26 SEPTEMBER 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #61

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 20 September 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.

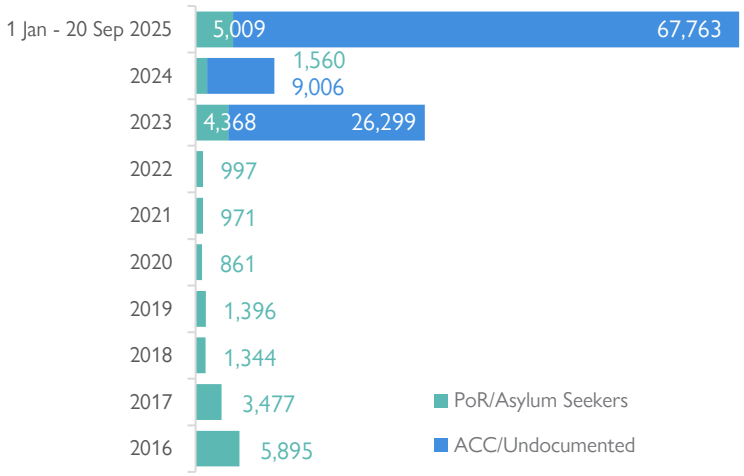
In 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued several directives impacting Afghan nationals. In January, the GoP announced that Afghan nationals should relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In April, further announcements indicated the implementation of the second phase of the "IFRP", targeting ACC holders, in addition to undocumented Afghans. In July, the GoP issued a Statutory Regulation Order (SRO) directing the repatriation/deportation of PoR card holders following the expiry of PoR card validity on 30 June. The GoP later indicated a deadline of 1 September for PoR holders to leave Pakistan, before the start of the repatriation/deportation process. UNHCR issued a press briefing expressing concern regarding the decision and urging the GoP to exempt Afghans with international protection needs, as well as those with particular circumstances or vulnerabilities, from involuntary return.

KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

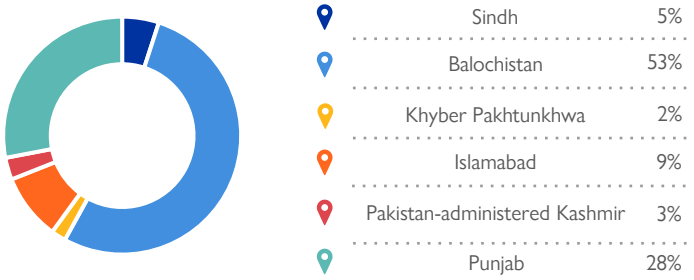
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (14 – 20 September), a total of 6,110 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a sharp 111% increase compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (14 – 20 September), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 80% of the total rate of arrest and detentions.
- During the reporting period (14 – 20 September), 57% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan, and 27% in Punjab.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 20 September 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Islamabad, and Attock (Punjab).

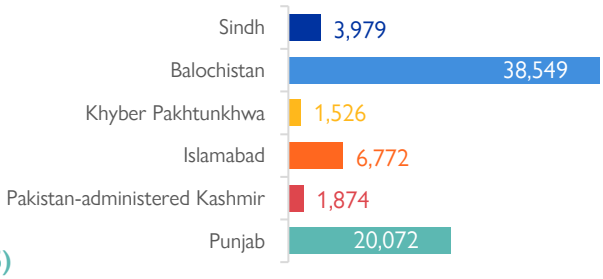
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



