28 AUGUST 2026

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #108

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September 2023 – 22 August 2026)

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.

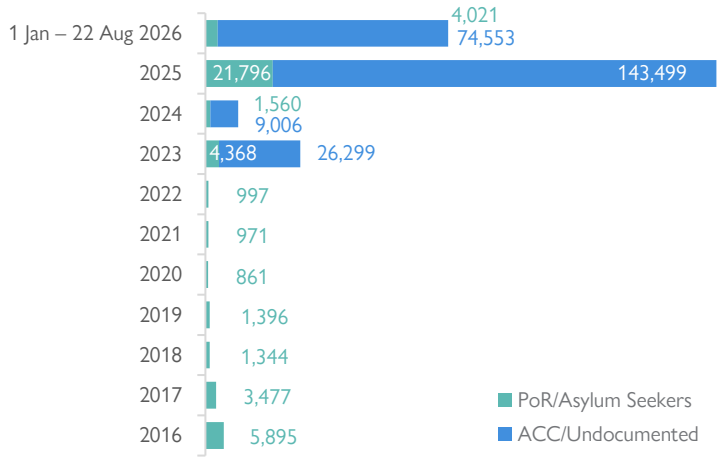
In 2025, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) issued several directives impacting Afghan nationals. In January, the GoP announced that Afghan nationals should relocate from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and Rawalpindi, or else face deportation. In April, further announcements indicated the implementation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

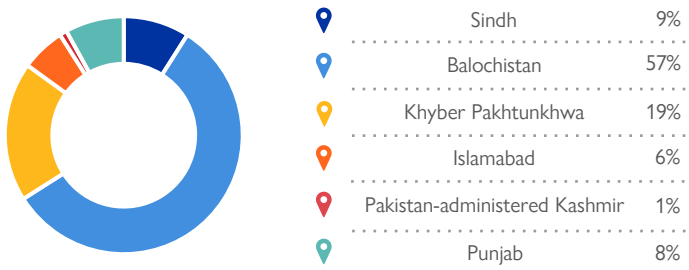
Prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data. The figures, particularly of undocumented Afghan nationals, should be considered underreported.

- During the reporting period (16 – 22 August) a total of 1,679 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained, representing a 26% increase compared to the previous week (9 – 15 August).
- Out of all arrests and detentions during the reporting period (16 – 22 August), ACC holders and undocumented Afghans represented 99% of the total rate of arrest and detentions, and PoR holders represented 1%.
- During the reporting period (16 – 22 August), 36% of the total reported arrests and detentions took place in Sindh, 33% in Balochistan, 19% in KP, 7% in Punjab, and 6% in ICT.
- Across Pakistan, the top three districts for arrest and detention between 1 January and 22 August 2026 were Chaghi (Balochistan), Peshawar (KP), and Karachi (Sindh).

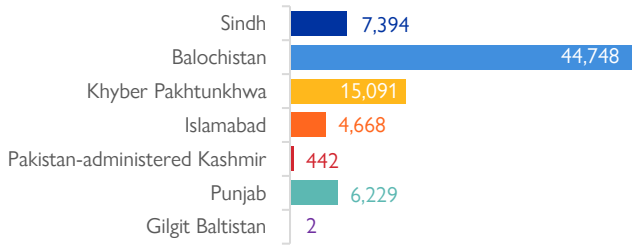
ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



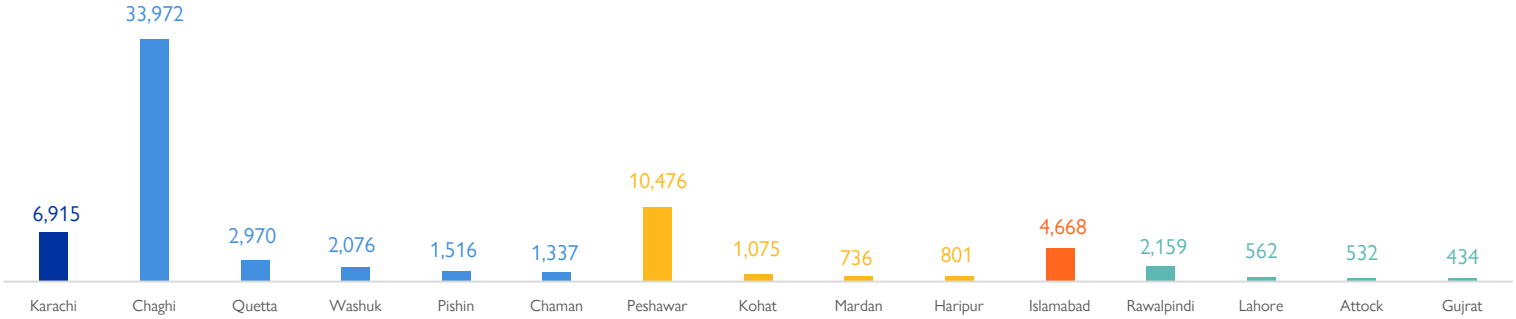
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 January – 22 August 2026)



