



UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) Mr. George Okoth-Obbo interacting with refugees in Naguman Refugee village Peshawar. © Asif Shehzad

Legal Assistance

27,004

Arrest & Detentions

1,310

Interventions

864

Releases

1,310

Key Issues of Interest

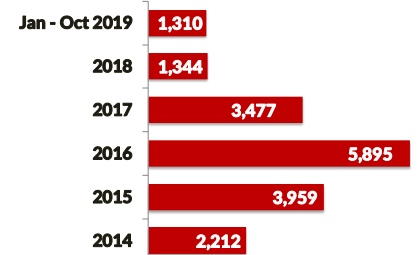
Nine Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC's) are operational in the main refugee-hosting areas of Pakistan's four provinces and provide free legal support to persons of concern (PoCs). Eight of these centers are run by UNHCR's partner, SHARP, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), while one is run by SEHER in Balochistan, another UNHCR's partner.

In October 2019, UNHCR and its partners provided legal assistance to a total of **2,784** PoCs. During the month, UNHCR and its partners intervened at police stations for **38** arrested/detained PoCs and secured release of all. In the majority of the cases, UNHCR and its partners managed to obtain the release of the arrested PoCs before they were formally charged by the law enforcement agencies. Most were released within 24 hours. In addition, ALAC partners represented to **38** PoCs in courts who had been charged under the Foreigners Act (dealing with unauthorized stay of foreigners) and other preventive laws (allowing preventive detention of person acting in a manner prejudicial to the integrity, security and defense of the country and public order) subsequently resulting in their release by the orders of the courts.

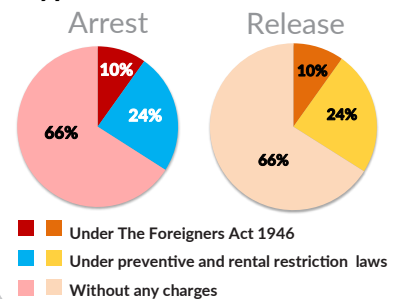
ALAC teams and the Ministry of SAFRON continue to take proactive steps to mitigate the risk of detention, including enhanced advocacy, pre-emptively intervening at police stations to prevent arrests and enhancing the response capacity of partners. UNHCR has developed and disseminated additional awareness raising material on legal assistance programs available for PoCs (including ALAC posters, brochures & use of social media).

When compared with October 2018 (105 Ind), there has been a significant decrease of **27.6%** in arrest and detention in October 2019 (76 Ind). UNHCR welcomes Government of Pakistan (GoP) decision on extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 30 June 2020 and will continue to disseminate the renewed PoR cards extension notification among refugee communities, law enforcement agencies through UNHCR and its partner organizations.

