# UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #35

UNHCR — The UN Refugee Agency        IOM — UN MIGRATION

**ARREST AND DETENTION**   FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 31 January 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.
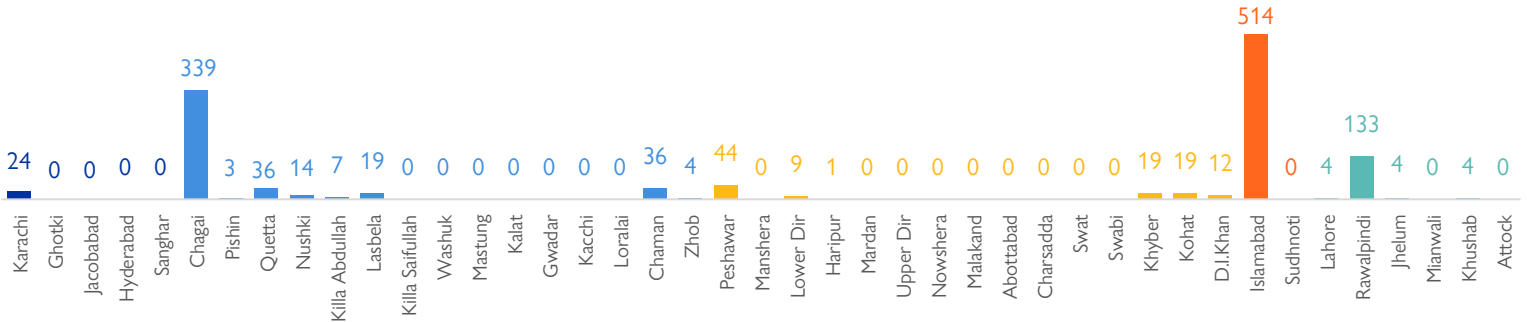
In late January 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued a directive requiring Afghan nationals in Pakistan to relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi or else face deportation. While UNHCR and IOM are seeking clarity over the modality and timeframe of this relocation, the directive applies to ACC and PoR holders, as well as Afghan nationals bound for third country relocation and resettlement. On 5 February 2025, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press statement.
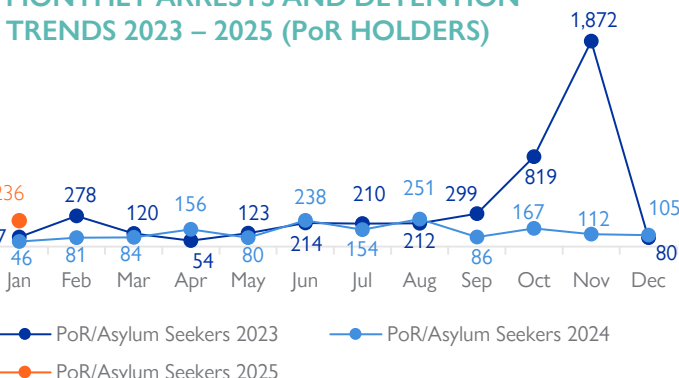
## KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

It is important to note that 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, which should be considered indicative at this point. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- In January 2025, the overall reported rate of arrests and detentions decreased by 40% compared to the past month (reporting period from 1 to 31 December 2024).
- In January 2025, ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 81% of the total rate of arrests and detentions, including a majority of undocumented Afghans.
- In January 2025, 55% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Islamabad Capital Territory and Rawalpindi following the directive on relocation from the two cities by the GoP.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 31 January 2025 are Islamabad, Chaghi (Balochistan), and Rawalpindi (Punjab).
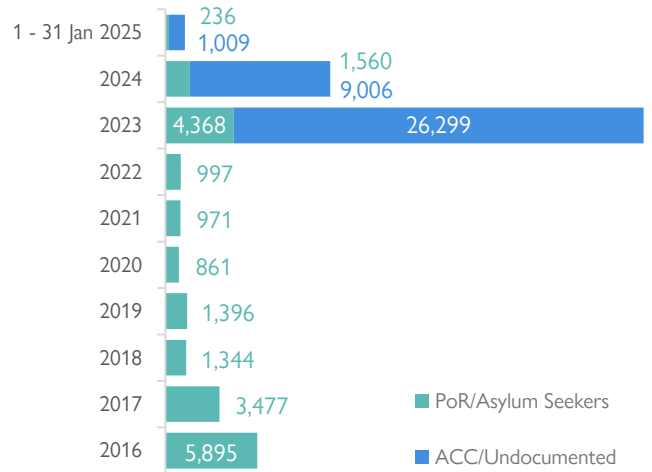
## ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



