

KEY DISPLACEMENT FIGURES



HIGHLIGHTS

- In April, the Government of Pakistan extended the validity period of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards for Afghan refugees from 1 April to 30 June 2024. Approved by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet, this three-month extension provides some relief in the current uncertain context and ensures continued access to essential services for refugees. This decision comes amid increased press reports regarding the rollout of "Phase II" of the 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan' (IFRP). While the situation on the ground remained relatively calm, community-level anxiety persists, particularly around the prospect of returns and issues such as access to education and women's rights.
- Some 570,000 Afghans have returned from Pakistan between 15 September 2023 and 30 April 2024. In Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance to PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum-seeker certificate holders and Afghans with other protection referrals. Since 15 September 2023, some 86,200 individuals who returned from Pakistan have been provided with cash assistance in Kabul, Kandahar and Jalalabad Encashment Centres, including over 50,400 PoR card holders. An uptick in media coverage on "Phase II" of the IFRP, which specifically targets Afghan Citizen Card holders, has fuelled anxiety among Afghans of all statuses, leading to heightened concerns among Afghans who fear increased pressure to return to Afghanistan. UNHCR has stepped up its advocacy with Government of Pakistan to advocate for the protection of refugees, leveraging the influence of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) Core Group+ through ambassadorial and technical-level engagements. Concurrently, Pakistan's Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions continues to reiterate the significance of facilitating the dignified return of Afghan nationals. For more information, please see the latest [External Update](#).
- UNHCR Special Advisor on Development, Mr. Hervé de Villeroche, made his inaugural visit to Pakistan from 17 to 22 April. During his visit, he met with key development stakeholders, including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, as well as significant government counterparts, such as the Ministry for States and Frontier Regions, Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Planning and Development Department. Discussions underscored UNHCR's commitment to advocating for and mobilizing additional resources for development. In addition, UNHCR also convened meetings with the ambassadors of the Netherlands and the US as well as heads of the EU/ECHO delegation. While in Peshawar, Mr. Villeroche visited a hospital supported by the World Bank IDA-18 Regional Sub-Window and Khazana refugee village. Talks were also held with refugee community leaders, female refugees, and members of the Afghan business community. To maintain momentum, follow-up discussions are ongoing to secure more support from international financial institutions to address the refugee and host community situations in Pakistan.

AFGHANISTAN:



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¹ An umbrella term that covers all returns, including deportations, assisted VolRep and other returns of Afghans of all statuses such as Proof of Registration (PoR card holders, Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, and the undocumented. The Government of Pakistan has subsequently announced that ACC and PoR cardholders are exempted. In November, the validity of PoR cards was retroactively extended to 31 December 2023. Advocacy by UNHCR is ongoing.

² This category includes all refugee returnees as well as PoR card holders who returned without passing through the established Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC) set up in Pakistan.

³ In Iran, UNHCR is using an average figure according to various government estimates and continues to follow-up with authorities to receive updated and disaggregated data as well as an estimate of how many presently remain in Iran. Of the average 1 million new arrivals since August 2021, over 88,000 Afghans have approached UNHCR. Of the 600,000 new arrivals reported by the Government of Pakistan, over 476,000 have approached UNHCR.

- UNHCR and partners in Afghanistan reached an estimated 346,600 people with humanitarian assistance in 33 out of 34 provinces countrywide in April 2024. Among those reached, 170,800 people received cash assistance while 175,800 benefitted from in-kind and other individual assistance, including protection, core relief items (CRIs), shelter, seasonal support and community-based interventions. Assessments were also carried out for 204,600 people to determine their specific needs.