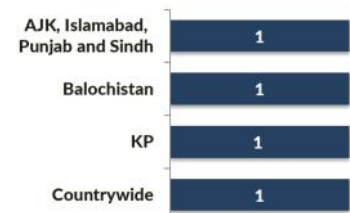
Arrest and Detentions by Years



Types of Arrests and Releases

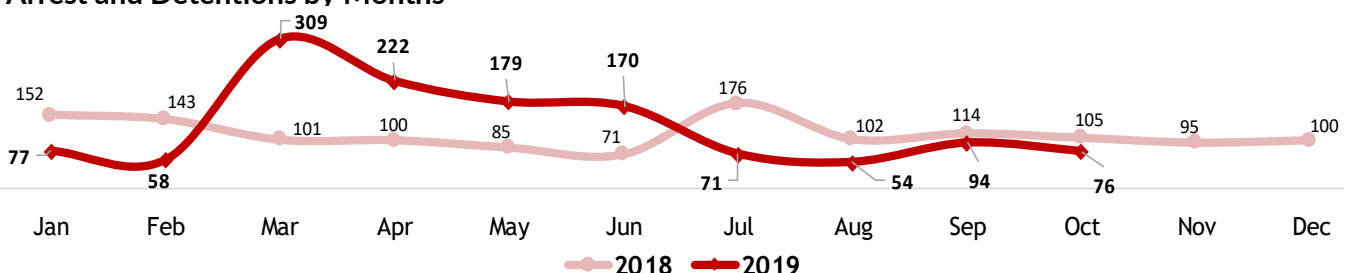


Avg Length of Detention (days)*

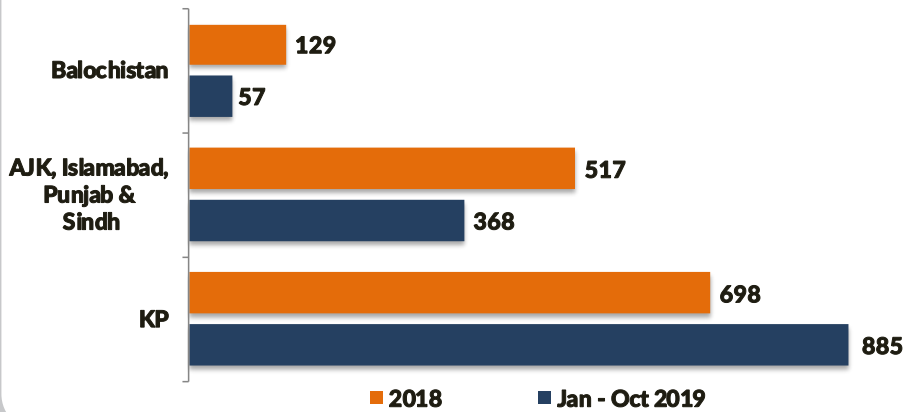


*Weighted proportionally by # of arrests in each province

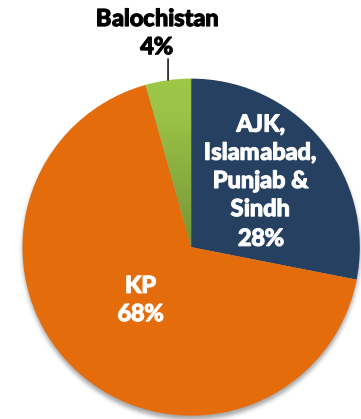
Arrest and Detentions by Months



Arrest and Detentions by Location and Year/Month



Arrest/Detention Locations



Access to Legal Assistance and Legal Remedies

Advice and Legal Aid Centre (ALAC) activities in 2019 include the following:

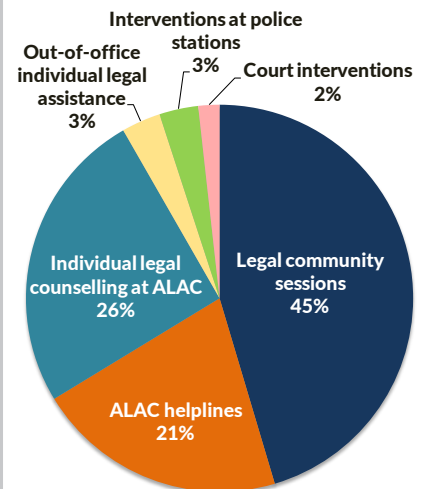
a) provision of legal intervention at police stations upon arrest/detention; b) court representation in the cases of arrest/detention and other issues involving protection of refugees or refugee status related matters; c) individually facilitated counseling (legal advice) at ALACs and through helplines; 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 October, partner's staff provided **individual legal counselling** to 825 PoCs who visited the Advice and Legal Aid Centres as well as legal advice to a total of 439 PoCs through **ALAC helplines**. Birth registration, police harassment, information on repatriation, PoR card modifications and asylum applications were the issues of greatest concern observed during the reporting period. **Out-of-court legal assistance** was provided to 117 PoCs, mostly related to police harassment, PoR card verifications, rental agreements and affidavits.

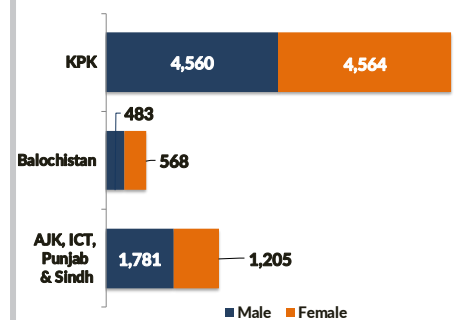
UNHCR and ALAC staff also organized a total of 57 legal camps and *shura* meetings, reaching 1210 participants (42% of whom were women) in the reporting month. 56% of the legal sessions were held in refugee villages and the remaining sessions in urban areas of Pakistan. Through these legal sessions, refugees shared various issues affecting their communities. UNHCR partner staff informed refugees of available free legal aid and UNHCR helpline services.

UNHCR and its partners organized five capacity building workshops on refugee protection in Tank, Mansehra, Hangu, Quetta & Layyah attended by 161 participants. 145 of these participants were police officials while 16 were members of the civil society.

ALAC Legal Assistance Activities for POCs



Legal Camp Participation



UNHCR continues to deploy border monitors at the two official Pak Afghan border crossings – Torkham (KP) and Chaman (Balochistan) – in order to identify potential protection issues during border movements.

Refugee-police liaison committees have been established in the districts of Mardan, Sawabi, 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 31 ALAC lawyers countrywide who provide the legal aid/assistance described above (18 in KP, 2 in Balochistan, 5 in Punjab/AJK, 3 in Sindh and 3 in Islamabad).

UNHCR continues to work through its legal assistance program including *pro bono* lawyers network.