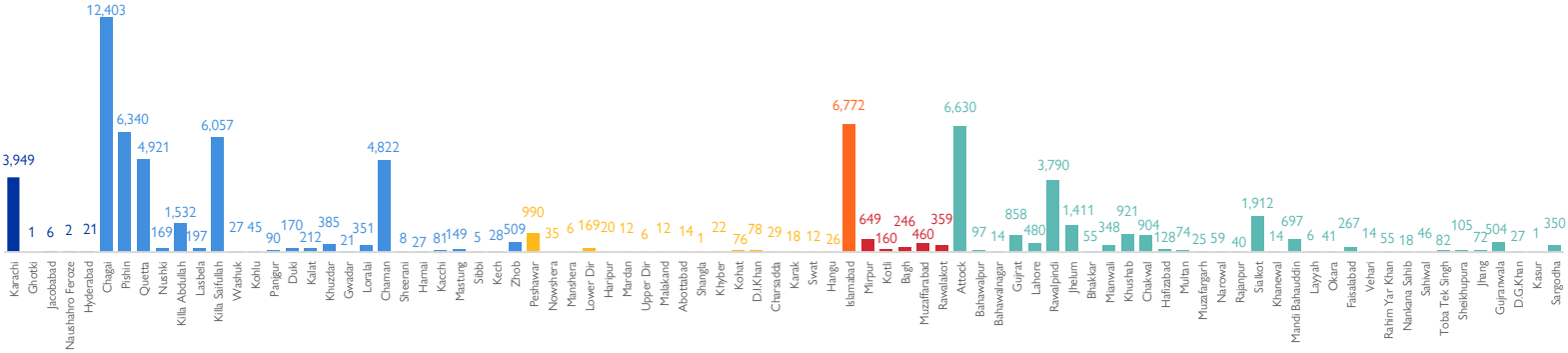
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 20 September 2025)



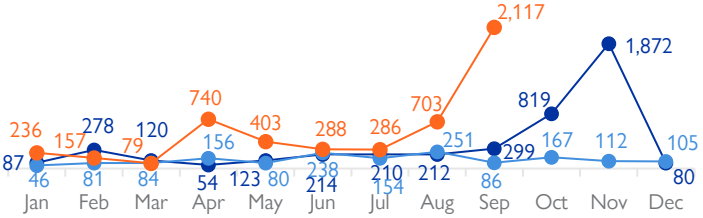
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 20 September 2025)



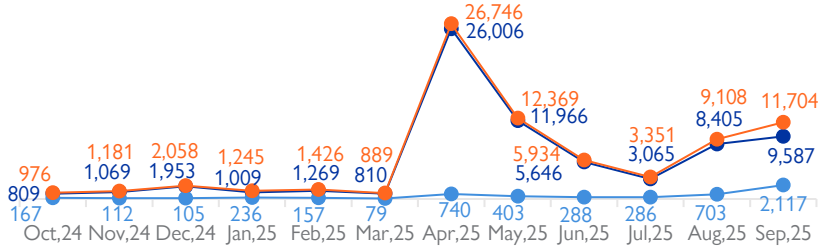
NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 January – 20 September 2025)



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



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2024 – 2025



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ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING | (15 September 2023 – 20 September 2025)

IOM border monitor conducting an interview at Chaman border. [IOM Pakistan 2025]

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 20 September 2025, 1,492,707 individuals have returned.
- During the period 14 – 20 September 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 55,708 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Returns increased (+11%) and deportations increased (+131%) during the period 14 – 20 September 2025 (55,708 returns including 6,642 deportations), compared to the previous week of 7 – 13 September (50,118 returns including 2,875 deportations).
- For the returns from 14 – 20 September 2025, most of the returnees were PoR holders (56%) followed by undocumented (39%) and ACC holders (5%). Majority of the POR returns include those facilitated by UNHCR through the Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs).
- For the deportees from 14 – 20 September 2025, most of the deportees were undocumented (63%); followed by PoR holders (36%) and ACC holders (1%).
- Since 1 April 2025, 638,674 Afghan nationals returned, of which 72,118 (11%) were deported. During the period, fear of arrest was the most common reason to return among undocumented/ACC holders (92%) and PoR holders (74%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Attock (20%), Islamabad (14%); and Rawalpindi (13%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (22%), Kabul (20%) and Kunduz (17%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

