

# Afghanistan Situation: Afghan Returns from Iran and Pakistan Emergency Update #2

(25 July 2025)



**2.1 million**  
Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan in 2025

**1.37 million**  
Afghans have returned from Iran since 1 April

**296,000**  
Afghans returned from Pakistan since 1 April

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Over 2.1 million Afghans have returned in 2025** as of 24 July, with returns from Iran and Pakistan continuing at scale.
- **Returns from Pakistan are taking place amid uncertainty around Poof of Registration (PoR) card renewals**, driven by reports of arrests, harassment, and extortion. Many are approaching UNHCR for support or opting to return out of fear of deportation.
- **In Afghanistan, returnees face severe challenges**, including lack of shelter, livelihoods, and essential services. UNHCR and partners are scaling up the response at key border points.

## Operational Context

Afghanistan is facing a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crisis, driven by prolonged economic hardship, recurrent natural disasters, and limited access to critical services. The situation is being compounded by sustained large-scale returns from neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, now exceeding 2.1 million.

In Iran, the situation for Afghans has grown increasingly precarious, driven by domestic uncertainty following the expiry of Headcount Slips on 20 March and the launch of a regularization and return scheme affecting two million people. Rising regional tensions have further compounded these challenges. In Pakistan, the start of Phase II of the 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' in April – targeting undocumented and Afghan Citizenship Card (ACC) holders – has accelerated returns, building on the large-scale movements that began in late 2023.

While UNHCR continues to urge countries in the region to ensure that returns are voluntary, safe, and dignified, thousands of Afghans are returning with no choice, no belongings, and no place to call home. In response, UNHCR and partners are present at key border points to provide immediate, life-saving support. But the scale and pace of returns are stretching already limited resources and placing mounting pressure on host communities.

UNHCR's Afghanistan situation remains critically underfunded, receiving only 24% of the required \$478 million. Without immediate and sustained funding, the capacity to respond effectively and deliver life-saving assistance and protection to Afghans across the region will be dangerously compromised.

## High-Level Visit Highlights Urgent Need for Coordinated Solutions to Afghan Returns

From 19 to 22 July, UNHCR's High Commissioner accompanied by the Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific visited Afghanistan and Iran to spotlight the growing returns crisis and advocate for coordinated, sustainable solutions.

In Afghanistan, the High Commissioner met with de facto authorities, donors, the UN Country Team, and diplomatic partners, and visited the Islam Qala border crossing, where he observed the emergency response and engaged with returning Afghans.



*UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi visits the Islam Qala border  
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In Iran, he met with senior government officials, Afghan refugees, UNHCR staff, and members of the diplomatic community. UNHCR continues to advocate for protection-sensitive approaches and greater international support to help Afghanistan absorb large-scale returns and meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

## Operational Highlights

### Iran

- **As of 23 July, some 1.36 million Afghans returned from Iran since 1 April and more than 1.68 million since the beginning of the year.** Between 17 and 23 July, daily average returns exceeded 15,700 people – a 47% decrease (29,600) from the previous week. *For more information, please read the latest UNHCR CORE Iran-Afghanistan Update [here](#).*
- **Protection concerns for Afghans in Iran persist, with reports of challenges related to access to services, housing, and livelihoods.** Refugees have shared difficulties such as increased living costs, wage disparities, and limited access to rental agreements in some areas. UNHCR is monitoring the situation and providing support, noting a rise in psychological distress among children – particularly related to school exclusion and fears of deportation – as well as a growing number of female-headed households seeking assistance.

### Pakistan

- **Between 1 April and 24 July, 296,000 Afghans returned,** including some 50,300 deportees (17%). Most were undocumented (69%), followed by Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders (17%) and Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders (14%). **The percentage of PoR card holders returning** increased to 27% in July compared to 6% in April.
- **Community concerns over PoR card expiry intensify, as call volumes surge.** Between 17 and 23 July, protection helplines received over 9,400 calls – more than double the 3,948 recorded between 14 and 16 July – reflecting rising anxiety. Most calls were related to arrests, deportation, harassment and inquiries about the PoR extension. UNHCR's [helpline](#) continues to be a vital resource, offering timely and accurate information to people seeking support.
- **Refugees face mounting pressures amid stricter enforcement and monsoon impacts.** Reports of harassment, extortion, and arrests by law enforcement continue, driving fear of deportation and prompting some families to return voluntarily. Refugees also remain exposed to climate risks, with recent monsoon floods in Islamabad damaging homes and property. UNHCR is advocating at all levels to protect refugees' rights and ensure their safety amid these growing challenges.

### Afghanistan

- **UNHCR and partners maintain a presence across key border entry points** – Islam Qala (Herat), Milak (Nimroz), Torkham (Nangarhar), Spin Boldak (Kandahar), as well as at the Encashment Centre in Kabul – providing life-saving assistance and scaling up protection, coordination, and preparedness in response to evolving return trends. Border monitoring in Afghanistan continues to reveal significant protection challenges faced by Afghan returnees while in Iran, including difficulties in obtaining essential services and instances of discrimination.
- **At Islam Qala, UNHCR is prioritizing protection for vulnerable returnees and facilitating referrals to available services.** Over 133,000 Afghan returnees have been screened since late June, including female-headed households. Persistent concerns include family separations, abuse, and gender-based violence. Many returnees arrive with few belongings and unpaid wages amid

ongoing difficulties in Iran. UNHCR and partners are working with partners to strengthen support and protection services to ensure safer and more dignified returns.

- **UNHCR is supporting returnees at Nimroz (Milak), focusing on protection, legal aid, and service access.** Since early July, over 2,500 people (154 households) have been referred for assistance at Zaranj Zero Point and the IOM Reception Centre. Legal awareness sessions have reached more than 750 people, with ongoing counselling and protection case identification. In addition, more than 5,300 people (1,024 households) received core relief items (CRIs) between 19 and 22 July, bringing the total assisted since 14 July to 2,413 households.
- **In Spin Boldak (Kandahar), 275 households received assistance referrals at Zero Point and Takhtapul Reception Centre** between 16 and 23 July, including support for health, water, sanitation and hygiene, food, and telecommunications. During this period, more than 10 protection cases were identified, including people with disabilities and female-headed households, with two referred for case management. UNHCR also screened over 900 returnees to ensure timely support.
- **UNHCR continues to provide cash assistance through its voluntary repatriation (VolRep) and Forcibly Returned Afghans Enrollment (FARE) programmes,** which use biometrics to support cash-based interventions for returning Afghan refugees. This support helps returning Afghans meet their immediate needs upon arrival and facilitates a more dignified and sustainable reintegration process. This support is also complemented by health care, psychosocial support, legal aid, and mine risk awareness.
- **The top three protection services requested upon arrival** by Afghan returnees from Iran were documentation and legal assistance (63%), family reunification support (42%), and information on services and assistance (21%). The top three needs upon arrival were food (88%), housing or accommodation (76%) and financial support (74%).
- **The top three protection services requested upon arrival** by Afghan returnees from Pakistan were documentation and legal assistance (74%), protection services for children (36%), and information on services and assistance (36%). The top three needs upon arrival were food (82%), housing (81%), and financial support (80%).

## Financial Information

UNHCR's Afghanistan situation this year is only funded at **24% against the required \$478 million**. UNHCR calls on the international community to urgently and substantially increase funding.

UNHCR appreciates the generosity of donors who have stepped up to support the Afghanistan situation response with earmarked, softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions, ensuring life-saving assistance reaches those most in need:

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