

Summary of Legal Assistance and Aid Programme

January–February 2018



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.¹

In February 2018, UNHCR and its partners provided legal assistance to a total of **3,957** persons of concern compared to 3,370 in January 2018. During the month, UNHCR and its partners intervened at police stations for **111** 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 32 persons of concern.

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).

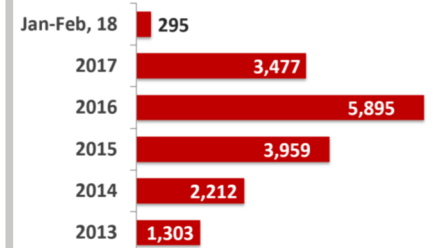
Arrest and detention of persons of concern decreased by 6% in the month of February 2018 as compared to the month of January 2018. However, the arrests and detention situation may remain fluid due to various factors, including short-term extension of validity of PoR cards and increased security checks and operations in the country. The Federal Cabinet of Pakistan discussed the Afghan Management and Repatriation Policy plan on 20 February and has approved a further extension in the stay of PoR cardholders until 30 June 2018.

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

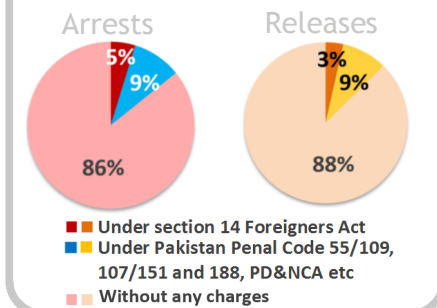
* Actual numbers of arrests / detentions / ** Interventions made by ALAC at police stations to secure the release of PoCs.

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.

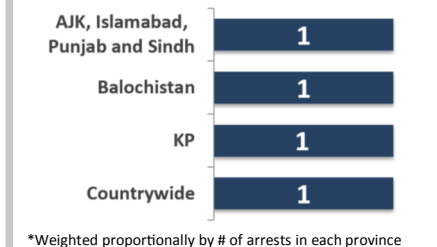
Arrests and detentions by year



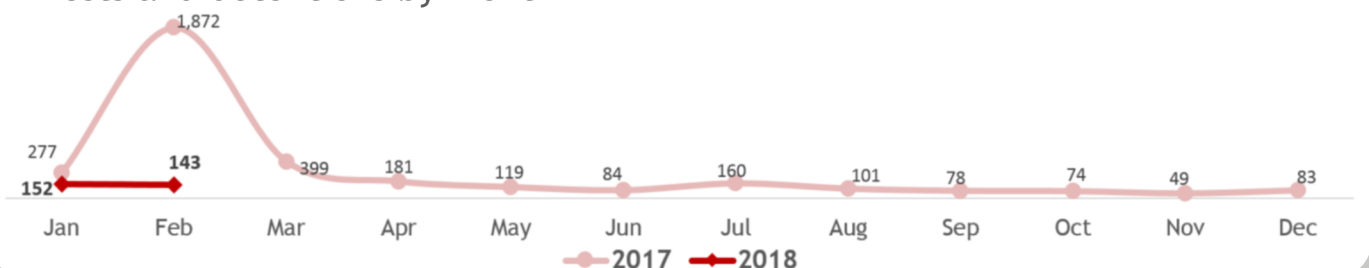
Types of arrests and releases



Avg length of detention (days)*

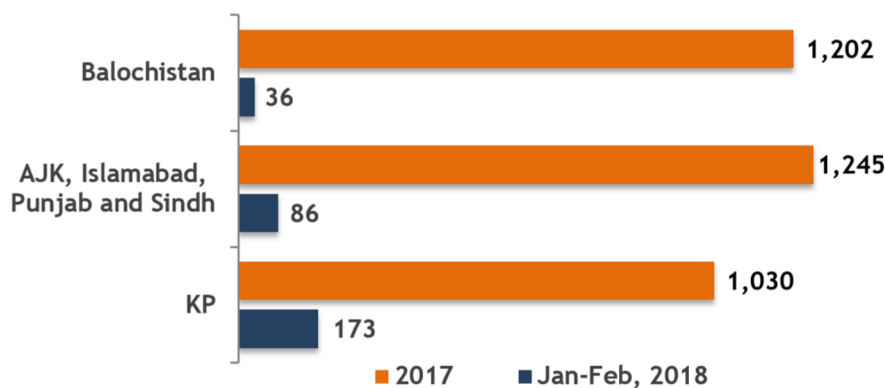


Arrests and detentions by month

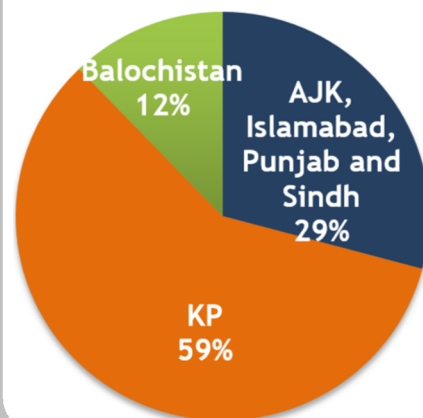




Arrests and detentions by location and year



Arrest/detention locations



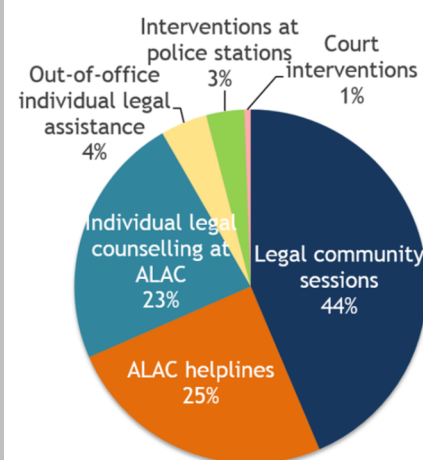
Access to legal assistance and legal remedies

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.

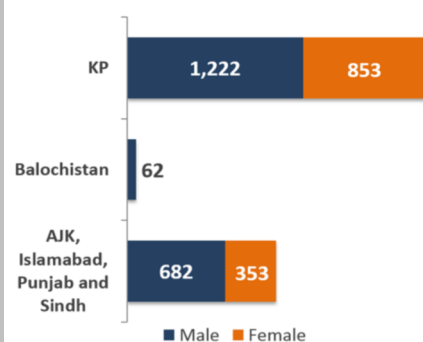
In February, partner staff provided **individual legal counselling** to 879 persons of concern who visited the Advice and Legal Assistance centres as well as legal advice to a total of 793 persons of concern through **ALAC helplines**. Birth registration, police harassment, information on repatriation, 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 127 persons of concern mostly related to police harassment, PoR card verifications, rental agreements and affidavits. In addition to court representations for arrest/detention cases under the Foreigners Act/preventive laws, ALAC lawyers also helped refugees to pursue 1 case related to financial dispute in the local court.

UNHCR and ALAC staff also organized a total of **84 legal camps and shura meetings** reaching **1,975 participants** (39% of whom were women) in the reporting month. 51% 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 protection issues affecting their communities. UNHCR partner staff informed refugees of available free legal aid 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 has 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 lawyers from across the country.