UNHCR-IOM FLASH UPDATE #2

UNHCR | The UN Refugee Agency   IOM | UN MIGRATION

ARREST AND DETENTION   FLOW MONITORING (15 September – 21 October 2023)

INTRODUCTION

In response to the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) decision to enact an "*Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan*" on 26 September 2023, 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 points, 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.

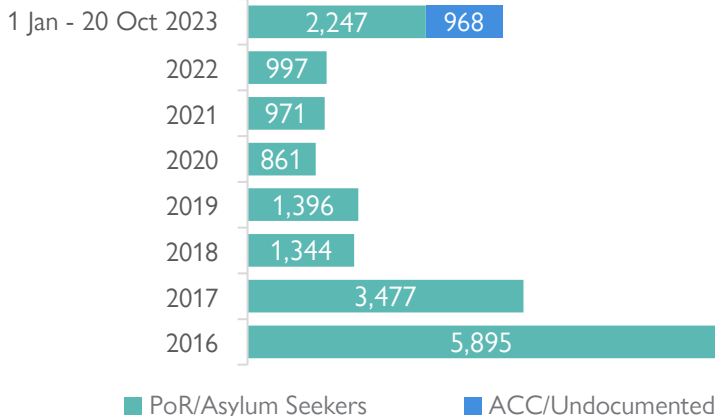### 7 October 2023

Joint statement issued by UNHCR and IOM urging the Government of Pakistan 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.

9 and 16 October 2023

Provincial-wide circular issued by the Home Departments of Balochistan and Sindh, stating that PoR and ACC holders can only be repatriated on a voluntary basis.

17 October 2023

Press release issued by UN Special Rapporteurs, urging the Government of Pakistan to stop planned mass deportation of Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

ARREST AND DETENTION BY YEARS

Year	PoR/Asylum Seekers	ACC/Undocumented
1 Jan - 20 Oct 2023	2,247	968
2022	997	
2021	971	
2020	861	
2019	1,396	
2018	1,344	
2017	3,477	
2016	5,895	

■ PoR/Asylum Seekers ■ ACC/Undocumented

% OF ARRESTS BY LOCATION 1-20 OCTOBER 2023

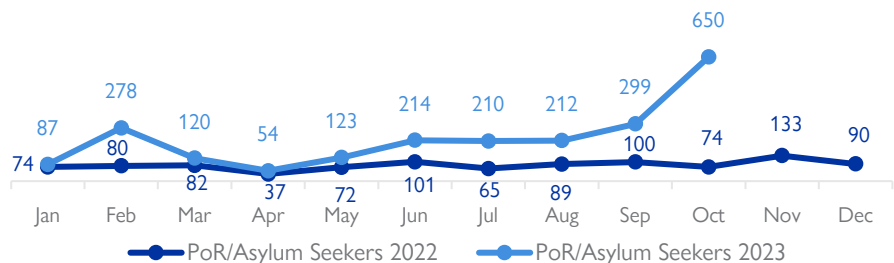| Location	%
Balochistan	46%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	22%
Punjab	12%
Sindh	12%
Islamabad/AJK	8%

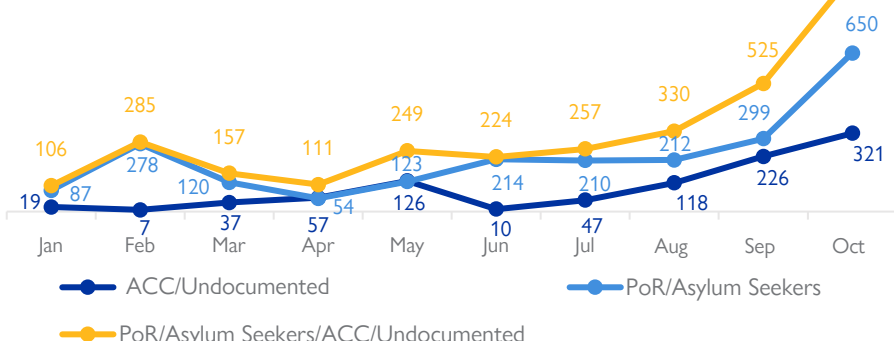## KEY FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS

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.

- In comparing the rate of arrest and detention of PoR holders, as collected by UNHCR, for the months of October 2022 and October 2023, the rate has increased by almost nine-fold.
- Since the issuance of the "plan", the rate of arrest has been highest in the province of Balochistan, making up nearly half of all arrests in Pakistan.

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

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
PoR/Asylum Seekers 2022	74	80	82	37	72	101	65	89	100	74	133	90
PoR/Asylum Seekers 2023	87	278	120	54	123	214	210	212	299	650		

MONTHLY ARRESTS AND DETENTION ANALYSIS 2023

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
ACC/Undocumented	19	7	37	57	126	10	47	118	226	321
PoR/Asylum Seekers	87	278	120	54	123	214	210	212	299	650
PoR/Asylum Seekers/ACC/Undocumented	106	285	157	111	249	224	257	330	525	971

UNHCR helplines have been inundated, with a 65% increase in calls in recent weeks. [UNHCR/Asif Shahzad]

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ARREST AND DETENTION | FLOW MONITORING (15 September – 21 October 2023)

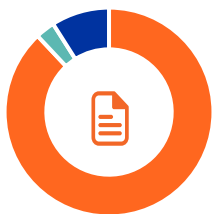UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | IOM UN MIGRATION

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

KEY FINDINGS

- During the reporting period, UNHCR and IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimate a total of 83,268 Afghans returned through the Torkham and Chaman border crossing points to Afghanistan. Of these, 80,161 individuals spontaneously returned (96%), 2,009 individuals were facilitated by UNHCR (3%), and 1,098 individuals were forced to return (1%).

