18 DECEMBER 2025

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #73

ARREST AND DETENTION FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 13 December 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.

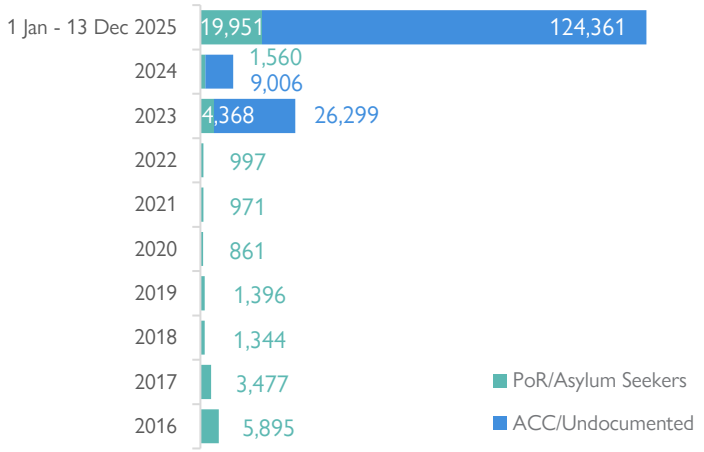
In 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued several directives impacting Afghan nationals. In January, the GoP announced that Afghan nationals should relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In April, further announcements indicated the implementation 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

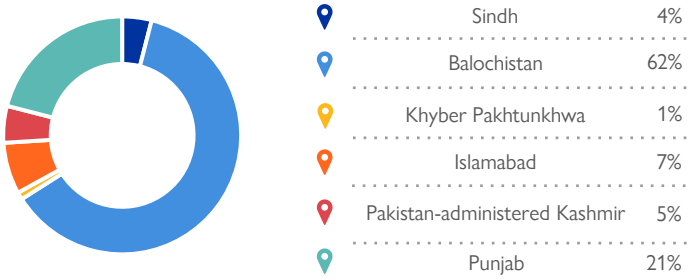
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (7 – 13 December), a total of 3,874 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, marking a 51% increase compared to the previous week.
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (7 – 13 December), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 85% of the total rate of arrest and detentions, and PoR holders represented 15%.
- During the reporting period (7 – 13 December), 68% of the total reported arrests and detentions took place in Balochistan, 11% in Islamabad Capital Territory, 10% in KP, and 9% in Punjab.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 13 December 2025 are Chaghi (Balochistan), Quetta (Balochistan), and Attock (Punjab).

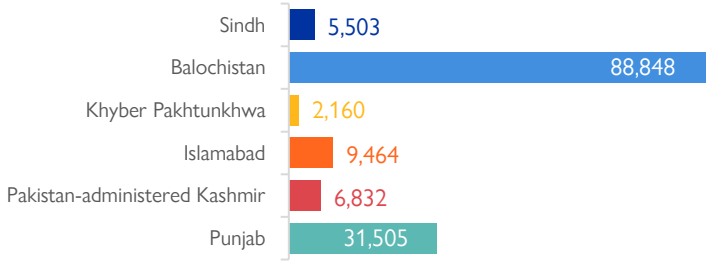
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



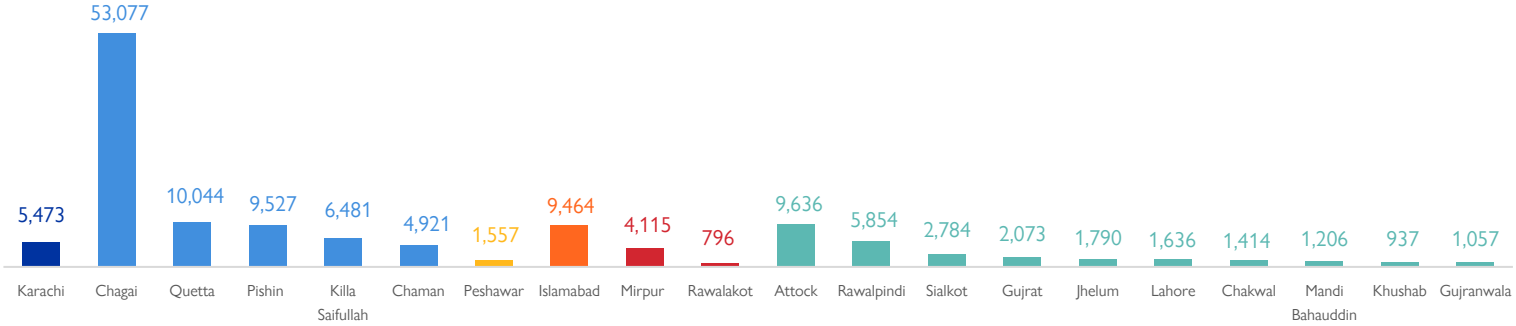
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 13 December 2025)



