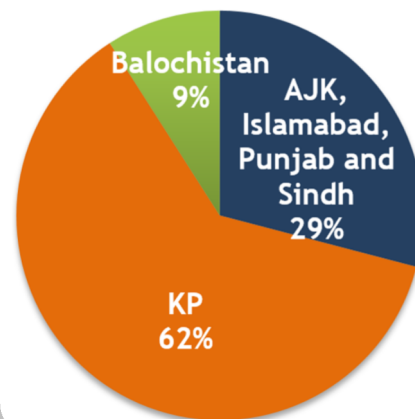




### Arrests and detentions by location and year



### Arrest/detention locations



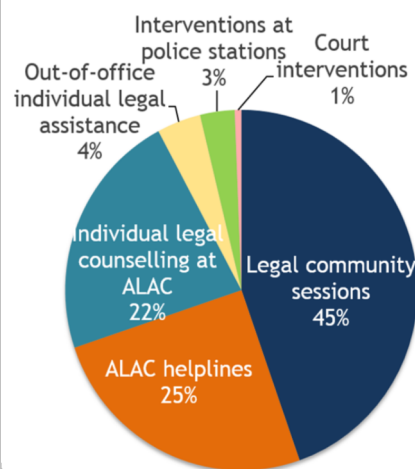
### Access to legal assistance and legal remedies

Advice and Legal Aid Centre (ALAC) activities in 2018 include the following: a) provision of legal intervention at police stations upon arrest/detention; b) court representation in the cases of arrest/detention and other issues regarding civil/family/tenancy matters etc.; c) individually facilitated counseling (legal advice) at ALACs and through helplines; d) out-of-court legal assistance; e) legal sessions in the form of legal camps, *shura* meetings and facilitated group discussions; and f) coordination with and training of law enforcement authorities including border officials and the judiciary.

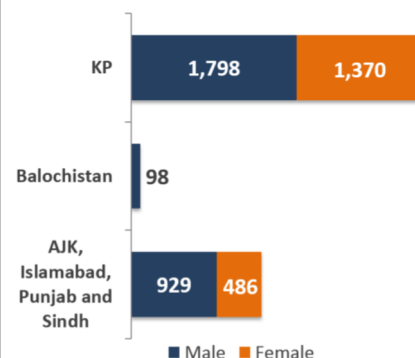
In March, partner staff provided **individual legal counselling** to **658** persons of concern who visited the Advice and Legal Assistance centres as well as legal advice to a total of **835** persons of concern through **ALAC helplines**. Birth registration, police harassment, information on repatriation, PoR card modification and registration exercise of undocumented Afghans were the issues of greatest concern observed during the reporting period. **Out-of-court/office legal assistance** was provided to **111** persons of concern mostly related to police harassment, PoR card verifications, rental agreements and affidavits. During the reporting month, UNHCR’s legal partner monitored the search operation conducted by LEAs (Pakistani Military) in I-12 refugee settlement in Islamabad. UNHCR’s legal partner encouraged refugees to cooperate with authorities and present their PoR cards. As a result the operation was conducted smoothly and did not lead to the arrest and detention of persons of concern.

UNHCR and ALAC staff also organized a total of **66 legal camps and shura meetings** reaching **1,509 participants** (43% of whom were women) in the reporting month. 65% of the legal sessions were held in refugee villages and the remaining sessions in urban areas of Pakistan. Through these legal sessions, refugees shared various issues affecting their communities. UNHCR partner staff informed refugees of available free legal aid and UNHCR helpline services.

### ALAC legal assistance activities for POCs



### Legal group participation



UNHCR continues to deploy border monitors at the two official Pak–Afghan border crossings at Torkham (KP) and Chaman (Balochistan) in order to identify potential protection issues during border movements.

Refugee-police liaison committees have been established in the districts of Mardan, Swabi, Buner and Malakand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after successful implementation in the districts of Charsadda, Peshawar and Nowshera to enable refugees directly approaching police.

There are 42 ALAC lawyers countrywide who provide the legal aid/assistance described above (29 in KP, 2 in Baluchistan, 5 in Punjab/AJK, 3 in Sindh and 3 in Islamabad).

UNHCR is expanding its legal assistance network through the identification of pro bono lawyers in addition to the existing ALAC legal aid program. During 2017, a pro-bono lawyers’ network was formally established during an introductory two-day Workshop on Refugee Law and International Protection attended by 24 pro bono lawyers from across the country.