



Summary of Legal Assistance and Aid Programme

January - May 2017

Legal Assistance
23,395

Arrests & detentions
2,848 *

Interventions
1,688 **

Releases
1,678 ***

Key findings

Ten Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC) are operational in the main refugee-hosting areas of four provinces in order to provide free legal support to persons of concern: four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), one in Sindh and three in Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through partnership agreements with SHARP and two in Baluchistan each run by SEHER & CRS.¹

The general protection situation for refugees remained stable in May 2017. Arrests and detentions of persons of concern has dropped to 119 in the month of May, which is the lowest in the last two years. Refugees normally face increased scrutiny after a security incident and the fact that no such major security incident occurred in May could be the reason for a decrease in arrests and detentions.

In May 2017, UNHCR and its partners provided legal assistance to a total of 4,483 persons of concern. During the month, UNHCR and its partners **intervened at police stations for 97** arrested/detained persons of concern and secured the release of 124² individuals. In the majority of all cases, UNHCR and its partners managed to obtain the release of the arrested refugees before the official lodging of charges against them which resulted in their release from detention within 24 hours. There were also 37 registered refugees (Proof of Registration cardholders) who were arrested and released without any charges in Balochistan, which brings the **total number of those arrested in May to 119**. (note: CRS-ILAC does not provide interventions at police stations for short detentions). ALAC lawyers also provided **court representations for 22 refugees** who were charged under the Foreigners Act and other preventive laws.

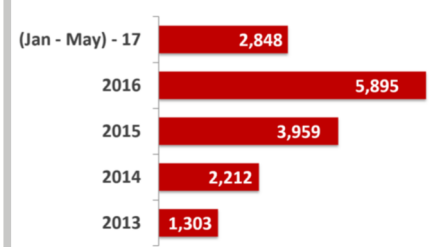
It is pertinent to note that February 2017 witnessed the highest number of arrests and detentions countrywide of any monthly period in the last two years owing to the intensified security operations (named Operation "Raad ul-Fasaad") initiated by the Government of Pakistan in the wake of a spate of recent terrorist attacks. By comparing April, May 2017 saw a 34% decrease in the number of arrests and detentions countrywide. This is potentially the result of the widespread dissemination of the official notification issued by the Ministry of SAFRON on 24 February regarding the Federal Cabinet's decision to extend the validity of the PoR cards providing proof of legal stay for registered Afghan refugees until the end of 2017. UNHCR have also taken proactive steps to mitigate the risk of detention including enhanced advocacy and preemptively intervening at police stations to prevent arrests and enhancing the response capacity of partners.

¹UNHCR funds 9 ALACs and CRS, as UNHCR's operational partner, funds 1 Information and Legal Aid Centre (ILAC) in Balochistan. SHARP operates in KP, Punjab and Sindh. SEHER has implemented UNHCR funded ALAC legal aid services in Balochistan in the month of April.

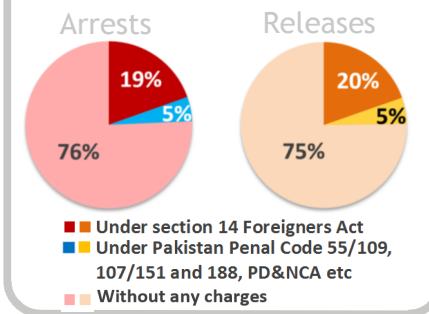
²Out of all released, some were detained in the previous month.

* Actual numbers of arrests / detentions / ** Interventions made by ALAC at police stations to secure the release of PoCs / *** Additionally 36 PoR cardholders were released through court interventions by CRS-ILAC in Balochistan.

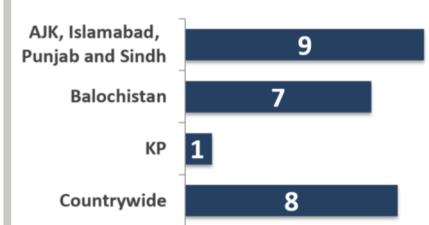
Arrests and detentions by year



Types of arrests and releases



Avg length of detention (days)*



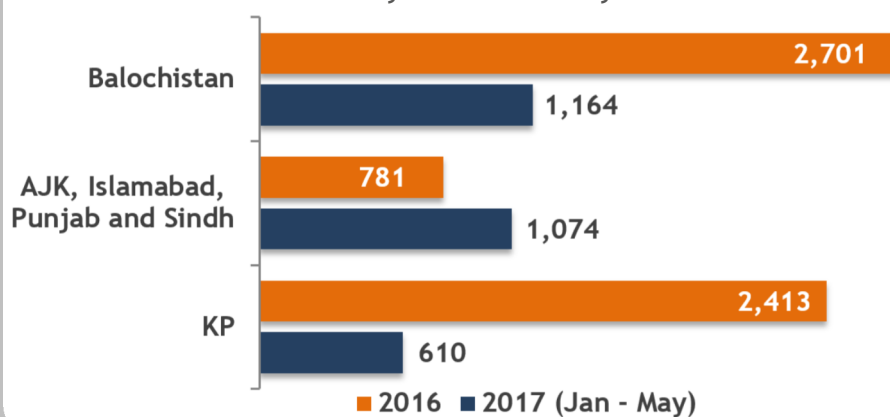
*Weighted proportionally by # of arrests in each province