| Year | PoR/Asylum Seekers | ACC/Undocumented |
|---|---|---|
| 1 - 31 Jan 2025 | 236 | 1,009 |
| 2024 | 1,560 | 9,006 |
| 2023 | 4,368 | 26,299 |
| 2022 | 997 | |
| 2021 | 971 | |
| 2020 | 861 | |
| 2019 | 1,396 | |
| 2018 | 1,344 | |
| 2017 | 3,477 | |
| 2016 | 5,895 | |

## % OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 – 31 January 2025)



| Location | % |
|---|---|
| Sindh | 2% |
| Balochistan | 37% |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | 8% |
| Islamabad/AJK | 41% |
| Punjab | 12% |
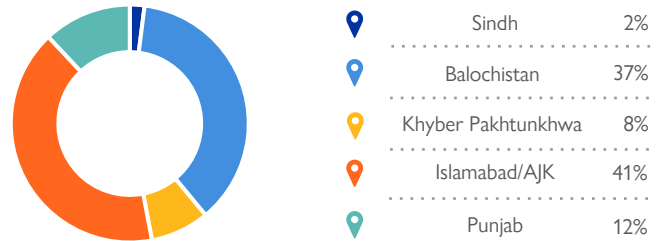
## NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 – 31 January 2025)



| Province | No. |
|---|---|
| Balochistan | 458 |
| Sindh | 24 |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | 104 |
| Islamabad/AJK | 514 |
| Punjab | 145 |

## NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 – 31 January 2025)



| District | No. |
|---|---|
| Karachi | 24 |
| Ghotki | 0 |
| Jacobabad | 0 |
| Hyderabad | 0 |
| Sanghar | 0 |
| Chagai | 339 |
| Pishin | 3 |
| Quetta | 36 |
| Nushki | 14 |
| Killa Abdullah | 7 |
| Lasbela | 19 |
| Killa Saifullah | 0 |
| Washuk | 0 |
| Mastung | 0 |
| Kalat | 0 |
| Gwadar | 0 |
| Kacchi | 0 |
| Loralai | 36 |
| Chaman | 4 |
| Zhob | 44 |
| Peshawar | 0 |
| Manshera | 9 |
| Lower Dir | 1 |
| Haripur | 0 |
| Mardan | 0 |
| Upper Dir | 0 |
| Nowshera | 0 |
| Malakand | 0 |
| Abottabad | 0 |
| Charsadda | 0 |
| Swat | 0 |
| Swabi | 19 |
| Khyber | 19 |
| Kohat | 12 |
| D.I.Khan | 514 |
| Islamabad | 0 |
| Sudhnoti | 4 |
| Lahore | 133 |
| Rawalpindi | 4 |
| Jhelum | 0 |
| Mianwali | 4 |
| Khushab | 0 |
| Attock | |

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



| Month | PoR 2023 | PoR 2024 | PoR 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jan | 87 | 46 | 236 |
| Feb | 278 | 81 | |
| Mar | 120 | 84 | |
| Apr | 156 | 54 | |
| May | 123 | 80 | |
| Jun | 238 | 214 | |
| Jul | 210 | 154 | |
| Aug | 251 | 212 | |
| Sep | 299 | 86 | |
| Oct | 819 | 167 | |
| Nov | 1,872 | 112 | |
| Dec | 105 | 80 | |

## MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2024 – 2025
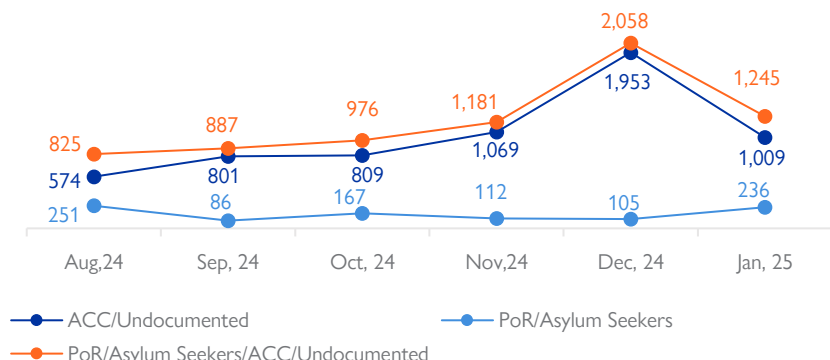


| Month | ACC/Undocumented | PoR/Asylum Seekers | PoR/Asylum Seekers/ACC/Undocumented |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aug, 24 | 574 | 251 | 825 |
| Sep, 24 | 801 | 86 | 887 |
| Oct, 24 | 809 | 167 | 976 |
| Nov, 24 | 1,069 | 112 | 1,181 |
| Dec, 24 | 1,953 | 105 | 2,058 |
| Jan, 25 | 1,009 | 236 | 1,245 |

# UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #35

**ARREST AND DETENTION** | **FLOW MONITORING** (15 September 2023 – 31 January 2025)

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION


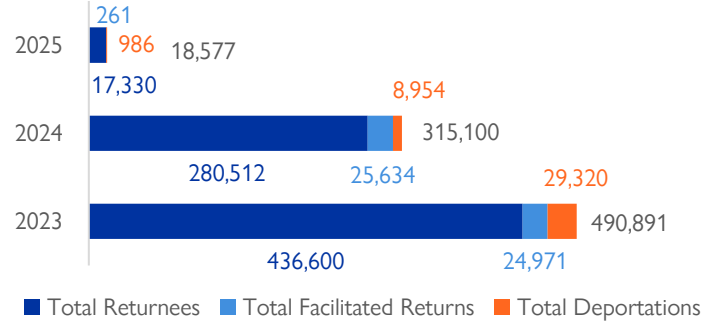IOM border monitor conducting an interview at Torkham border. [IOM Pakistan 2024]

## KEY FINDINGS

- During the period 1 – 31 January 2025, UNHCR and IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimate 18,577 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Reports indicate that Afghan nationals are being deported to Afghanistan from ICT and Rawalpindi, resulting in an increased number of deportations from both locations. Despite these recent developments, no significant impact on overall returns was observed during this reporting period.
- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 31 January 2025, 824,568 individuals have returned. The number of returns in the last month (1 – 31 January; 18,577) decreased by 16% as compared to returns in the month prior to that (1 – 31 December; 22,073).
- Most of the returnees were undocumented Afghans (88%), followed by PoR holders (10%) and ACC holders (2%). Majority of the PoR returns are facilitated by UNHCR.
- Fear of arrest (85%) remains the most common reason to return to Afghanistan among undocumented/ACC holders, while PoR holders cite socio-economic challenges.
- Returnees were most likely to return from Quetta (21%) and Peshawar (20%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (22%), Kandahar (21%) and Kabul (19%) in Afghanistan.
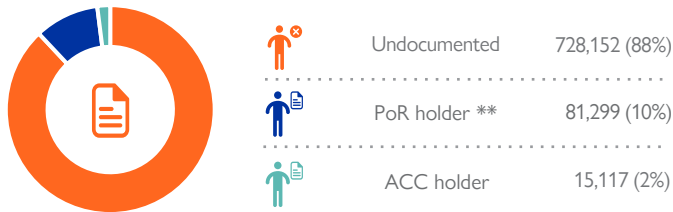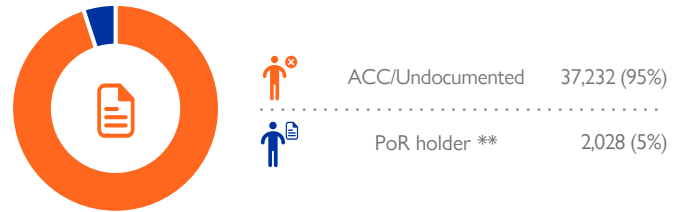
## CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

