22 MAY 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #43

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 17 May 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.

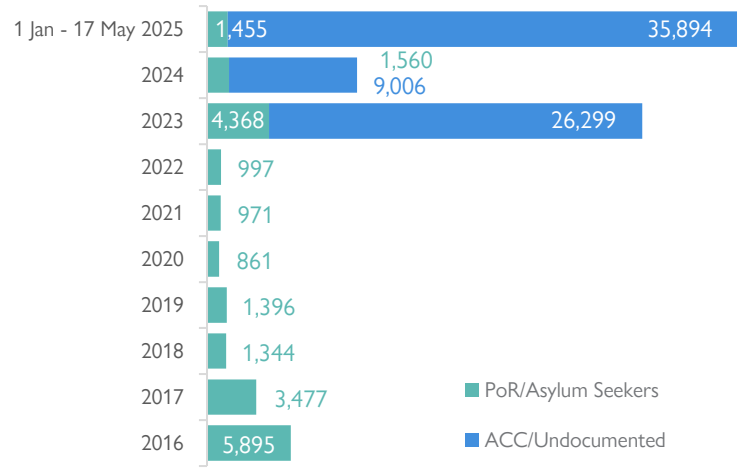
From January – February 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued a directive, requiring Afghan nationals in Pakistan to relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In response, on 5 February 2025, UNHCR and IOM issued a joint press statement. Further announcements followed on the implementation of the second phase of the "IFRP", targeting ACC holders in addition to undocumented Afghans to return to Afghanistan. These decisions have resulted in an uptick in arrests, detentions and deportations of Afghan nationals, particularly in April 2025. As of May 2025, arrests and detentions of Afghan nationals in 2025 alone, have surpassed figures from 2023, when the "IFRP" was first enacted.

KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

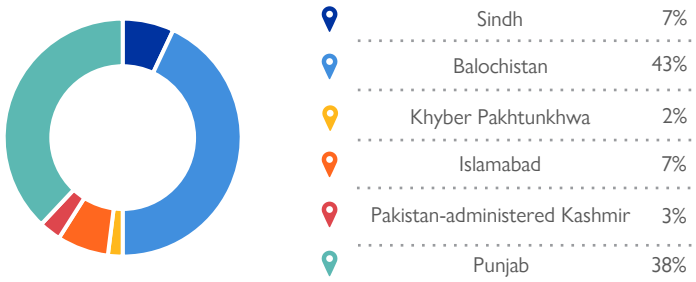
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data, which should be considered indicative at this point. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be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

- During the reporting period (11 – 17 May), a total of 2,854 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a 11% increase compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period, ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 97% of the total rate of arrest and detentions.
- During the reporting period (11 – 17 May), 76% of the total arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 17 May 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Attock (Punjab), and Killa Saifullah (Balochistan).

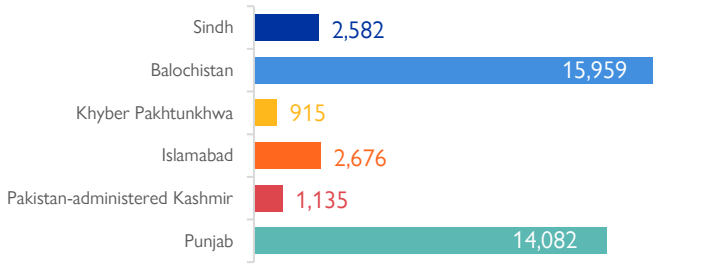
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