REGIONAL

- In Pakistan, a technical-level meeting of the SSAR Core Group+ was convened on 9 April, chaired by the Netherlands. UNHCR and IOM shared updates on recent developments and embassy counterparts gave their insights on the IFRP. UNHCR also gave an overview of its contingency plan, with discussions centred on developing strategic advocacy points to engage the Government of Pakistan. On 30 April, the Netherlands, as co-chair of the SSAR Core Group+, organized an ambassadorial-level meeting attended by ambassadors and senior representatives from various countries and organizations. Discussions primarily focused on the status of the IFRP and advocacy efforts. The group observed a slight reduction in pressure from the Government of Pakistan regarding the IFRP, as the Prime Minister and other ministers in assured in recent bilateral meetings that the exercise had not been reinstated. While this suggested a potential easing of Pakistan's stance on the IFRP, there was agreement that if relations with Afghanistan deteriorated, the exercise could resume. Recognizing the ongoing fragile situation for Afghans, discussions reiterated the need for continued dialogue with the Government of Pakistan.
- In Iran, UNHCR is working with the National Organisation for Migration of the Ministry of Interior, the UN Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) and other partners to coordinate the distribution of CRIs to flood-affected communities in Sistan and Balochistan provinces. Some 200,000 people in the area have reportedly been affected, including Afghan nationals residing in the province. All items were delivered and will support up to 2,000 flood-affected host community and refugee households (an estimated 11,000 individuals). Items include 2,000 tents, 2,000 plastic tarpaulins, 2,000 high-thermal blankets, 2,000 family hygiene kits (which also contain dignity kits), and 2,000 kitchen sets. Plans are already underway for UNHCR, UNOCHA and UNICEF to conduct a joint assessment on behalf of UNDMT in the flood-affected areas to better understand the needs on the ground.
- On 16 April, UNHCR Pakistan welcomed a delegation from the UK Home Office, accompanied by colleagues from the British High Commission. The visit follows the successful departure of over 750 refugees on three charter flights in 2024, facilitated by UNHCR, with the final flight on 23 April. Around 230 refugees awaiting decisions in Pakistan have submitted applications to the UK. Highlighting ongoing challenges in the UK, the delegation emphasized their exploration of complementary pathways, with a particular focus on skilled labour as a means to address the Afghan refugee situation.
- In April, UNHCR Pakistan's WhatsApp channel for the Afghan community officially went live. This channel serves as a vital platform for UNHCR to disseminate announcements and utilizes various formats such as text, video, images, and voice messages to reach refugees. The channel also facilitates interactive polls, enabling UNHCR to gather valuable feedback from its 'followers'. Initial content posts include information, counselling, and legal assistance materials covering legal aid, child protection, and gender-based violence hotlines. Moreover, the channel highlights complaint mechanisms, underscores anti-fraud measures, and promotes protection from sexual exploitation and abuse key messages. To date, the group has amassed approximately 120,000 members, showcasing its significant impact and reach within the Afghan community.
- In April, UNHCR Pakistan submitted 46 cases (154 refugees). In 2024, 198 cases (767 individuals) were submitted to nine resettlement countries (Australia: 13; Canada: 408; France: 3; Germany: 1; Italy: 1; the Netherlands: 1; New Zealand: 15; United Kingdom: 3; and the United States: 322). In addition, 412 refugees departed for resettlement. In 2024, 1,741 refugees have departed to six resettlement countries so far (Australia: 182; Canada: 443; New Zealand: 111; Norway: 6; United Kingdom: 887 and the United States: 112). Nine people benefitted from complementary pathways that facilitated access to protection and solutions. In 2024, 126 people departed to four countries on complementary pathways (Australia: 17; Canada: 35; Switzerland: 1 and the United States: 73). Of the departures, 103 were facilitated via humanitarian programmes, 19 via community or private sponsorship and four via family reunification. Meanwhile, in Iran, UNHCR submitted 220 cases (733 individuals) to resettlement countries. 47 cases (142 individuals) departed for Australia, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Norway. Resettlement continues to be an invaluable responsibility-sharing mechanism as well as a durable solution and protection tool for refugees whose life, liberty, safety, health, or fundamental human rights are at risk.



CROSS BORDER SITUATION

- Over 1.46 million IDPs returned to their places of origin between 2021 and 2024. The source of these figures are the 417,600 household-level rapid assessments conducted by UNHCR and partners from 10 October 2021 to April 2024. These figures are subject to retroactive adjustments due to ongoing assessments. As such, they are considered indicative rather than the overall statistical data of IDP returnees in Afghanistan. Figures may also be underestimated due to the recent reduction in assessments carried out in 2023.
- In the first quarter of 2024, UNHCR facilitated nearly 21,900 returns, with 99% originating from Pakistan. While there has been a decrease in returns compared to the last quarter of 2023, this figure marks a significant increase from a similar period in 2023, during which only around 1,400 refugee returns were recorded. The primary catalyst for this uptick can be traced back to 3 October 2023, when Pakistan's national Apex Committee endorsed the 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan (IFRP). Most Afghan returns between January to April 2024 were concentrated primarily in five provinces: Nangarhar (49%), Kabul (15%), Laghman (13%), Kandahar (8%), and Kunduz (3%). Over 2% of those assisted have disabilities. For more information, please see the latest [Afghan Returns Quarterly Update](#).

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The total requirements for the Afghanistan situation for 2024 are USD 479.7 million. As of end-April, the situation was 22% funded. UNHCR is grateful for the support of the following donors who have contributed to our Afghanistan situation response with earmarked and softly earmarked funding:

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