**824,568 (100%)** TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

**734,442 (89%)** TOTAL RETURNEES

**50,866 (6%)\*** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

**39,260 (5%)** 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 – 31 Jan 2025 | 18,577 | 17,330 | 261 | 986 |
| **Total** | **824,568** | **734,442** | **50,866** | **39,260** |

**Chart (by year):**
- 2025: Total Returnees 17,330; Total Facilitated Returns 261; Total Deportations 986; Total 18,577
- 2024: Total Returnees 280,512; Total Facilitated Returns 25,634; Total Deportations 8,954; Total 315,100
- 2023: Total Returnees 436,600; Total Facilitated Returns 24,971; Total Deportations 29,320; Total 490,891

Legend: ■ Total Returnees ■ Total Facilitated Returns ■ Total Deportations

## DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

| | |
|---|---|
| Undocumented | 728,152 (88%) |
| PoR holder ** | 81,299 (10%) |
| ACC holder | 15,117 (2%) |

## DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

| | |
|---|---|
| ACC/Undocumented | 37,232 (95%) |
| PoR holder ** | 2,028 (5%) |

## TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 31 JANUARY 2025



Event annotations:
- Announcement of the IFRP
- Implementation of 1st phase IFRP
- Reports of increased arrests, detentions, and deportations of Afghans in ICT and Rawalpindi.***

Monthly totals:
- Sep-23: 22,196
- Oct-23: 147,526
- Nov-23: 262,473
- Dec-23: 58,696
- Jan-24: 19,458
- Feb-24: 17,632
- Mar-24: 17,137
- Apr-24: 25,397
- May-24: 38,894
- Jun-24: 38,062
- Jul-24: 35,928
- Aug-24: 28,729
- Sep-24: 22,689
- Oct-24: 23,679
- Nov-24: 25,422
- Dec-24: 22,073
- Jan-25: 18,577

Legend: ■ Returns KP (Torkham + Ghulam Khan) ■ Returns Balochistan (Chaman + Badini + Bahramcha) --- % Deportations ● Event date ▢ Event
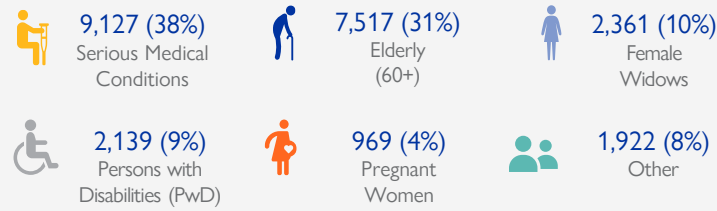
*The number refers to facilitated PoR returns through VRCs who crossed the border during the reporting period.
** This figure refers to PoR holders based on interviews conducted with returnees in Afghanistan.
*** These arrests and detentions occurred following news reports on 27 November 2024, indicating a MoI requirement of a NOC for Afghan nationals residing in ICT after 31 December 2024.
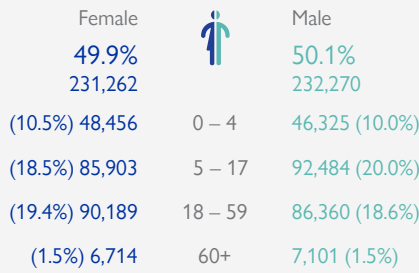
# UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #35