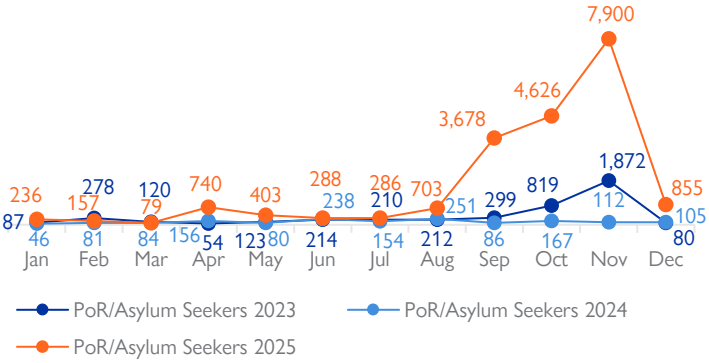
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 13 December 2025)



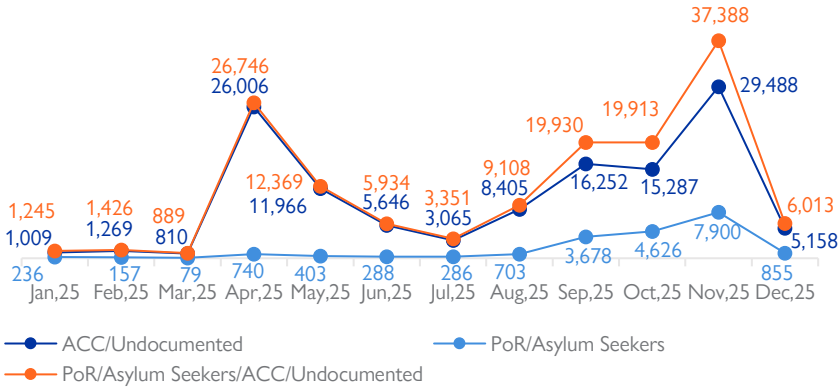
NO. OF ARRESTS – TOP 20 DISTRICTS (1 January – 13 December 2025)



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



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2025



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ARREST AND DETENTION **FLOW MONITORING** (15 September 2023 – 13 December 2025)

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

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 13 December 2025, 1,867,257 individuals have returned.
- During the period 7 – 13 December 2025, UNHCR and IOM estimate 24,931 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Between 7 – 13 December 2025, the number of returns and deportations increased by 41% and 45% respectively — compared to the previous week of 30 November – 6 December (17,725 returns including 2,461 deportations). During 7 – 13 December, the figures reached 24,931 returns, including 3,580 deportations. The increase in returns has been observed primarily at the Torkham border and is linked to the closure of refugee camps and related administrative measures in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- For the returns from 7 – 13 December 2025, most of the returnees were undocumented (46%) followed by PoR (44%) and ACC holders (10%). Majority of the POR returns include those processed by UNHCR through the Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs).
- For the deportees from 7 – 13 December 2025, most were undocumented (83%); followed by PoR holders (12%) and ACC holders (5%).
- Since 1 April 2025, 1,013,224 Afghan nationals returned, of which 143,787 (14%) were deported. During the period, fear of arrest remained the main reason for return among undocumented individuals and ACC holders (94%) as well as PoR holders (58%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Quetta (25%); Attock (12%) and Rawalpindi (8%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (20%), Kunduz (18%) and Kabul(16%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE – 2023, 2024 AND 2025

