4 SEPTEMBER 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #58

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 30 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.

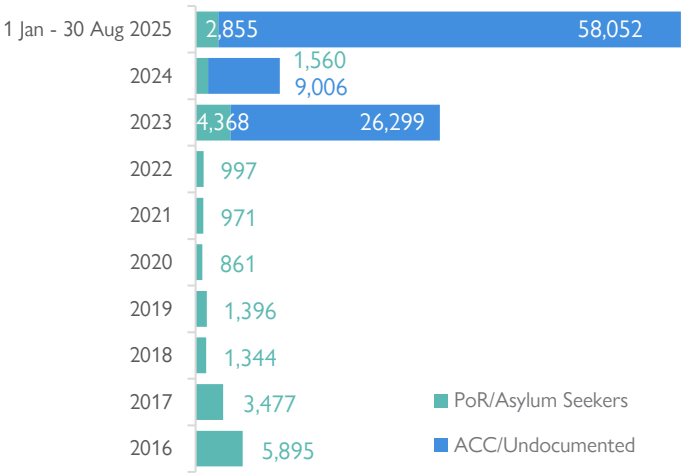
From January – February 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued a directive, requiring Afghan nationals in Pakistan to relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In response, on 5 February 2025, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press statement. Further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

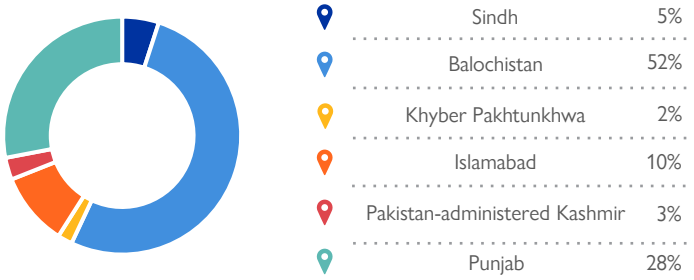
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (24 – 30 August), a total of 2,371 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a 35% increase compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (24 – 30 August), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 93% of the total rate of arrest and detentions.
- During the reporting period (24 – 30 August), 83% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 30 August 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Islamabad, and Killa Saifullah (Balochistan).

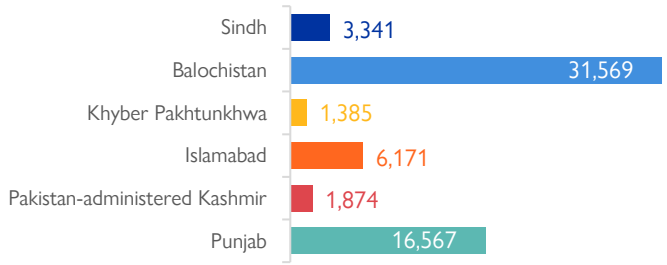
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



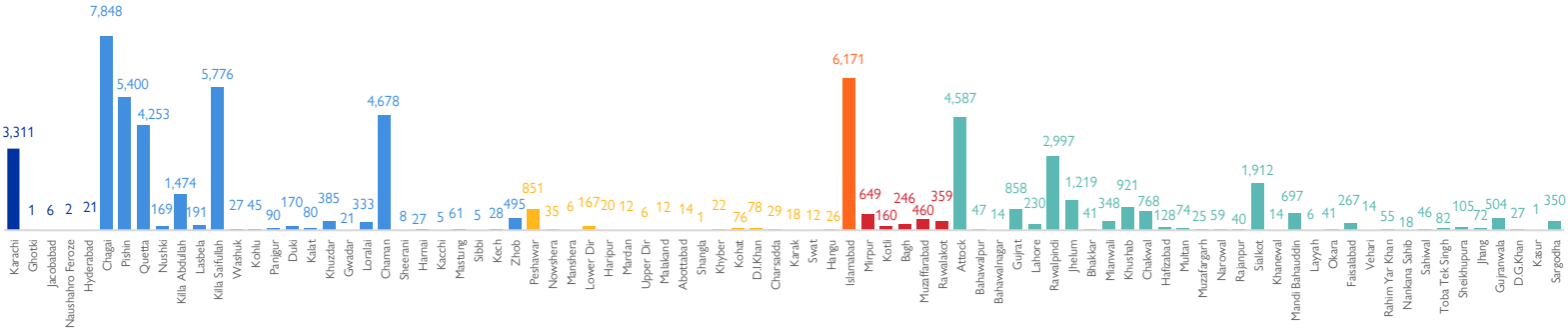
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 30 August 2025)



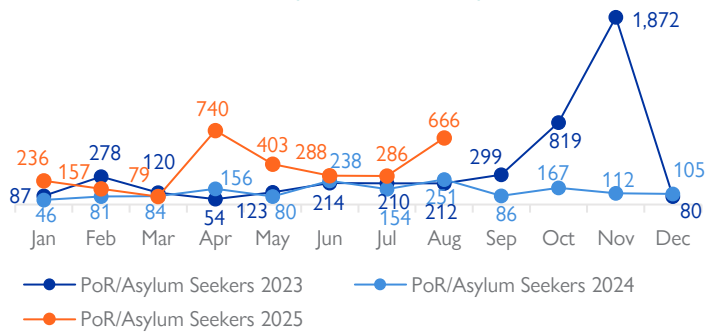
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 30 August 2025)