- The vast majority of the returnees were undocumented Afghans (88%), followed by and PoR holders (9%) and ACC holders (3%).

- Fear of arrest (87%) was the most common reason among returnees to return to Afghanistan.

- Returnees were most likely to return from Punjab (37%) in Pakistan and intend to go to Kabul (29%), Nangarhar (27%) and Kandahar (13%) in Afghanistan.
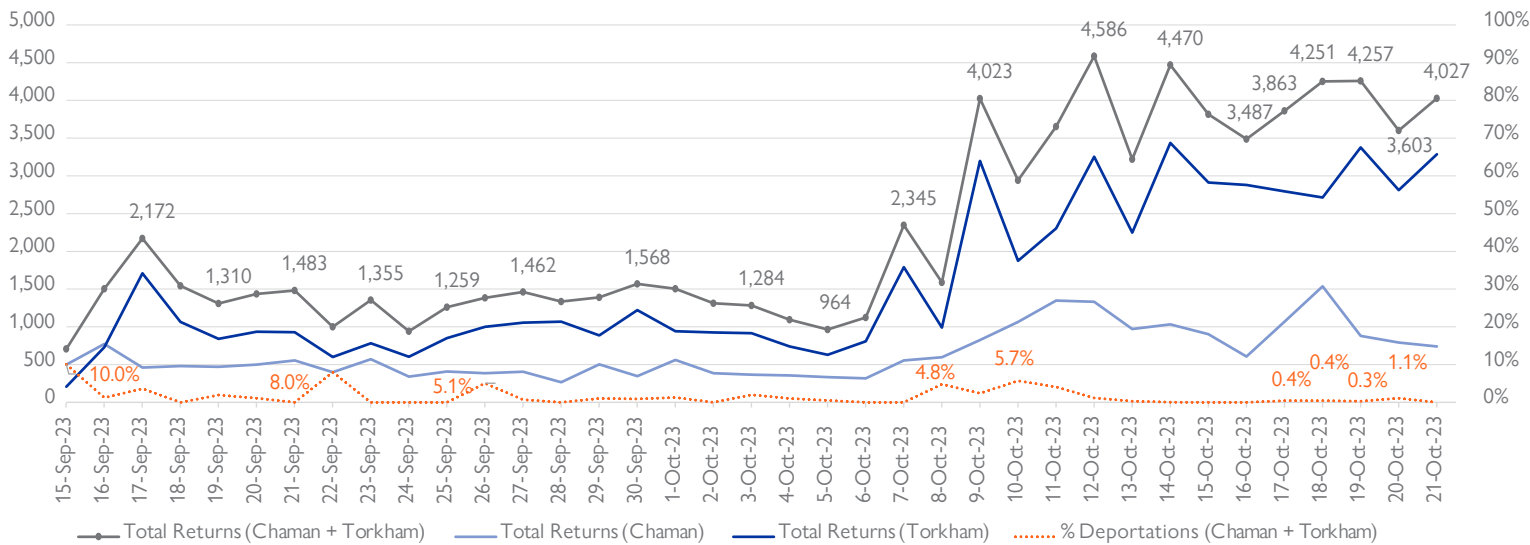
83,268 (100%) TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNS	**80,161 (96%)** TOTAL SPONTANEOUS RETURNEES	**2,009 (3%)*** TOTAL FACILITATED PoR RETURNEES	**1,098 (1%)** TOTAL DEPORTATIONS

DOCUMENTATION CATEGORY OF RETURNEES

Undocumented	88%
PoR holder **	9%
ACC holder	3%

TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | TORKHAM AND CHAMAN | 15 SEPTEMBER – 21 OCTOBER 2023

Legend: Total Returns (Chaman + Torkham) — Total Returns (Chaman) — Total Returns (Torkham) — % Deportations (Chaman + Torkham)

Data labels: 2,172; 1,310; 1,483; 1,355; 1,259; 1,462; 1,568; 1,284; 964; 2,345; 4,023; 4,586; 4,470; 4,251; 4,257; 3,863; 3,487; 3,603; 4,027
% Deportations: 10.0%; 8.0%; 5.1%; 4.8%; 5.7%; 0.4%; 0.4%; 0.3%; 1.1%

This section only applies to ACC holders and undocumented Afghans

PUSH FACTORS (Multiple answers, N = 2,650, can exceed 100%)

Fear of arrest	87%
No employment	46%
Unable to pay house rent	25%
Unable to pay house utilities	20%
Communal pressure to return	19%

ORIGIN AND INTENDED DESTINATION (TOP 5, BY PROVINCE)

PROVINCE OF ORIGIN		PROVINCE OF DESTINATION	
1. Punjab	37%	1. Kabul	29%
2. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	29%	2. Nangarhar	27%
3. Balochistan	15%	3. Kandahar	13%
4. Sindh	11%	4. Kunar	6%
5. Islamabad Capital Territory	5%	5. Kunduz	6%

*The number refers to facilitated POR returnees who crossed the border during the reporting period. 3,312 POR holders, who were facilitated to return by UNHCR, approached encashment centers in Afghanistan for return assistance. ** PoR cardholder is an Afghan refugee registered by the Government of Pakistan.