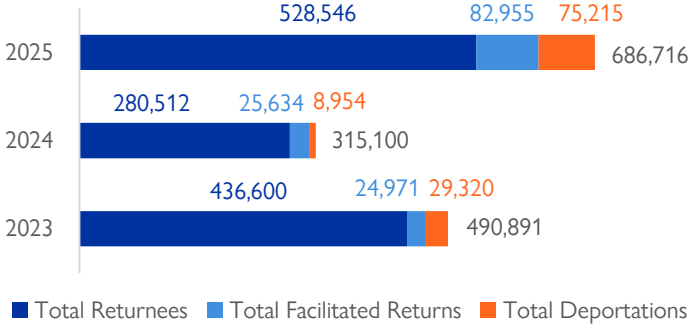
1,492,707 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

1,245,658 (84%) TOTAL RETURNEES

133,560 (9%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

113,489 (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 – 20 Sep 2025	686,716	528,546	82,955	75,215
Total	**1,492,707**	**1,245,658**	**133,560**	**113,489**



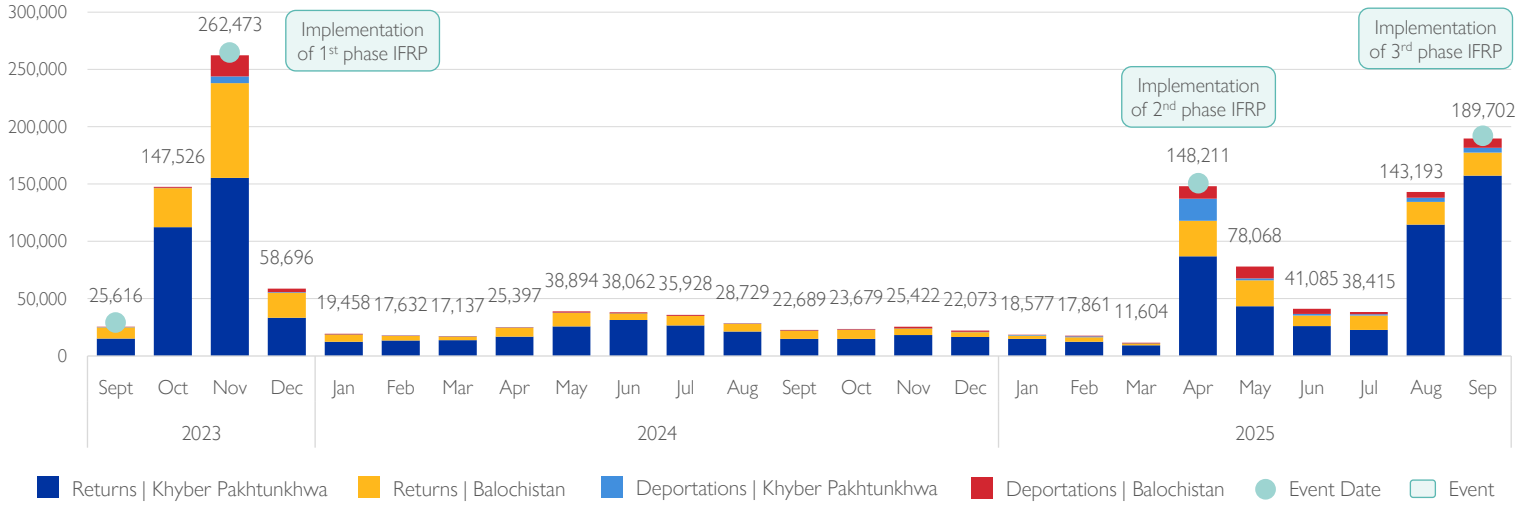
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	1,011,363 (73%)
ACC holders	68,392 (5%)
PoR holders ***	299,463 (22%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented (15 Sep 2023 – 31 Mar 2025)	39,333
Undocumented (1 Apr – 20 Sep 2025)	52,841
ACC holders (1 Apr – 20 Sep 2025)	14,657
PoR holders *** (15 Sep 2023 – 20 Sep 2025)	6,658