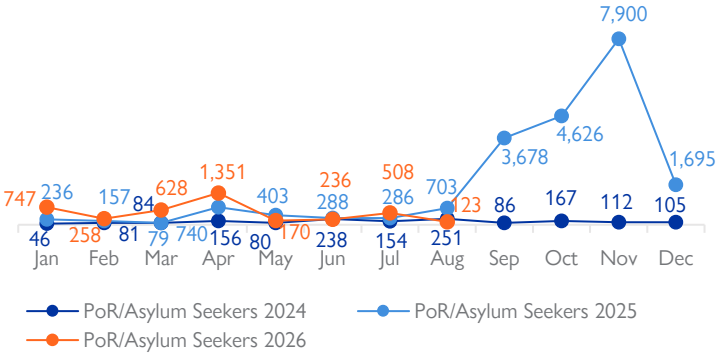
NO. OF ARRESTS BY PROVINCE (1 January – 22 August 2026)



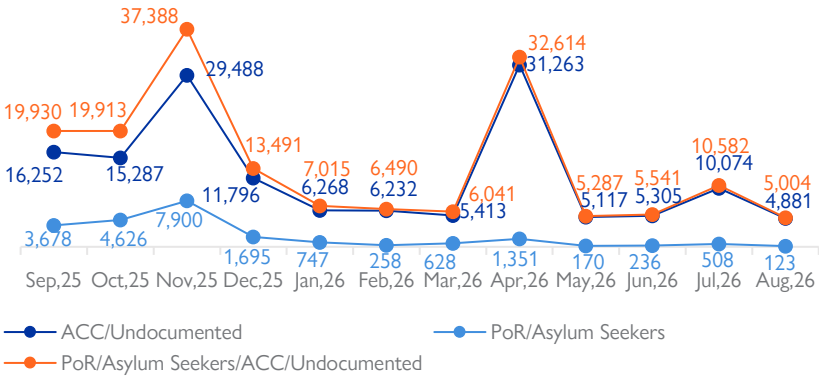
NO. OF ARRESTS – TOP 15 DISTRICTS (1 January – 22 August 2026)



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION TRENDS 2024 – 2026 (PoR HOLDERS)



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2025 – 2026



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IOM border monitors conducting an interview at Torkham border. [IOM Pakistan 2026]

KEY FINDINGS

- Cumulatively, from 15 September 2023 to 22 August 2026, 2,693,186 individuals have returned.
- During the period 16 to 22 August, UNHCR and IOM estimate 10,193 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman, Badini and Bahramcha (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Between 16 and 22 August, the number of returns decreased by 10% and deportations increased by 25% — compared to the previous week of 9 – 15 August 2026 (11,328 returns including 1,334 deportations). During 16 to 22 August, a total of 10,193 returns were reported, including 1,670 deportations. The increase in deportations is likely linked to an increase in arrest operations during the reporting period, while returns did not change significantly.
- For the returns from 16 to 22 August, most of the returnees were undocumented (58%) followed by PoR holders (24%) and ACC holders (18%). Majority of the PoR returns were processed by UNHCR through the Voluntary Repatriation Centers (VRCs).
- For the deportees from 16 to 22 August, most were undocumented (97%) followed by PoR holders (3%) and ACC holders (<1%).
- Since 1 April 2025, 1,839,153 Afghan nationals returned, of which 229,337 (12%) were deported.
- During the period, fear of arrest remained the main reason for return among undocumented individuals and ACC holders (95%) as well as for PoR holders (68%).
- During the same time period, returnees were most likely to return from Quetta (16%), Nowshera (14%) and Peshawar (14%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (28%), Kabul (22%) and Kunduz (13%) in Afghanistan.