ARREST AND DETENTION    FLOW MONITORING    (15 September 2023 – 31 January 2025)

## This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

### TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

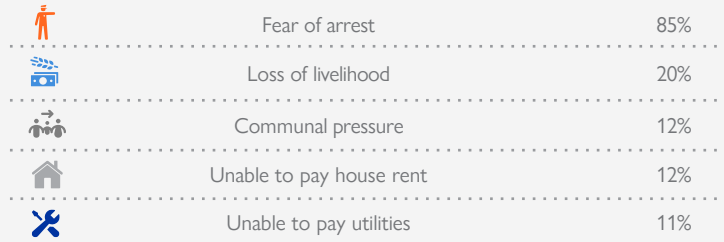(Expressed as a percentage of the total numbers of vulnerable persons)

- **9,127 (38%)** Serious Medical Conditions
- **7,517 (31%)** Elderly (60+)
- **2,361 (10%)** Female Widows
- **2,139 (9%)** Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- **969 (4%)** Pregnant Women
- **1,922 (8%)** Other

### AGE AND GENDER

| | Female | | Male |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **49.9%** 231,262 | | **50.1%** 232,270 |
| (10.5%) 48,456 | | 0 – 4 | 46,325 (10.0%) |
| (18.5%) 85,903 | | 5 – 17 | 92,484 (20.0%) |
| (19.4%) 90,189 | | 18 – 59 | 86,360 (18.6%) |
| (1.5%) 6,714 | | 60+ | 7,101 (1.5%) |

### REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN (TOP 5)

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 30,004)

| | |
|---|---|
| Fear of arrest | 85% |
| Loss of livelihood | 20% |
| Communal pressure | 12% |
| Unable to pay house rent | 12% |
| Unable to pay utilities | 11% |

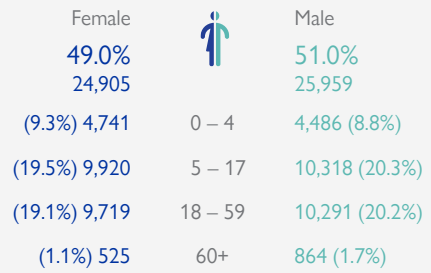## This section only applies to PoR holders

### TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

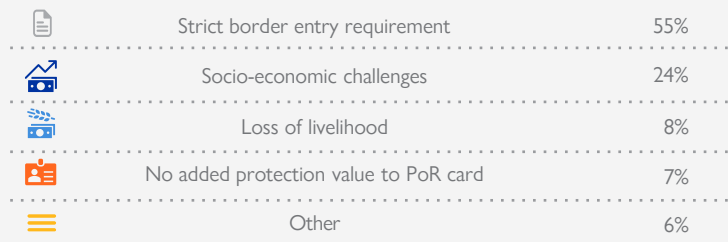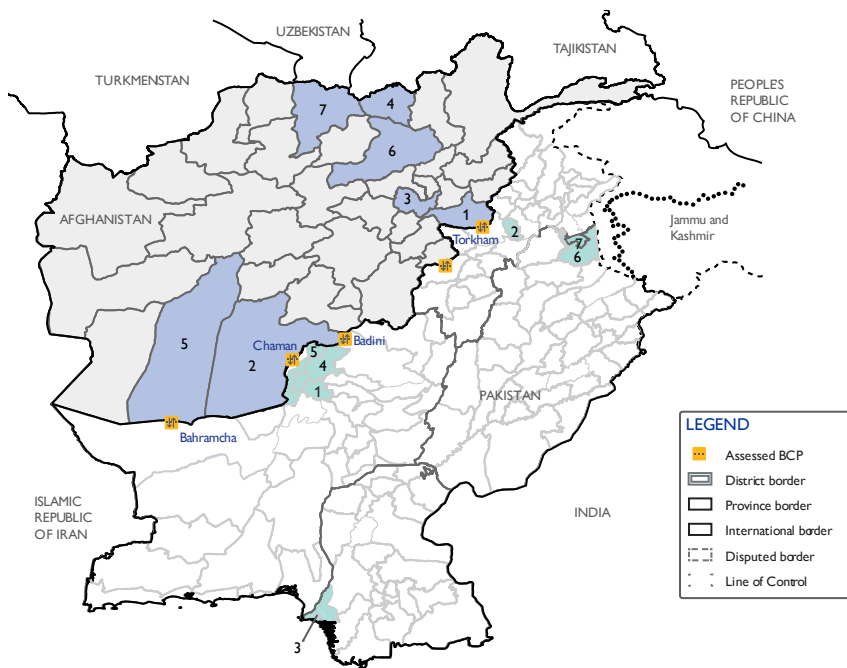- **1,246 (42%)** Serious Medical Conditions
- **533 (18%)** Elderly (60+)
- **300 (10%)** Women at Risk
- **299 (10%)** Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- **608 (20%)** Other