TOTAL RETURNS AND DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 20 SEPTEMBER 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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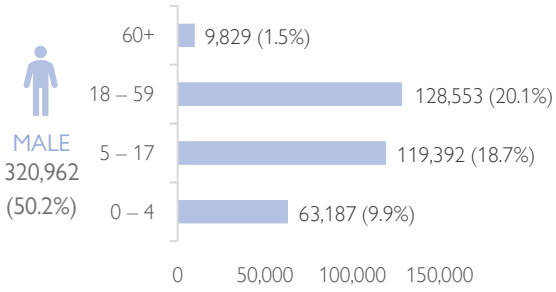
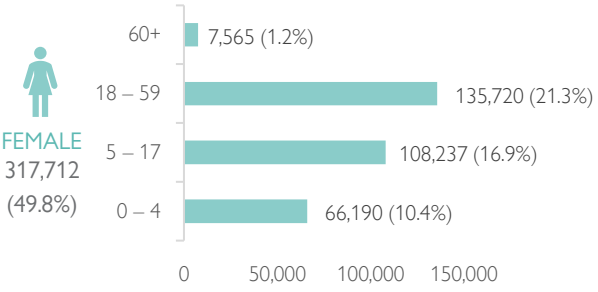
ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (1 April – 20 September 2025)

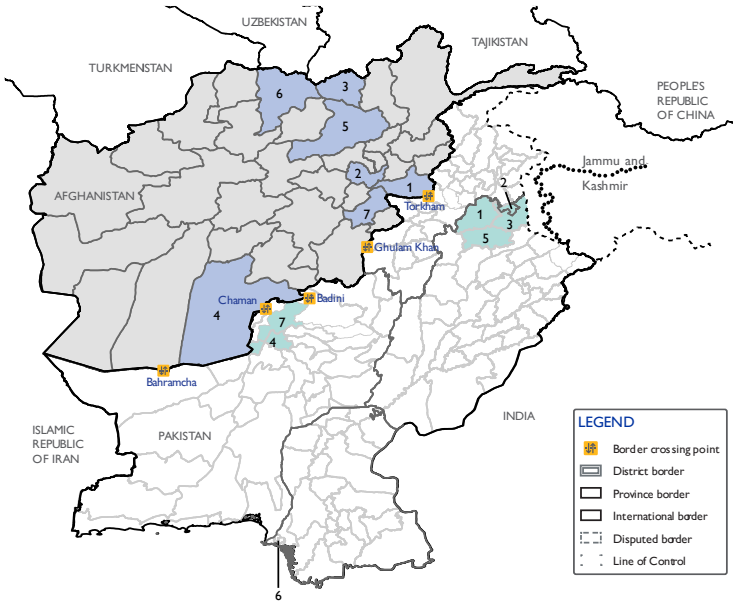
AGE AND GENDER****

638,674
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. Attock	20%
2. Islamabad	14%
3. Rawalpindi	13%
4. Quetta	11%
5. Chakwal	10%
6. Karachi Central	5%
7. Pishin	5%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Nangarhar	22%
2. Kabul	20%
3. Kunduz	17%
4. Kandahar	9%
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)

- 7,554 (48%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 4,482 (28%) Elderly (60+)
- 1,749 (11%) Female Widows
- 960 (6%) Pregnant Women
- 611 (4%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 490 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 24,448)

Fear of arrest	92%
Financial debt	27%
Family member deported	20%
No employment	10%
Communal pressure to return	7%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 2,456 (52%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 1,212 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 573 (12%) Women at Risk
- 533 (11%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 2,869)

Fear of arrest	74%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	29%
High inflation rate	4%
No added protection value of PoR card	4%
Lack of livelihoods	4%

**** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 42 per cent (268,453 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 58 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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