CUMULATIVE | 2023 – 2026

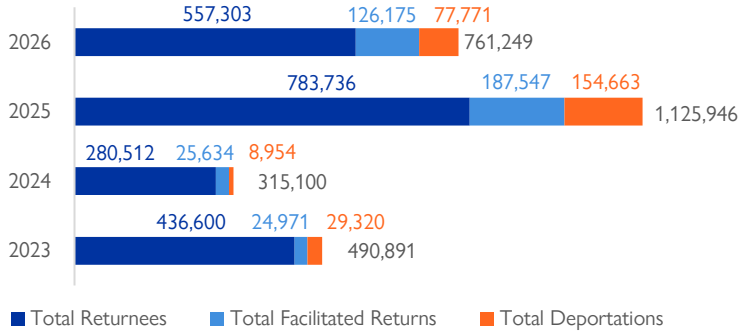
2,693,186 (100%)* TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

2,058,151 (76%) TOTAL RETURNEES

364,327 (14%)** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

270,708 (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 – 31 Dec 2025	1,125,946	783,736	187,547	154,663
1 Jan – 22 Aug 2026	761,249	557,303	126,175	77,771
Total	**2,693,186**	**2,058,151**	**364,327**	**270,708**



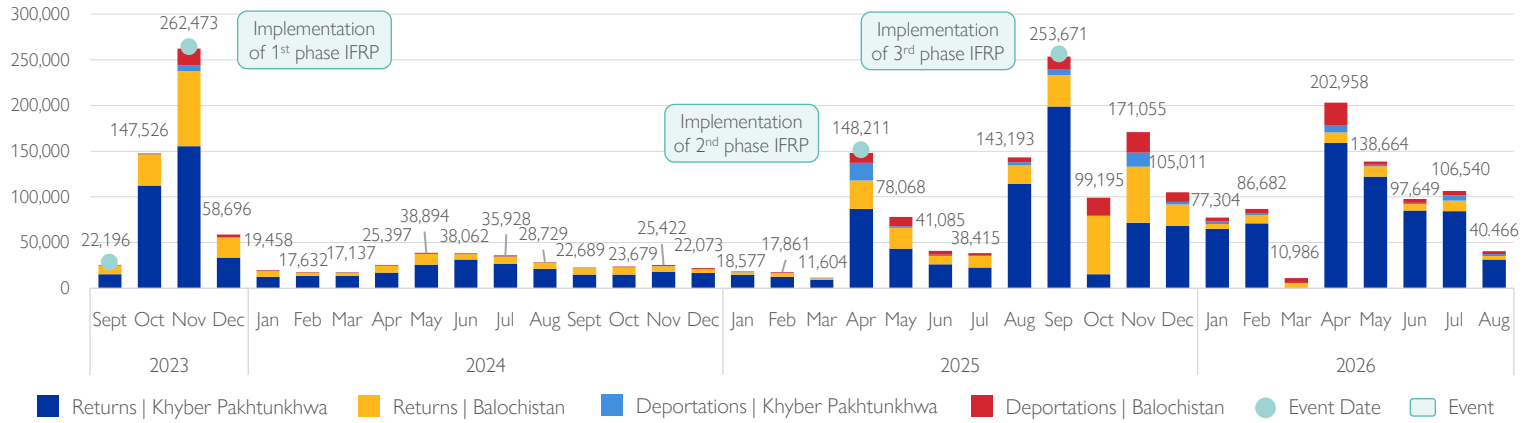
DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES (EXCLUDING DEPORTEES)

Undocumented ***	1,521,666 (63%)
ACC holders	168,779 (7%)
PoR holders ****	732,033 (30%)

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

ACC/Undocumented (15 Sep 2023 – 31 Mar 2025)	39,329
Undocumented (1 Apr 2025 – 22 Aug 2026)	195,705
ACC holders (1 Apr 2025 – 22 Aug 2026)	18,957
PoR holders ***** (15 Sep 2023 – 22 Aug 2026)	16,717

TOTAL RETURNS AND DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 22 AUGUST 2026