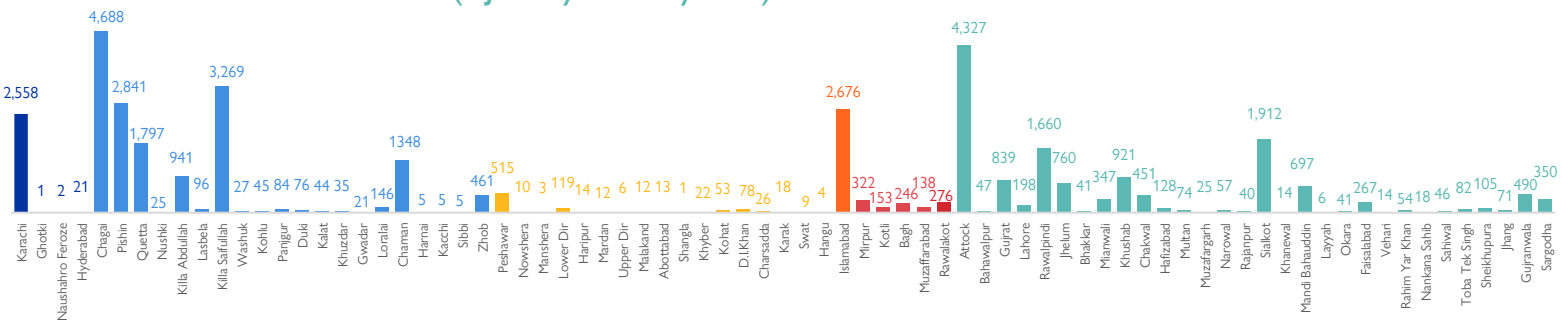
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 17 May 2025)



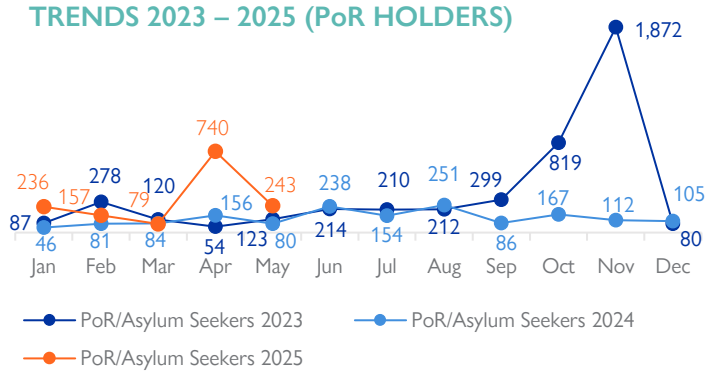
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 17 May 2025)



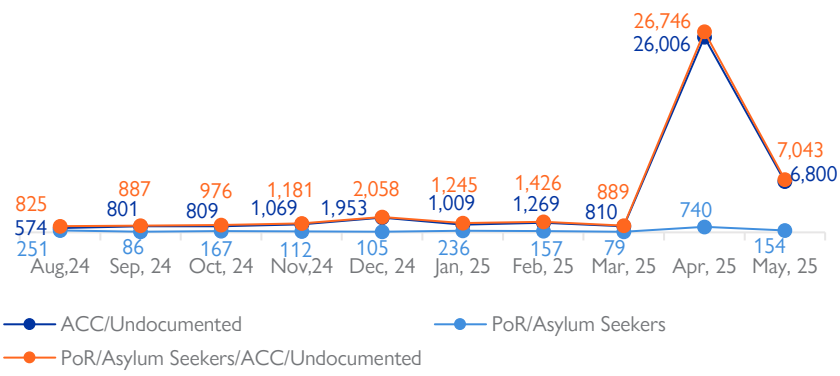
NO. OF ARRESTS BY DISTRICTS (1 January – 17 May 2025)



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 – 17 May 2025)

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

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 17 May 2025, 1,051,451 individuals have returned.
- During the period 11 – 17 May 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 17,554 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- The number of returns have decreased, while deportations have increased (11 – 17 May; 17,554 returns and 2,827 deportations) compared to returns and deportations in the week prior to that (4 – 10 May; 22,565 returns and 2,348 deportations). Returns decreased by 22%, however, deportations increased by 20% compared to the last week (4 – 10 May). This rise is primarily attributed to renewed arrests initiated by Deputy Commissioners in Balochistan, such as districts Chaman and Killa Abdullah.
- For the returns from 11 – 17 May 2025, most of the returnees were undocumented (65%), followed by PoR holders (24%), and ACC holders (11%). This marks an increase in PoR returns compared to the previous week (4 – 10 May; 9%). Majority of the PoR returns are facilitated by UNHCR.
- Since 1 April, 197,418 Afghan nationals returned, of which 36,970 were deported.
- Since the beginning of April, fear of arrest is the most common reason to return among undocumented/ACC holders (91%) and PoR holders (65%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Karachi Central (13%), Rawalpindi (13%) and Islamabad (12%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (19%), Kabul (19%) and Kunduz (19%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

