



UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner Mr. George Okoth-Obbo talking to refugees in Naguman Refugee village Peshawar.

## Summary of Key Events

The first-ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF) concluded in Geneva on 17 December, with more than 770 pledges of support, covering areas such as protection, employment and education for refugees and the communities which host them. The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, attended the forum as one of the co-conveners. The forum will be held every four years and is a key element of the Global Compact on Refugees, which the international community adopted in December 2018. More than 3000 participants attended this first gathering, ranging from representatives of governments, international financial organisations, business, civil society and humanitarian and development organisations, as well as refugees themselves. Leaders from the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, along with UNHCR and refugee representatives, launched a new Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) the day before the GRF. The Support Platform reinforces tangible efforts and contributions made by countries towards lasting solutions and will enhance coordination and assist by ensuring that humanitarian and development investments are closely aligned in the interests of refugees and local hosting communities. The platform also encourages a wider range of partners - including new donors, development actors, community organizations and the private sector - to commit to supporting solutions for Afghan refugees. On the occasion, UNHCR appointed Mr. Javed Afridi, CEO Haier Pakistan, as the Refugee Youth Ambassador for Pakistan. Mr. Afridi pledged to provide jobs for 25 refugees and also to train 50 refugees in the Peshawar Zalmi Foundation, which owns the Peshawar Zalmi and Benoni Zalmi cricket teams.

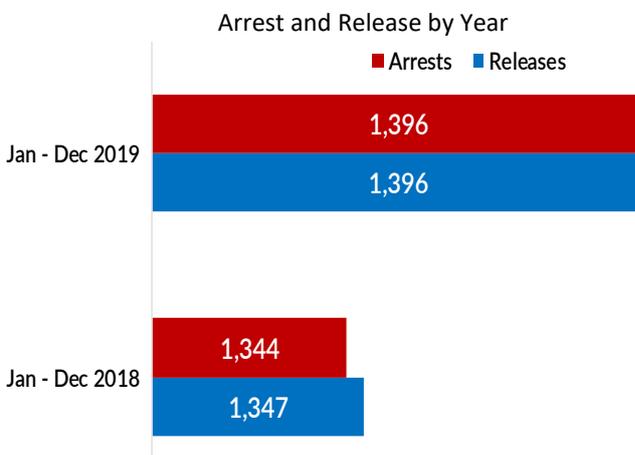
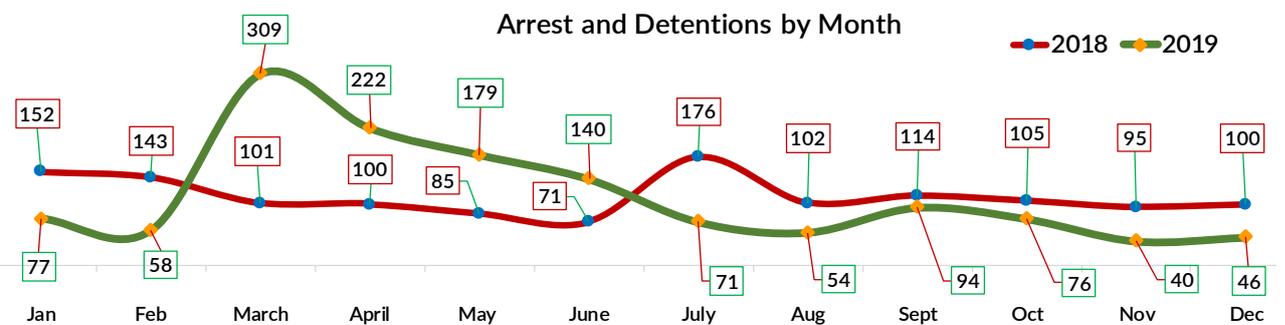
The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations), Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, visited Pakistan from 4-8 November. He was accompanied by the Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP), Mr. Indrika Ratwatte. During his mission, he held several high level meetings, notably with the Chief Minister and Minister Finance of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Minister SAFRON, Director General-UN in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), CCAR and the Secretary, Economic Affairs Division (EAD). AHC(O) hosted a reception for the international community, including ambassadors, UN agencies and development actors and on the occasion announced official appointment of Ms. Mahira Khan as a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. The AHC(O) mission also included a visit to the Women Welfare and Development Centre (WWDC) in Islamabad, meeting a group of 20 refugees and a visit to Naguman Refugee Village. The AHC(O) delegation, together with the Minister of SAFRON, KP Health Minister, KP Finance Minister, KP Law Minister and other dignitaries from the provincial government, officially inaugurated a state-of-the-art cold-chain vaccine storage facility in Peshawar which is constructed with the support of UNHCR and US funding.