### AGE AND GENDER

| | Female | | Male |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **49.0%** 24,905 | | **51.0%** 25,959 |
| (9.3%) 4,741 | | 0 – 4 | 4,486 (8.8%) |
| (19.5%) 9,920 | | 5 – 17 | 10,318 (20.3%) |
| (19.1%) 9,719 | | 18 – 59 | 10,291 (20.2%) |
| (1.1%) 525 | | 60+ | 864 (1.7%) |

### REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN (TOP 5)

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 4,782)

| | |
|---|---|
| Strict border entry requirement | 55% |
| Socio-economic challenges | 24% |
| Loss of livelihood | 8% |
| No added protection value to PoR card | 7% |
| Other | 6% |
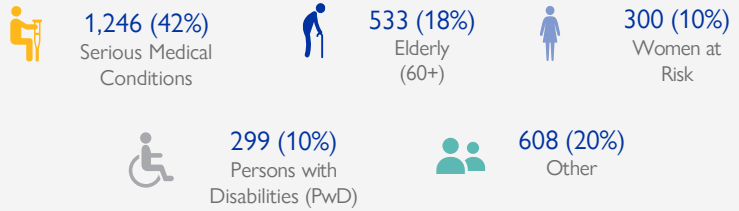
## DISTRICT OF ORIGIN IN PAKISTAN AND PROVINCE OF DESTINATION IN AFGHANISTAN

LEGEND
- Assessed BCP
- District border
- Province border
- International border
- Disputed border
- Line of Control

### DISTRICT OF ORIGIN (TOP 7)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Quetta | 21% |
| 2. | Peshawar | 20% |
| 3. | Karachi Central | 12% |
| 4. | Pishin | 10% |
| 5. | Killa Abdullah | 7% |
| 6. | Rawalpindi | 5% |
| 7. | Islamabad | 4% |

### PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nangarhar | 22% |
| 2. | Kandahar | 21% |
| 3. | Kabul | 19% |
| 4. | Kunduz | 12% |
| 5. | Hilmand | 5% |
| 6. | Baghlan | 5% |
| 7. | Balkh | 4% |
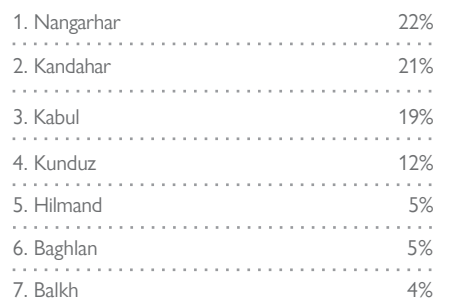
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Dotted line represents approximately the line of control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The designations employed and presentation of material 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 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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