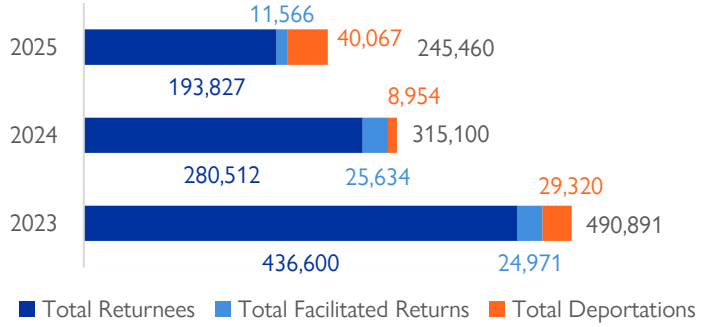
1,051,451 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

910,939 (87%) TOTAL RETURNEES

62,171 (6%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

78,341 (7%) 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 – 17 May 2025	245,460	193,827	11,566	40,067
Total	**1,051,451**	**910,939**	**62,171**	**78,341**



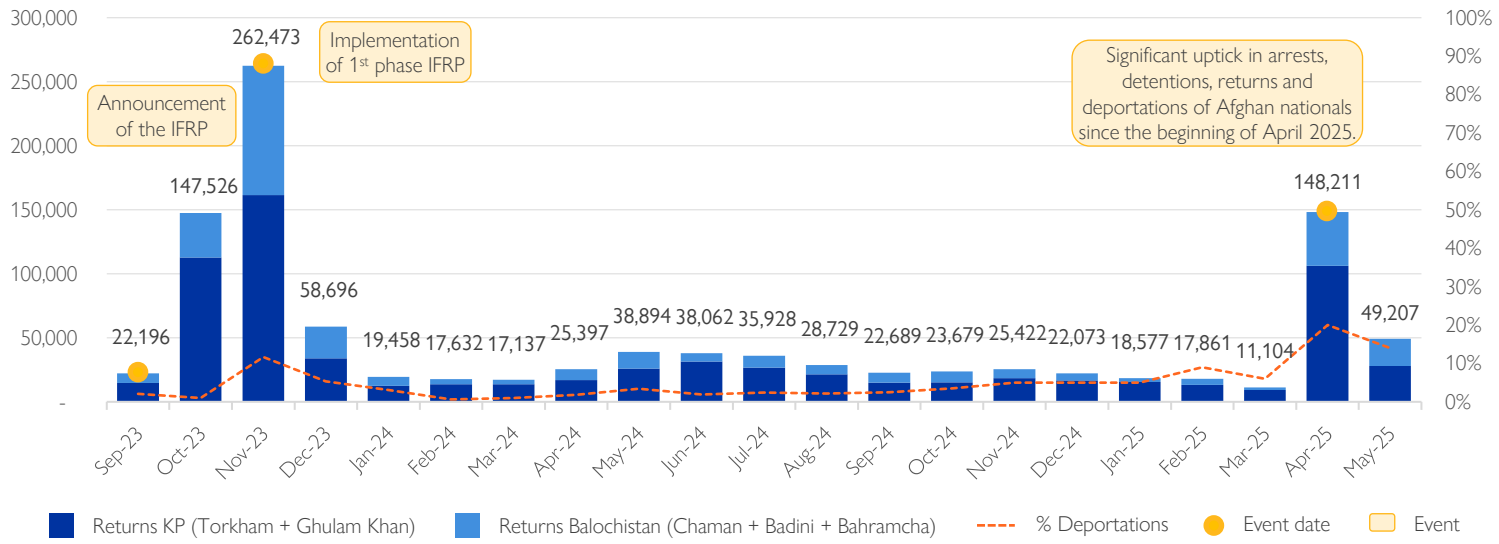
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	906,217 (87%)
PoR holder ***	98,034 (9%)
ACC holder	47,200 (4%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented	75,998 (97%)
PoR holder ***	2,343 (3%)

TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 17 MAY 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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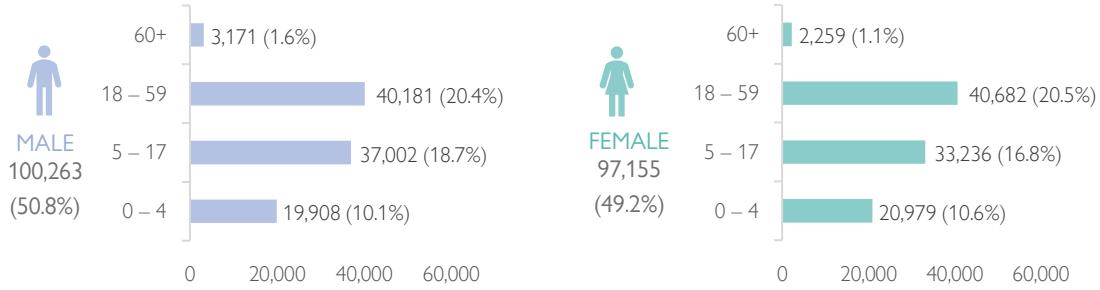
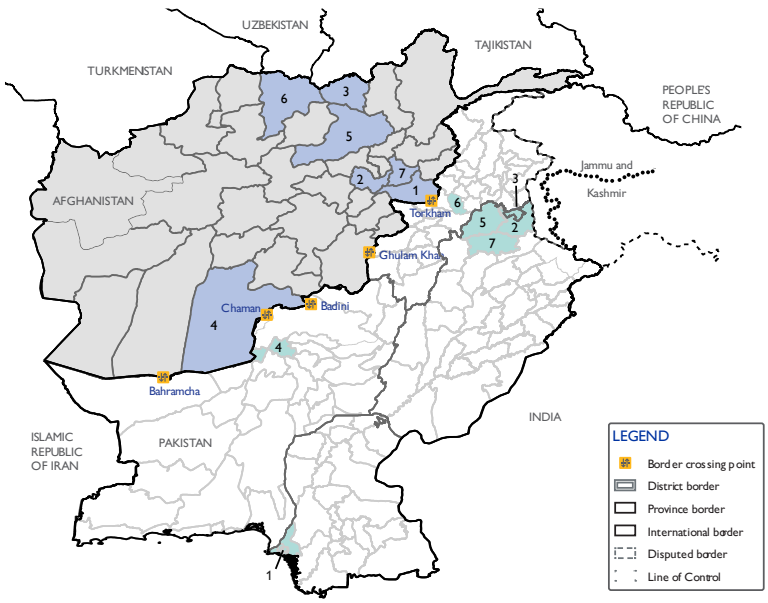
ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (1 April – 17 May 2025)

AGE AND GENDER****

197,418
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. Karachi Central	13%
2. Rawalpindi	13%
3. Islamabad	12%
4. Quetta	11%
5. Attock	5%
6. Peshawar	5%
7. Chakwal	5%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Nangarhar	19%
2. Kabul	19%
3. Kunduz	19%
4. Kandahar	11%
5. Baghlan	6%
6. Balkh	5%
7. Laghman	4%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 2,365 (45%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 1,651 (32%) Elderly (60+)
- 574 (11%) Female Widows
- 321 (5%) Pregnant Women
- 178 (3%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 169 (4%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 9,458)

Fear of arrest	91%
Financial debt	40%
No employment	11%
Communal pressure	4%
Low wages	2%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 309 (49%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 157 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 80 (13%) Women at Risk
- 79 (13%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 1,047)

Fear of arrest	65%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	15%
No added protection value of PoR card	6%
Overall deterioration in security situation	4%
Strict border entry requirement	3%

**** 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 (82,878 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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