UNHCR Pakistan, CCAR and NADRA agreed on a new policy regarding the timeframe for the collection of modified Proof of Registration (PoR) cards from the Proof of Registration Card Modification (PCM) centres, which will be effective as of 1 January 2020. Under the new policy, Afghan refugees who wish to modify their PoR cards will be given thirteen months to collect them from respective PCM centres, failing which cards will be withdrawn from PCM centres and the cardholder will be de-registered from the NADRA database, leading to the loss of refugee status. The thirteen-month period will commence from the date a refugee applies for the PoR card modification at the PCM centre. UNHCR and NADRA also launched a new service through which refugees can check the status of their modified cards by sending a SMS to: 8400. UNHCR launched a mass-information campaign to inform refugees about the new policy through social, print and electronic media as well as through direct and partners' community outreach activities.

UNHCR Pakistan hosted the Inter-Governmental and Inter-Agency Cross-Border Coordination Workshop on Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan (6-7 November), which was organised by GIZ. Along with the participants from UNHCR Pakistan and Afghanistan, CCAR, MORR, WB, IOM (Pakistan and Afghanistan) and GIZ attended the workshop. The main objective of the workshop was to explore linkages between the current activities of all the stakeholders and to enhance coordination with a view to effectively contributing to cross-border cooperation, especially in the areas of refugees' voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration. The forum discussed the earlier agreed upon roadmap and took stock of progress made on its action points. The participants agreed to revitalise the working groups formed in three thematic areas: 1) capacity building of government counterparts; 2) livelihoods, skills and economic opportunities for refugees and returnees; and 3) education, health and social cohesion. It was also agreed to enhance coordination and follow up through designated agency focal persons. GIZ agreed to act as the Secretariat for the coordination and will convene all the stakeholders on a regular basis.

## 1. Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC)

From 1 October until 31 December, 162 PoR cardholders were detained by the security authorities, as compared to 300 during the same period in 2018. This figure represents a 85.2 % decrease from the previous year and, in part, may be attributed to the improved security situation in the country. Sixty six percent of the refugees detained from 1 October to 31 December were released without being formally charged, 13% were charged and detained under the Foreigners Act for being on the territory illegally, while 27% of the refugees detained were charged under Preventive Laws.



All but one of the detained refugees were released with the ALAC assistance and interventions. UNHCR continues to work proactively against any harassment of persons of concern, through continued visits and interventions of the ALAC teams to police checkpoints and stations in the refugee-hosting areas. The majority of arrests and detentions (68%) took place in KP, followed by Punjab and the Islamabad Capital Territory, Pakistan Administered Kashmir and Sindh (28%).