* 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 58,716 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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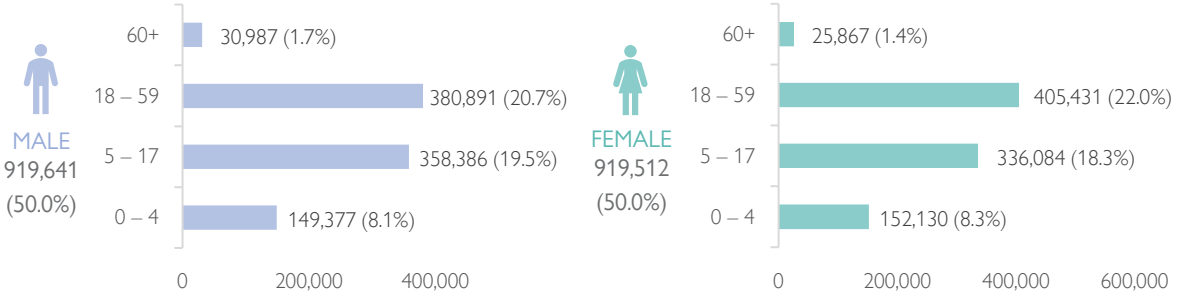
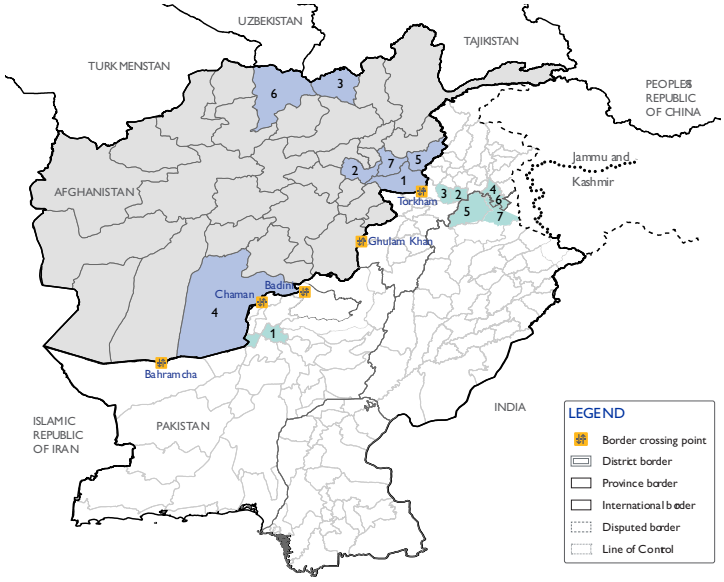
AGE AND GENDER******

1,839,153
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	16%
2. Nowshera	14%
3. Peshawar	14%
4. Haripur	10%
5. Attock	8%
6. Islamabad	6%
7. Rawalpindi	6%

PROVINCE OF DESTINATION (TOP 7)

1. Nangarhar	28%
2. Kabul	22%
3. Kunduz	13%
4. Kandahar	7%
5. Kunar	7%
6. Balkh	7%
7. Laghman	5%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 15,720 (45%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 12,151 (35%) Elderly (60+)
- 3,351 (9%) Female Widows
- 1,614 (4%) Pregnant Women
- 1,289 (4%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 976 (3%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 65,604)

Fear of arrest	95%
Financial debt	34%
Forced repatriation	20%
No employment	5%
Communal pressure to return	3%

This section only applies to PoR holders

TYPE OF VULNERABILITY

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

- 9,475 (52%) Serious Medical Conditions
- 4,663 (25%) Elderly (60+)
- 2,139 (12%) Women at Risk
- 2,014 (11%) Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
- 0 (0%) Other

TOP 5 REASONS FOR LEAVING PAKISTAN

(Multiple answers can exceed 100%, N = 10,521)

Fear of harassment/arrest and/or deportation	68%
Uncertainty related to the PoR cards extension	11%
Loss/lack of livelihoods	11%
No added protection value of PoR card	7%
Overall deterioration in security conditions	3%

****** The figures shown in this visual are based on gender and age aggregated figures from UNHCR and IOM, which were available for 43 per cent (788,865 individuals) of the total returns and then applied to the total return figure since 1 April 2025. For the remaining 57 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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