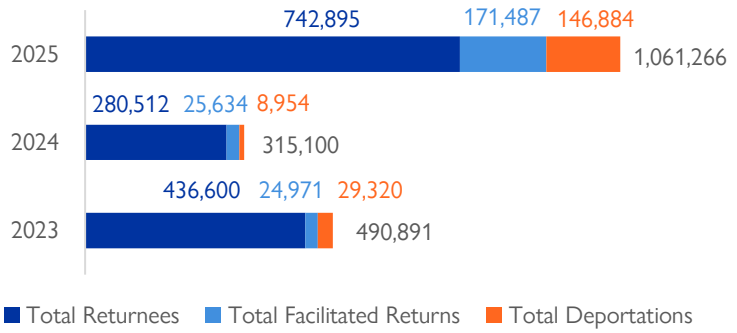
1,867,257 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

1,460,007 (78%) TOTAL RETURNEES

222,092 (12%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

185,158 (10%) 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 – 13 Dec 2025	1,061,266	742,895	171,487	146,884
Total	**1,867,257**	**1,460,007**	**222,092**	**185,158**



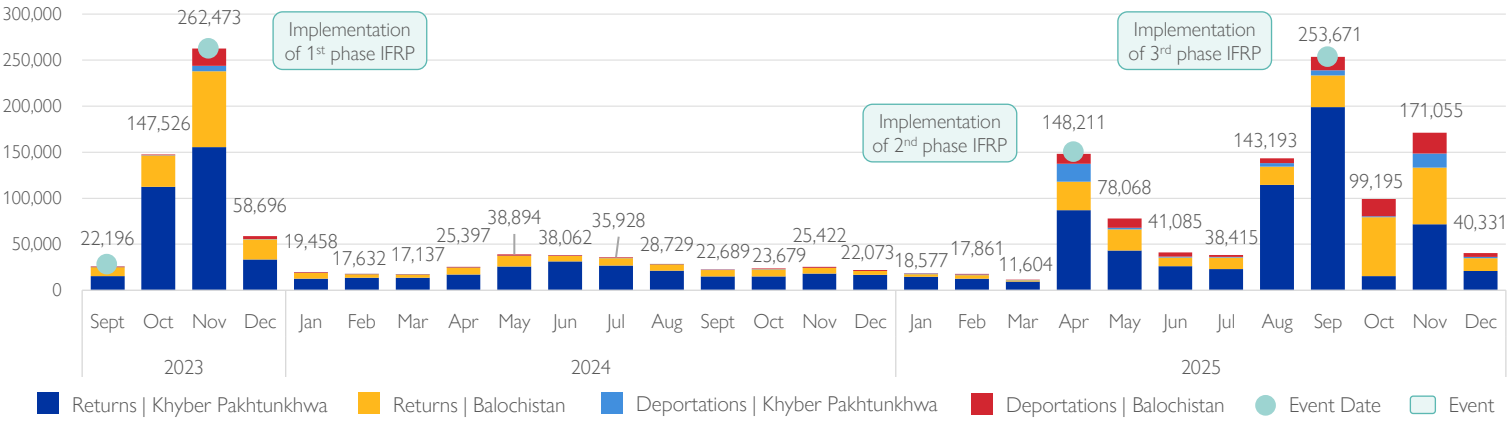
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES (EXCLUDING DEPORTEES)

Undocumented ***	1,211,904 (72%)
ACC holders	93,599 (6%)
PoR holders ****	376,596 (22%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented (15 Sep 2023 – 31 Mar 2025)	39,333
Undocumented (1 Apr – 13 Dec 2025)	114,795
ACC holders (1 Apr – 13 Dec 2025)	17,253
PoR holders ***** (15 Sep 2023 – 13 Dec 2025)	13,777

TOTAL RETURNS AND DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 13 DECEMBER 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.

