



UPDATE ON RETURN OF AFGHAN REFUGEES FROM PAKISTAN

5-18 September 2016

TRENDS

- Large numbers of Afghan refugees continued to return to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during the reporting period. More than 22,000 Afghan refugees have returned from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan since 5 September. However the rate of return saw a brief lull during the Eid period (12 & 13 September).
- A majority of the returns are taking place to the Kabul and Nangarhar areas in Afghanistan. A further breakdown of the main return areas is available below.
- Up to 80 per cent of returnees are from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. Some 13 per cent are from the Punjab province.
- UNHCR expects that this trend could continue and reach over 220,000 returnees from Pakistan by the end of the year.
- The Afghanistan Humanitarian Country Team estimates that in 2016 there will be more than one million people on the move, including new IDPs and returnees, both refugees and undocumented Afghans.

KEY FIGURES

(as of 17 September 2016)

115,496
Refugees already returned in 2016

- 113,461 (98.2 %) from Pakistan
- 1,912 (1.7 %) from Iran
- 123 (0.1 %) from other countries

More than

220,000

refugees expected to return in total in 2016

USD 400

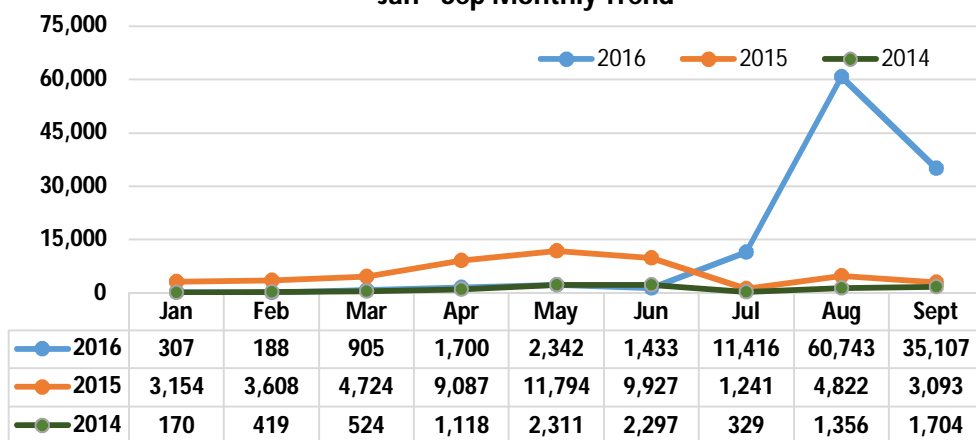
Repatriation cash grant per person as of 25 June

MOST URGENT FINANCIAL NEEDS

USD 104.7 million

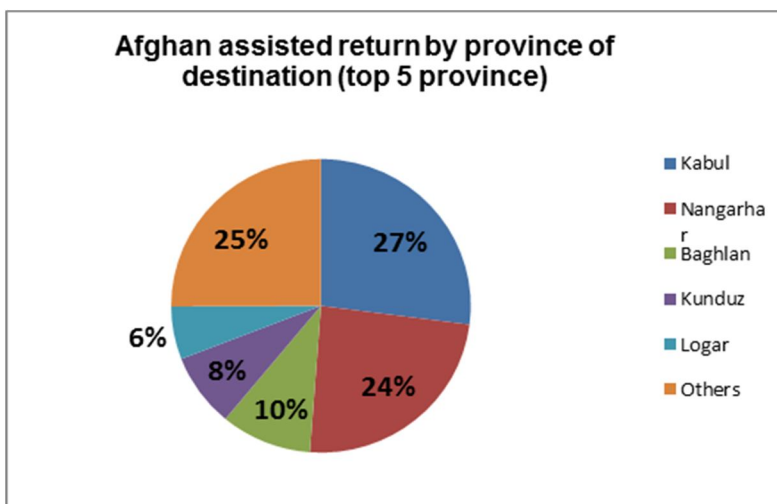
Required to support the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan

Assisted Return from Pakistan - 2014-2016
Jan - Sep Monthly Trend



Note: The numbers for September 2016 are only as of 17 September, while the figures for 2014 and 2015 are for the entire month.

