13 DECEMBER 2023

UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #9

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September – 9 December 2023)

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 and Chaman border crossing point, to better understand the protection environment and movements of Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

CHRONOLOGY

26 September 2023

"*Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan*" issued internally by MoI, outlining the "repatriation" of Afghan nationals in three phases, starting with undocumented Afghan nationals, followed by ACC holders, and PoR holders.

3 October 2023

Formal announcement by MoI of the deadline of 1 November 2023 for all "illegal foreigners" to leave Pakistan.

7 October 2023

Joint statement issued by UNHCR and IOM urging the Government of Pakistan (GoP) to maintain the protection space for Afghan nationals in need of safety.

10 October 2023

Government-wide circular issued by the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) under the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), stating that PoR and ACC holders can only be repatriated on a voluntary basis.

30 October 2023

Notification issued by the MoI instructing all relevant authorities to enact the "*Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan*" as of 1 November 2023.

3 November 2023

Joint press release issued by UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF calling for the protection of Afghans seeking safety in Pakistan.

10 November 2023

Notification issued by SAFRON that the validity of PoR cards is extended to 31 December 2023.

15 November 2023

Press release issued by UN Human Rights Chief appealing to suspend deportations until safeguards are in place.

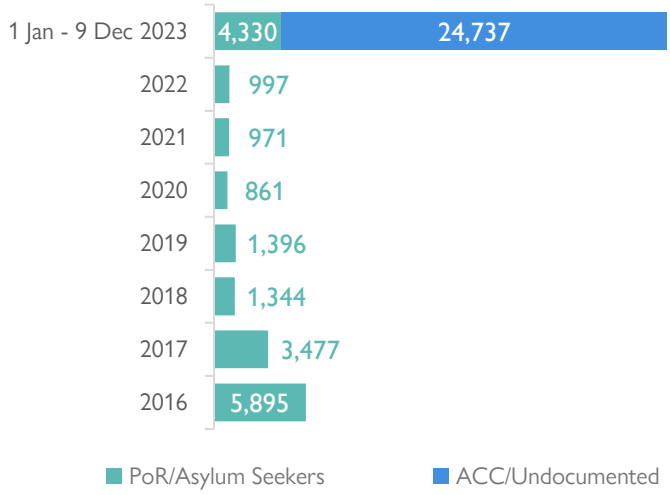
21 November 2023

Press briefing by UNHCR Representative urging the GoP to put in place a screening mechanism to identify individuals in need of international protection.

6 December 2023

Second Press release issued by UN Special Rapporteurs calling for the protection of Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS



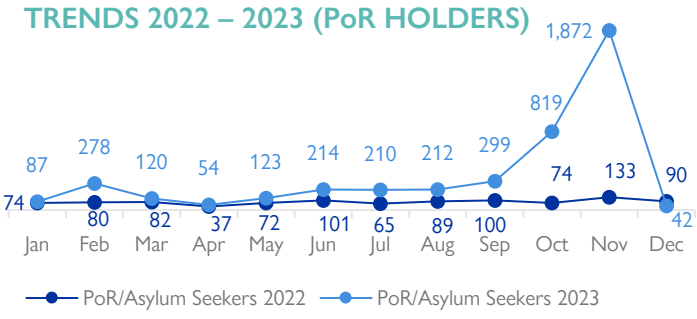
% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION (1 October – 9 December 2023)

KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

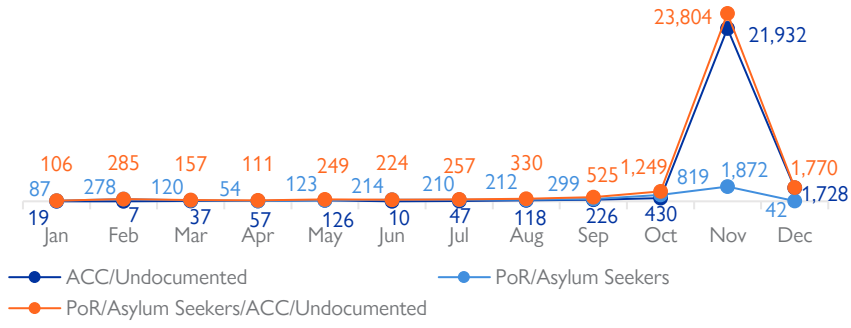
It is important to note that prior to 2023, there was no data collected on the arrest and detention of ACC holders or undocumented Afghan nationals. Since January 2023, IOM has started to collect this data, which should be considered indicative at this point. The figures, particularly of undocumented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

- Over the last week, there has been a 23% decrease in the number of reported arrests, in comparison to the week before.
- Thus far in 2023, 29,067 Afghan nationals have been arrested, a figure exceeding any previous year since data has been collected on arrest and detention of Afghan nationals.
- During the reporting period, the rate of arrest reported has been highest in the province of Balochistan. However, it is important to nuance this figure by noting that some Afghan nationals may be recorded as being arrested in Balochistan while having come from Karachi.
- In addition to arrest, detention, and deportation, UNHCR and IOM continue to receive reports of Afghan nationals facing forcible eviction, extortion, and harassment.

MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION TRENDS 2022 – 2023 (PoR HOLDERS)



MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2023



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UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION

ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September – 9 December 2023)

IOM enumerator collecting flow monitoring data at Torkham border. [IOM Pakistan 2023]

KEY FINDINGS

- During the past seven days, UNHCR and IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimate 18,419 Afghans returned through the Torkham, Ghulam Khan (located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Chaman and Badini (located in Balochistan) border crossing points to Afghanistan.
- Cumulatively, from 15 September to 9 December 2023, 456,590 individuals have returned.
- The overall return flows have decreased by 25 per cent compared to last week (Flash Update #8) and an 87 per cent reduction compared to the first week of November (Flash Update #4, 29 October – 04 November), which recorded the highest returns since 15 September 2023.
- The number of returnees and deportations remains high but are steadily decreasing.
- Most of the returnees were undocumented Afghans (95%), followed by PoR holders (3%) and ACC holders (2%).
- Fear of arrest (90%) remains the most common reason to return to Afghanistan among returnees.
- Returnees were most likely to return from Balochistan (35%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Nangarhar (30%), Kandahar (28%) and Kabul (16%) in Afghanistan.

456,590 (100%) TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS

412,030 (90%) TOTAL RETURNEES

16,967 (4%)* TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES

27,593 (6%) TOTAL DEPORTATIONS

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES

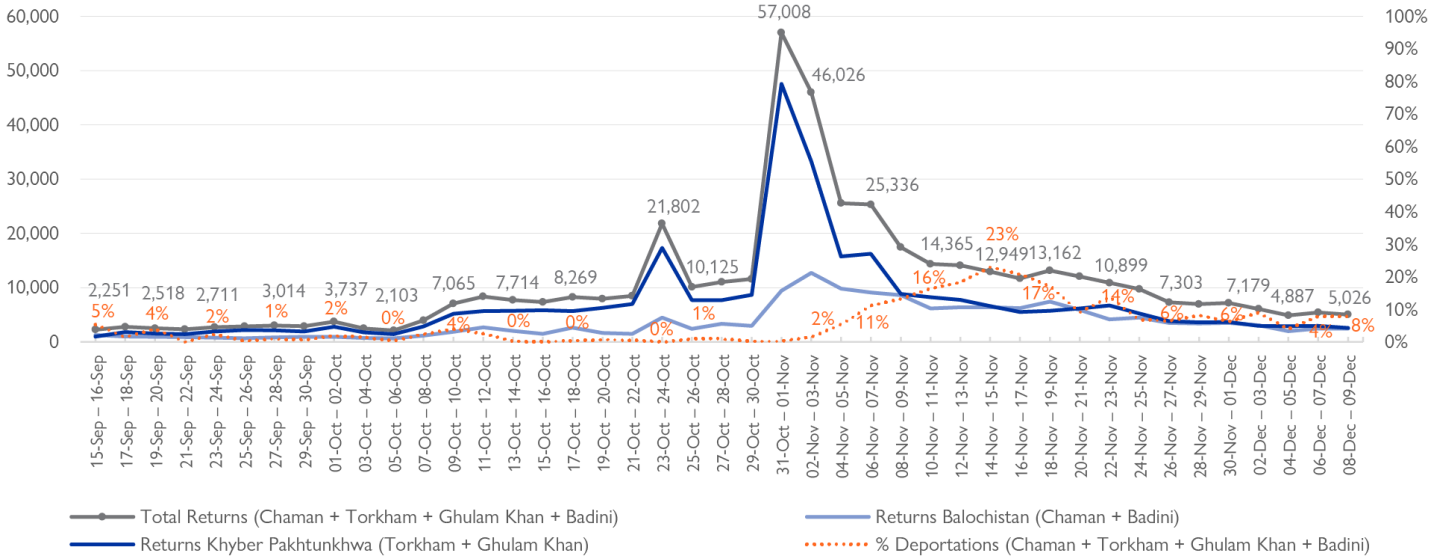
Undocumented	95%
PoR holder **	3%
ACC	2%

DOCUMENTATION – TOTAL DEPORTEES

Undocumented	96%
PoR holder **	4%

This section only applies to PoR holders and undocumented Afghans.

TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER – 9 DECEMBER 2023



This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

AGE AND GENDER

Female		Male
49.6%		50.4%
	AGE	
10.4%	0 – 4	10.1%
18.8%	5 – 17	20.1%
18.9%	18 – 59	18.6%
1.5%	60+	1.6%

PUSH FACTORS (TOP 5)

(Multiple answers, N = 18,054, can exceed 100%)

Fear of arrest	90%
No employment	23%
Communal pressure to return	16%
Unable to pay utilities	7%
Unable to pay house rent	7%

ORIGIN AND INTENDED DESTINATION (TOP 5, BY PROVINCE)

PROVINCE OF ORIGIN		PROVINCE OF DESTINATION	
1. Balochistan	35%	1. Nangarhar	30%
2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	30%	2. Kandahar	28%
3. Punjab	21%	3. Kabul	16%
4. Sindh	10%	4. Kunduz	5%
5. Islamabad Capital Territory	3%	5. Kunar	4%

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*The number refers to facilitated PoR returnees who crossed the border during the reporting period. 21,982 PoR holders, who were facilitated to return by UNHCR, approached encashment centers in Afghanistan for return assistance. ** This figure refers to PoR holders based on interviews conducted with returnees in Afghanistan.

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