## 2. Evictions/ Eviction Notices

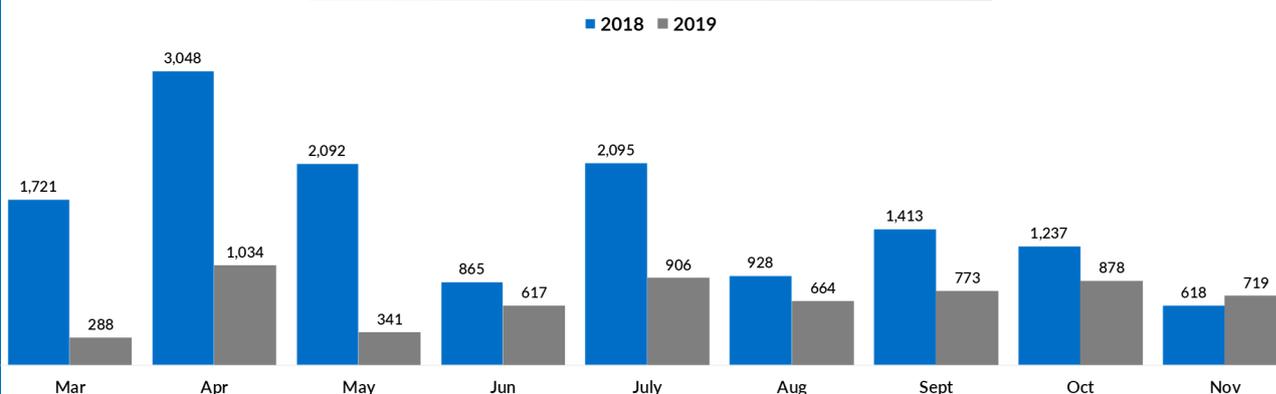
In early October, the local authorities approved the relocation of the primary school from Ichrian RV to Panian RV and the decision was communicated to the refugee elders of the RV. Approximately 100 families showed their readiness to relocate to Panian from Ichrian. In regard to refugees in Berari RV, another warning notice was issued to the refugees, which stated that services, such as education, water and electricity would be discontinued. In mid-October, officials of the Special Security Division, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), met with the elders of the Berari RV and reminded them of the need to comply with eviction orders. During subsequent follow-up meetings by UNHCR field teams, the refugee elders were unwilling to relocate to the provided options and were waiting for the local court's decision on the matter. Refugee elders from Ichrian approached the DA's office and informed about the challenges in relocation and repatriation due to winter conditions and requested to be given additional time for relocation or repatriation, until the end of winter season. No major development occurred on the issue. UNHCR continues to monitor the situation closely.

In another development, formal eviction notices were served to refugees residing in the urban clusters of Aldo and Jammu, in Ghazi urban, both situated close to the Army Aviation Base. Previously, verbal eviction orders were communicated to both the clusters to vacate the areas. The UNHCR field team and CAR-KP are following up on the matter, along with Deputy Commissioner (DC)-Ghazi district.

### 3. Voluntary Repatriation (VOLREP)

From 1 March to 30 November, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 6,220 (1,598 families) individuals through the two voluntary repatriation centers (VRCs) in Azakhel, KP, and Baleli, Balochistan. This figure represents a 56 % decrease in voluntary returns from the same period in 2018, when 14,017 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned. The lower return rate is the result of the ongoing volatile security situation in Afghanistan and uncertainty surrounding Afghanistan’s political environment. The economic situation is also a factor in any decision to return home. Afghan refugees have also stated that the increasingly strict border entry requirements were another factor influencing the decision not to return. The main Afghan provinces of return were Nangarhar (17%), Saripul (17 %) and Kabul (16 %).

VOLREP Monthly Trends Comparison 2018 & 2019



### 4. UNHCR’s Interventions and Capacity Building Activities

Advice and Legal Assistance Centre (ALAC) teams continued to visit police stations and courts across the country in order to represent refugees in legal cases and update law enforcement agencies (LEAs) on the Government of Pakistan’s extension of PoR card validity and other refugee related matters. From 1 October to 31 December 2019, UNHCR and ALAC staff organized 142 legal outreach and *shura* meetings, reaching out to 2,775 participants (41% of whom were women). Fifty six percent of these sessions were held in RVs and the rest were held in urban areas. The meetings gave a forum for refugees to voice their concerns about various issues affecting their communities.

During the last quarter of 2019, UNHCR and ALAC teams also organized fifteen capacity-building sessions with LEAs on refugee protection and refugee status in Pakistan, in which 417 LEA personnel, 74 public prosecutors and 16 persons from the civil society participated.

Additionally, UNHCR facilitated 15 sessions at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) sensitizing 284 military officials who are deployed as part of UN peacekeeping and observer missions internationally. In October, UNHCR also organized a day-and-half workshop for the C/CAR senior staff, with the aim of strengthening the knowledge and existing capacity within C/CAR vis-à-vis the fundamentals of refugee protection. Twenty-seven C/CAR staff from all over the country participated in this workshop.