Afghan assisted return by province of destination (top 5 province)



NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- On 9 September, Pakistan's Prime Minister and Federal Cabinet extended the validity of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards for a period of three months (from December 2016 until the end of March 2017). The Prime Minister strongly urged against any mistreatment and harassment of Afghan refugees, noting that their return will take place in safety and dignity and in a way that does not create any negative impressions in the minds of people living on both sides of the border.
- Pakistan's Prime Minister also tasked the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) to convene a meeting of leaders of all political parties with a view to formulate recommendations on the future management of Afghan refugees. The recommendations of the all-parties conference, which will take place on 21 September, will be submitted to the Federal Cabinet and form the basis of the future comprehensive policy on the management of Afghan refugees.
- UNHCR issued its Supplementary Appeal¹ to enhance the protection and processing capacity in Pakistan and to address the initial needs of returning refugees through cash grants in Afghanistan. The total revised 2016 requirements for the Afghan situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including additional requirements, amount to \$291 million. Of this total, \$104.7 million is the requirement until the end of the year to support the repatriation.
- The humanitarian community in Afghanistan launched a Flash Appeal² for USD 152 million to cover the immediate needs of the documented and undocumented returnees over the next four months. UNHCR's supplementary budget requirements for Afghanistan are included in the Flash Appeal.

RESPONSE

- In Afghanistan, in addition to supporting returnees with cash grants, UNHCR continued enhanced interviews with them to identify protection concerns and focus group discussions with returnees by groups (men/women, boys/girls), the results of which help inform UNHCR's monitoring activities in Pakistan. All returning PoR card holders undergo biometric verification during the de-registration process in Pakistan.
- In Pakistan, UNHCR upgraded the facilities in the two Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in Peshawar and Quetta in order to ensure a protection-sensitive environment for return and improve the processing times. Sanitary facilities were upgraded and expanded. Furthermore, parking lots for the trucks used to transport people were also extended and additional waiting areas constructed along with additional child friendly spaces. The capacity of these VRCs has also been increased. Operational hours have been extended to six days a week and a second shift has been added for each day.
- A third VRC in Peshawar (Azakhel) is expected to be functional as of 19 September. A fast-track priority processing system for certain categories of vulnerable refugees is now operational in VRC Chamkani and will be extended to VRC Azakhel.
- UNHCR is continuing with mass information and media campaigns in Pakistan on the increase in cash grant and modalities for voluntary repatriation, as well as on the rights of refugees in Pakistan (including information on the extension of the temporary legal stay until March 2017, protection conferred by PoR cards, and accessing helplines to report incidents of harassment).
- A pre-return rapid survey will be launched in the coming days in the refugee villages and by telephone with prospective returnees to elicit information on reasons for their envisaged repatriation, assess conditions impacting returns and address any protection challenges they may be facing.
- UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan continue to make the necessary interventions to prevent the harassment and intimidation of PoR card holders by local authorities and the police, and to monitor and follow up on reports received. The Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), responsible for refugee matters, has been intervening with the provincial police, reminding them of the status and rights of PoR card holders as refugees.

¹ UNHCR Supplementary Appeal: Repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/15511>

² Afghanistan Flash Appeal 2016: One million people on the move, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/afghanistan-flash-appeal-2016-one-million-people-move>

UNHCR and its partners in the ten Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC) operational in the country have also been intervening on behalf of individual refugees wrongfully detained, advocating for their release and securing documentation for them.

- UNHCR further continues its high-level advocacy in Pakistan with a broad spectrum of political leaders and prominent public personalities with a view to continue upholding the protection space, ensuring voluntariness of return and encouraging a long-term solutions-oriented approach to the future management of Afghan refugees.

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