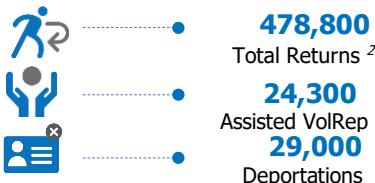


Key Figures (from 15 Sept to date)



UNHCR Funding Requirements

\$43.48M for Afghanistan from November 2023 to July 2024

\$8.43M for Pakistan from November to December 2023

The quoted figures are currently under revision.

Timeline of Key Events

26 SEP
"Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" issued internally by Pakistan's Ministry of Interior (MoI), outlining the "repatriation" of Afghan nationals in three phases, starting with undocumented Afghan nationals, followed by ACC holders, and PoR cardholders.

MoI makes formal announcement that 1 November 2023 is the deadline for all "illegal foreigners" to leave

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

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

9&16 OCT
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**.

Press release issued by UN Special Rapporteurs and statement made by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), urging the Government of Pakistan to stop planned mass deportation of Afghan nationals in Pakistan.

17&27 OCT
Notification issued by the MoI instructing all relevant authorities to enact the "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" from 1 November 2023.

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

3 NOV
SAFRON issues notification that the **validity of PoR cards has been extended to 31 December 2023**

10 NOV
Press release issued by UN Human Rights Chief, Volker Türk, appealing to suspend deportations until procedures and safeguards required by international law are in place.

Background

On 3 October 2023, the Government of Pakistan announced plans to repatriate "illegal foreigners".¹ In view of the ongoing humanitarian and human rights concerns in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls, UNHCR and IOM issued a [joint statement](#) urging Pakistan to maintain the protection space for Afghans in need of safety. This was followed by a [joint statement](#) by UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF which appealed for the protection of children and families seeking safety in Pakistan.

Population trends during the reporting period indicate that most Afghans made the decision to leave Pakistan following the announcement of the repatriation plan although deportations through Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossing points were also recorded. People arriving at the border are exhausted and require urgent assistance as well as psychosocial support. Arrivals back to Afghanistan are also adding to the worsening humanitarian crisis, as winter temperatures start to dip to -4°C in some locations. Many Afghan returnees are vulnerable, including women and children, who could lose their lives in a harsh winter if left without adequate shelter.

1.375 million undocumented Afghans are estimated to reside in Pakistan. Approximately 720,000 undocumented individuals and 50,000 assisted Proof of Registration (PoR) cardholders are expected to require support at border points from now through July 2024. The sudden surge in returns in recent weeks is putting pressure on already strained resources, including shelter and basic services. Additional support is urgently required. UNHCR and partners in Pakistan and Afghanistan are currently working together to ensure a harmonized and coordinated cross-border response to the new emergency. To support these efforts, an inter-agency Border Consortium Appeal was launched on 8 November and has recently been updated. In addition, UNHCR and partners are also stepping up their presence in and around Torkham and Chaman border crossing points and accelerating efforts to ensure protection-sensitive mechanisms are in place via regular border monitoring visits and protection screenings to identify and assist people with heightened vulnerabilities and needs.

UNHCR maintains a [non-return advisory](#) for Afghanistan, which has been in place since August 2021, and continues to call for a bar on forced returns of Afghan nationals to a country still impacted by recurrent conflict, instability and climate-induced disasters. UNHCR continues to appeal to the Government of Pakistan to maintain the protection space for Afghan nationals in need of safety and that any returns must be voluntary, safe and dignified with full respect for rights and protection of those in need.

Key Highlights

The number of returnees entering **Afghanistan** from **Pakistan continued to decline during the reporting period**. The average number of daily border crossings has come down to some 1,500 people.

¹ The Government of Pakistan has subsequently announced that Afghan Citizen Cardholders and Proof of Registration (PoR) cardholders are exempted. The validity of PoR cards was retroactively extended to the end of the year.

² An umbrella term that includes all returns including deportations, assisted VolRep and other returns of Afghans of all statuses such as PoR cardholders, ACC holders, and the undocumented.

- In **Afghanistan**, UNHCR mixed-gender teams visited Spin Boldak and Torkham and carried out protection interviews with new Afghan arrivals from Pakistan. As previously reported, fear of arrest and detention, limited freedom of movement, reports of extortion, as well as challenges extending tenancy agreements, are some of the reasons why families returned to Afghanistan. Help desks continue to guide returnees requiring assistance to the different available services. Winterization support, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene were identified as the most critical needs by returnees and scaling up support in these areas remains an urgent priority.
- In **Afghanistan**, UNHCR continued to biometrically process and provide cash assistance to PoR card holders and their nuclear family members, UNHCR slip holders, asylum seeker certificate holders and other protection referrals. Since 15 September 2023, some 61,600 individuals returning from Pakistan have been provided with cash assistance, including some 41,700 PoR cardholders.
- In **Pakistan**, Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC) have started operating three days a week (Mondays – Wednesdays). This is in response to the decline in the number of people returning during the winter.
- In **Pakistan**, advocacy with authorities continues following reports of evictions and arrests of both documented and undocumented individuals, including holders of PoR cards, Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) and reception slips. In 2023, 29,781 Afghan nationals have been arrested thus far, a figure exceeding any previous year since data collection on the arrest and detention of Afghan nationals began. Advocacy with authorities at all levels continues. For the latest figures, please see the [UNHCR-IOM Flash Update](#).
- In **Pakistan**, a meeting of the technical level of the [Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees](#) (SSAR) Core Group ++ was convened on 14 December by the Netherlands as co-chair of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform, hosted at UNHCR with IOM also in attendance. UNHCR briefed on the latest developments, including the decreasing trend in both arrests and deportation. UNHCR Pakistan Assistant Representative (Protection) updated the group on the visit to Afghanistan, including the situation at the border.
- **More funding** is needed to bolster UNHCR's and the inter-agency response to this unfolding emergency, with significant resource requirements identified in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Needs are continuing to rise due to a confluence of insecurity, instability, and environmental disasters as well as economic and geopolitical crosswinds. To support the response, UNHCR's ask under the inter-agency appeal is \$43.48 million for Afghanistan from November 2023 to July 2024 and \$8.43 million for Pakistan from November to December 2023.



UNHCR steps up its presence at official border crossings as tens of thousands of Afghans arrive from Pakistan © UNHCR/Oxygen Empire Media Production