Arrests and detentions by month

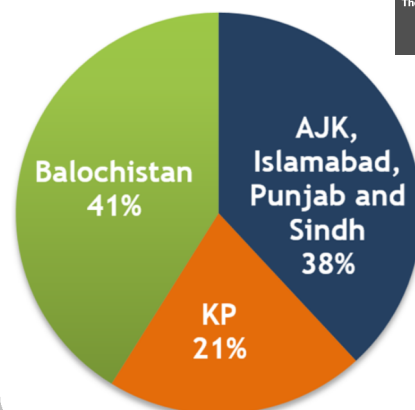




Arrests and detentions by location and year



Arrest/detention locations



Access to legal assistance and legal remedies

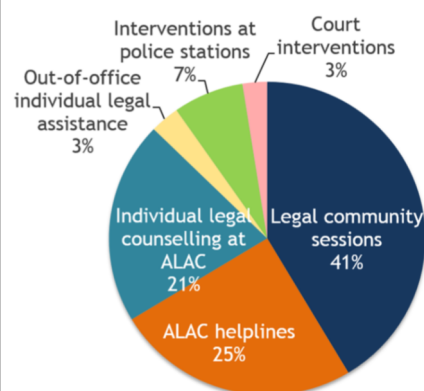
ALAC activities in 2017 include the following: a) provision of legal intervention at police stations upon arrest/detention; b) court representation in the cases of arrest/detention and other issues regarding civil/family/tenancy matters etc.; c) individually facilitated indoor counseling (legal advice) at ALACs and through helplines; d) out-of-court legal assistance; e) legal sessions in the form of legal camps, shura meetings and facilitated group discussions; and f) coordination with and training for law enforcement authorities including border officials and the judiciary.

In May, partner staff provided **individual legal counselling** to **1,107** persons of concern who visited the Advice and Legal Assistance centres as well as legal advice to a total of **907** persons of concern through **ALAC helplines**. Birth registration, police harassment, information on repatriation and PoR card modification were the issues of greatest concern observed in the month of May. **Out-of-court/office legal assistance** was provided to **183** persons of concern mostly related to police harassment, PoR card-related issues, drafting rental agreements and affidavits. In addition to court representations for arrest/detention cases under the Foreigners Act/preventive laws, ALAC lawyers helped refugees to pursue **8** cases related to money, land and tenancy disputes in local courts.

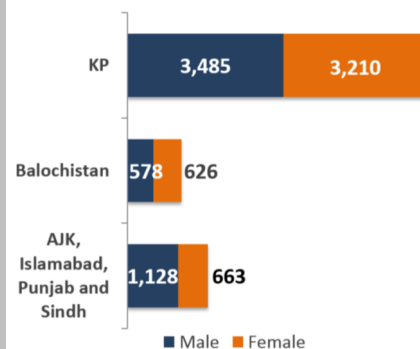
UNHCR and ALAC staff also organized a total of **85 legal camps and shura meetings** reaching **2,180 participants** (47% of whom were women) in the reporting month. 53% of the legal sessions were held in refugee villages and the remaining sessions in urban areas. Through these legal sessions, refugees shared various legal issues affecting their communities to UNHCR partner staff and information on available free legal aid services from UNHCR/partners was shared with participants.

335 Police officials from Refugee hosting areas in KP and Punjab attended three sessions organized by UNHCR at the Police Stations in two districts of KP and one district in the province of Punjab in the month of May. 19 Lawyers attended a session in Balochistan province on refugee rights in Pakistan.

ALAC legal assistance activities for POCs



Legal group participation



UNHCR continues to deploy border monitors at the two official Pakistan-Afghan border crossings at Torkham (KP) and Chaman (Balochistan) in order to identify potential protection issues during border movements.

Refugee-police liaison committees were established in the districts of Mardan, Swabi, Buner and Malakand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after successful implementation in the districts of Charsadda, Peshawar and Nowshera to enable refugees directly approaching police.

Please note that there are 49 ALAC lawyers countrywide who provide the legal aid/assistance described above (29 in KP, 9 in Balochistan, 5 in Punjab/AJK, 3 in Sindh and 3 in Islamabad). UNHCR is expanding its legal assistance network through the identification of pro bono lawyers in addition to the existing ALAC legal aid program. UNHCR is working closely with the UNDP Rule of Law in KP on joint-training for police officials.