*** Includes 50,320 Afghans who were registered with UNHCR.

**** Refers to all groups of undocumented Afghans, including of holders of expired PoR cards who did not renew their PoR cards during the latest verification exercise conducted by the GoP in 2021 (DRIVE).

***** This figure refers to PoR holders based on interviews conducted with returnees in Afghanistan.

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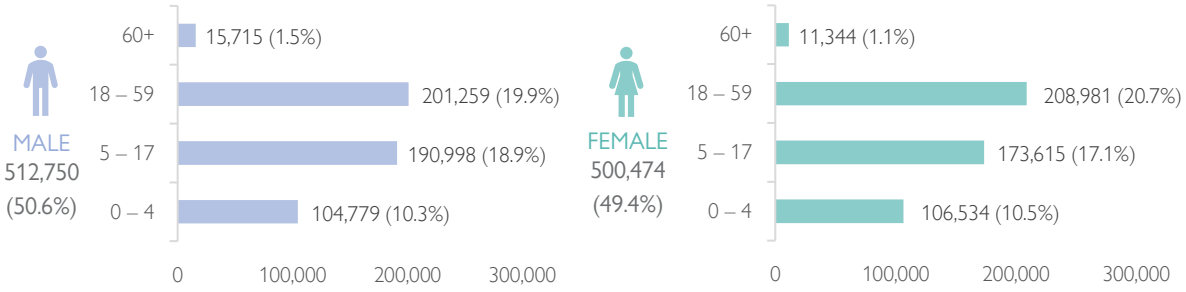
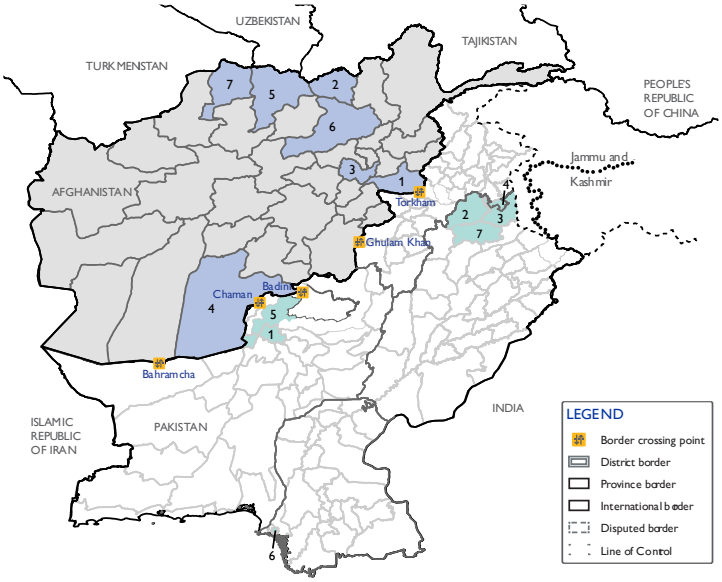
AGE AND GENDER******

1,013,224
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. Quetta	25%
2. Attock	12%
3. Rawalpindi	8%
4. Islamabad	8%
5. Pishin	7%
6. Karachi East	5%
7. Chakwal	5%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Nangarhar	20%
2. Kunduz	18%
3. Kabul	16%
4. Kandahar	10%
5. Balkh	9%
6. Baghlan	8%
7. Jawzjan	6%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 11,135 (48%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 6,989 (30%) Elderly (60+)
- 2,522 (11%) Female Widows
- 1,126 (5%) Pregnant Women
- 703 (3%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 697 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 38,287)

Fear of arrest	94%
Financial debt	28%
Family member deported	14%
No employment	7%
Communal pressure to return	4%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 5,136 (52%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 2,530 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 1,170 (12%) Women at Risk
- 1,097 (11%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 3,602)

Fear of arrest	58%
Strict border entry requirements	26%
Uncertainty related to PoR card extension	4%
Overall deterioration in security conditions	4%
No added protection value of PoR card	3%

****** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 46 per cent (465,125 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 54 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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