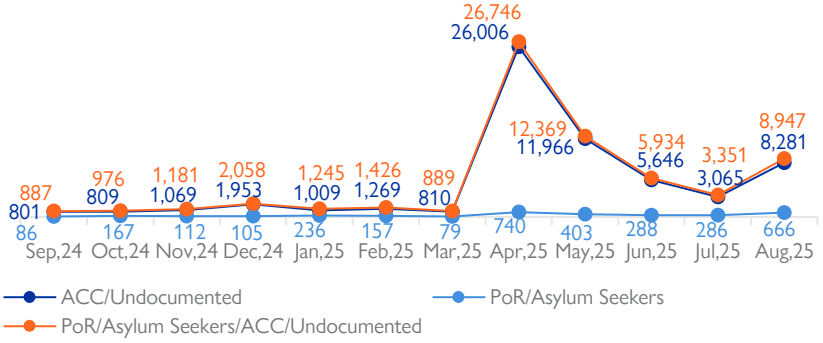
NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 January – 30 August 2025)



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



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2024 – 2025



4 SEPTEMBER 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #58

ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (15 September 2023 – 30 August 2025)

Intensifying outflow of Afghan families and individuals at the Torkham border. [IOM Pakistan 2025]

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 30 August 2025, 1,286,363 individuals have returned.
- During the period 24 – 30 August 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 65,412 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Returns and deportations increased substantially by 134 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively, during the period of 24 – 30 August (65,412 returns and 2,279 deportations), compared to the previous week of 17 – 23 August (27,943 returns and 1,699 deportations).
- For the returns from 24 – 30 August 2025, most of the returnees were PoR holders (66%) followed by undocumented (32%) and ACC holders (2%). Majority of the PoR returns are facilitated by UNHCR.
- For the deportees from 24 – 30 August 2025, most of the deportees were undocumented (87%); followed by PoR holders (12%) and ACC holders (1%).
- Since 1 April 2025, 432,330 Afghan nationals returned, of which 59,757 were deported.
- Since 1 April 2025, fear of arrest is the most common reason to return among undocumented/ACC; holders (92%) and PoR holders (48%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Islamabad (21%), Quetta (15%); and Rawalpindi (14%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Kabul (23%), Kunduz (20%) and Nangarhar (19%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

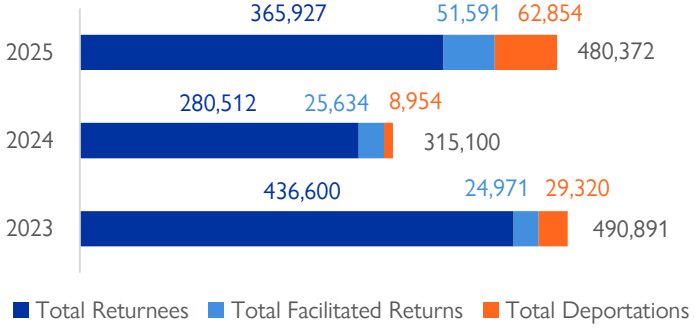
1,286,363 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

1,083,039 (84%) TOTAL RETURNEES

102,196 (8%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

101,128 (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 – 30 Aug 2025	480,372	365,927	51,591	62,854
Total	**1,286,363**	**1,083,039**	**102,196**	**101,128**



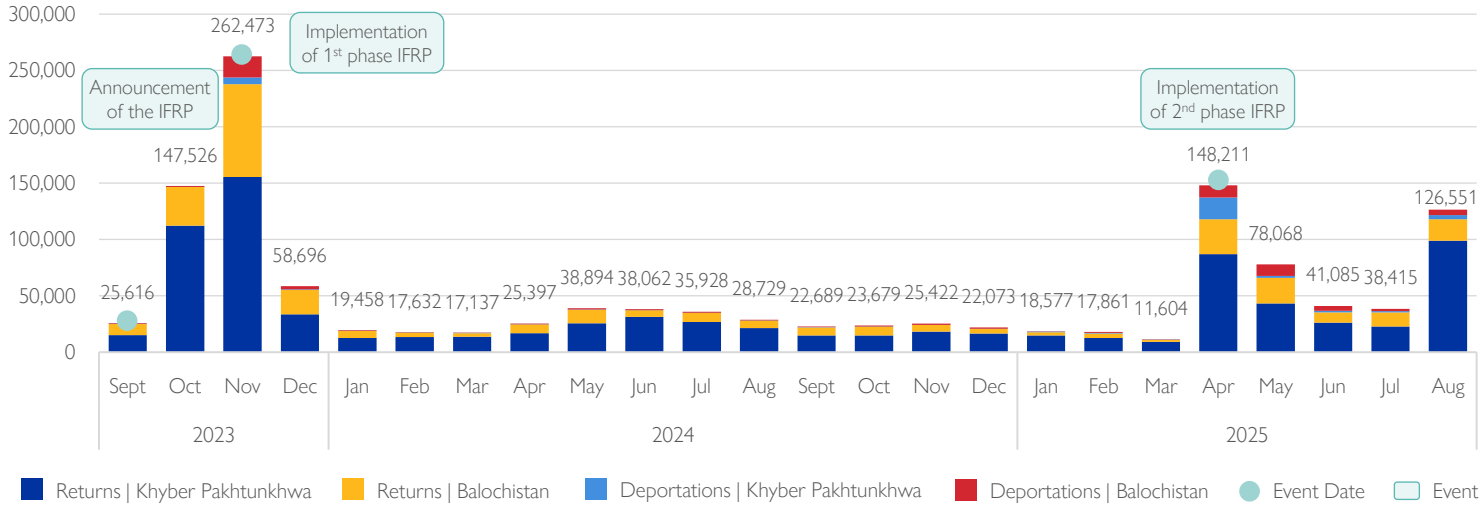
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	931,248 (79%)
ACC holders	61,733 (5%)
PoR holders ***	192,254 (16%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented (15 Sep 2023 – 31 Mar 2025)	39,333
Undocumented (1 Apr – 30 Aug 2025)	42,556
ACC holders (1 Apr – 30 Aug 2025)	14,556
PoR holders *** (15 Sep 2023 – 30 Aug 2025)	4,683

TOTAL RETURNS AND DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 30 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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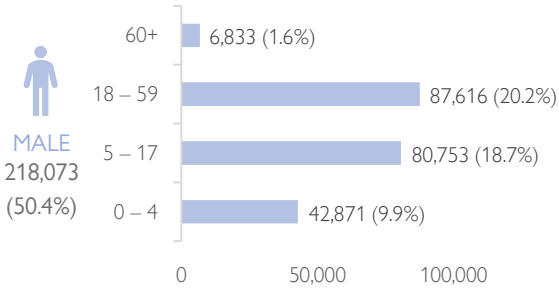
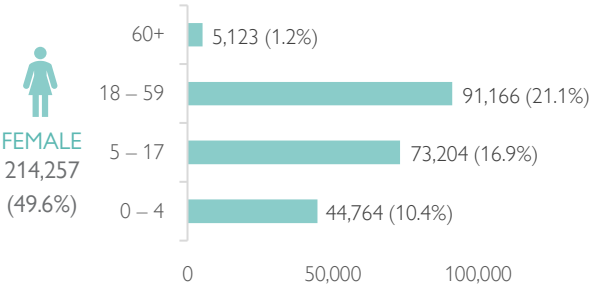
ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (1 April – 30 August 2025)

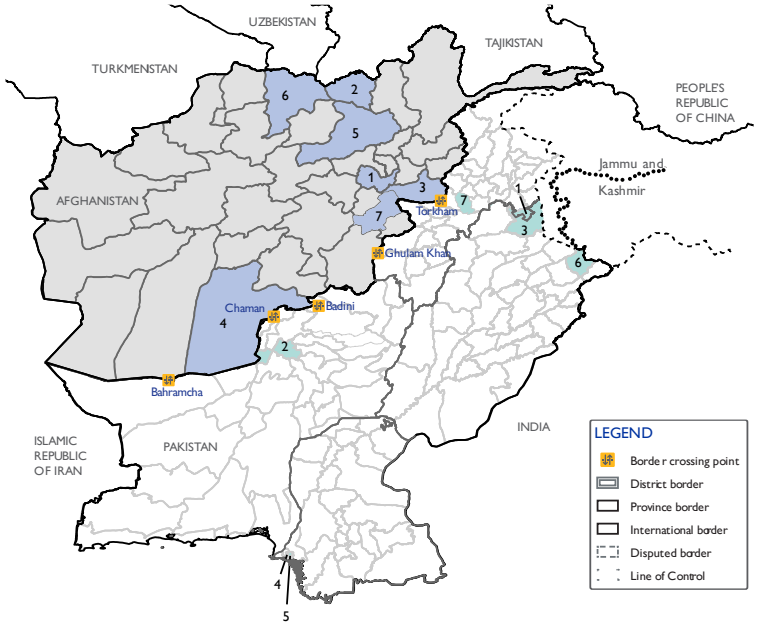
AGE AND GENDER****

432,330
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	21%
2. Quetta	15%
3. Rawalpindi	14%
4. Karachi Central	7%
5. Karachi East	7%
6. Sialkot	7%
7. Peshawar	6%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Kabul	23%
2. Kunduz	20%
3. Nangarhar	19%
4. Kandahar	11%
5. Baghlan	8%
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)

- 4,668 (47%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 2,857 (29%) Elderly (60+)
- 1,104 (11%) Female Widows
- 639 (6%) Pregnant Women
- 354 (4%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 316 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 15,280)

Fear of arrest	92%
Financial debt	26%
Family member deported	21%
No employment	12%
Communal pressure to return	5%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 1,510 (51%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 745 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 360 (12%) Women at Risk
- 334 (12%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 2,688)

Fear of arrest	48%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	26%
No added protection value of PoR card	12%
Deterioration in security conditions	5%
Lack of livelihoods	3%

**** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 39 per cent (168,455 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 61 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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