



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

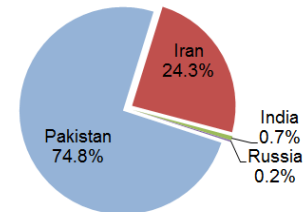
FEBRUARY 2013

From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of February 2013, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. Today, about a quarter of Afghanistan's population consists of returnees.

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

1 – 28 February 2013: In February 2013, a total of 1,041 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 667 came from Pakistan, 373 from Iran and one from India. This figure is 17% lower compared to 1,215 Afghans who returned last month but 65% higher compared to the 631 Afghans who returned during February 2012.

Total returns 01 January - 28 February 2013



Year	Returns from Pakistan	Returns from Iran	Returns from Other countries	Total
2002	1,565,066	259,792	9,679	1,834,537
2003	332,183	142,280	1,176	475,639
2004	383,321	377,151	650	761,122
2005	449,391	63,559	1,140	514,090
2006	133,338	5,264	1,202	139,804
2007	357,635	7,054	721	365,410
2008	274,200	3,656	628	278,484
2009	48,320	6,028	204	54,552
2010	104,331	8,487	150	112,968
2011	48,998	18,851	113	67,962
2012	79,435	15,035	86	94,556
2013	1,687	549	20	2,256
Total	3,777,905	907,706	15,769	4,701,380

1 January – 28 February 2013: During the first two months of 2013, a total of 2,256 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan of whom 1,687 came from Pakistan, 549 from Iran and 20 from non-neighbouring countries (NNCs): India: 15 and the Russian Federation: five. The average number of returns, per day in 2013 is 38 individuals which is double compared to the daily average of 19 individuals during the same period in 2012.

The increase in returns may be attributed to the high cost of living particularly a rise in food and fuel prices, increased competition with locals for jobs and the escalating security situation in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until June 2013 may also influence refugees in Pakistan to make a decision for return. Economic pressures in Iran and a cut in subsidies for basic commodities for Afghan refugees could also be factors resulting in higher returns.

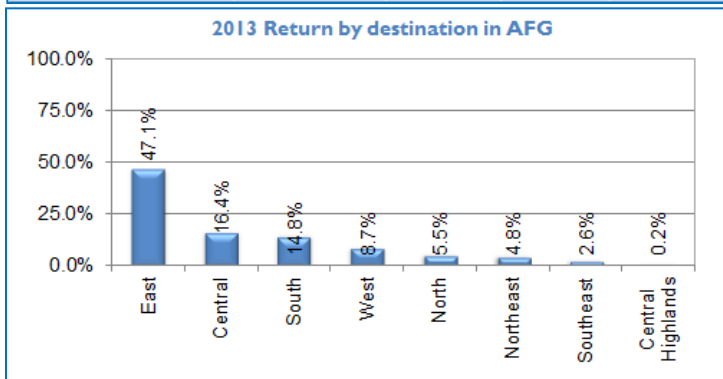
A refugee wishing to return to Afghanistan with the assistance of UNHCR must approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the country of asylum to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF).

Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through three VRCs located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Chamkani (Peshawar), Timergara (Dir), Bannu (Banu Township) and Baleli (Quetta) VRC in Baluchistan. Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through Soleimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

Upon return in Afghanistan, returnees were assisted at five encashment centres (ECs): Mohmmad Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).

At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs receive approximately US\$ 150 per person (between US\$20 - US\$46 for transport and US\$117 as a short-term assistance grant). The transportation grant varies according to the distance from the areas of asylum to the areas of origin. Returning refugees are also briefed on mine awareness and education procedures in Afghanistan at the EC. They can benefit from transit facilities for overnight stay and basic health services. All children under the age of five are vaccinated for polio and measles. Returnees are briefed also on how to access legal aid, if required.

Assisted returns by region of destination in Afghanistan 2013 & 2012				
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Feb 2013		Jan - Feb 2012	
	No.	%	No.	%
East	1,062	47.1%	588	51.1%
Central	369	16.4%	202	17.6%
South	333	14.8%	100	8.7%
West	197	8.7%	117	10.2%
North	123	5.5%	65	5.7%
Northeast	109	4.8%	43	3.7%
Southeast	58	2.6%	29	2.5%
Central Highlands	5	0.2%	6	0.5%
Total	2,256	100.0%	1,150	100.0%



Assisted return by area of residence in Country of Asylum (CoA) - 2013		
CoA	Province	%
PAKISTAN	KPK	71.5%
	Balochistan	21.9%
	Punjab	3.1%
	Sindh	2.8%
	AJK	0.4%
	Islamabad	0.3%
IRAN	Tehran	29.0%
	Esfahan	25.9%
	Khorasan	10.7%
	Kerman	8.0%
	Qom	7.8%
	Fars	7.1%
	Markazi	3.5%
	Semnan	2.6%
	Yazd	1.3%
	Khuzestan	1.3%
	Qazvin	0.9%
	Golestan	0.9%
	Hormozgan	0.4%
	Mazandaran	0.2%
	Bushehr	0.2%
	Unknown	0.4%

ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 28 February 2013, a total of 173 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (151) and Iran (22). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (134) and from those with obvious protection concerns (39) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Hirat (GTC). This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.

RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

Push factors

Among returnees from Pakistan, 56% cited economic factors as a primary reason for their return followed by "the deteriorating security conditions in the country" (13%), alleged harassment by authorities (11%), settlement closures (3%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (1%), lack of school and health facilities (1%), and other reasons (15%): mainly eviction notice by the land owner, Afghan national army employee and the possible expiration of PoR cards.

Pull factors

28% of returnees cited better employment opportunities in Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return followed by improvement of the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan (19%), UNHCR's assistance package (18%), none or reduced fear of persecution (15%), the land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (15%), improved weather conditions for agricultural activities (3%) and improvements in health and education facilities (2%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin was mainly obtained through the Afghan community (53%), visits to Afghanistan (37%), through the media (5%), from UNHCR (3%) and from other sources (2%). Sixty six percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 19% obtained information directly from UNHCR, 9% were informed through the media (TV, Radio and Newspaper) and 6% stated that they had visited Afghanistan.

Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Some 4% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan. This is a higher number compared to 2012. Some 12% of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems while traveling from the VRC to Torkham border point. This is a decrease in reported incidents, compared to 2012 possibly due to better efforts made by UNHCR Pakistan with the authorities. Among those interviewed, 95% alleged that they had paid bribes at different check points in Pakistan because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 151 respondents, 63 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (35%), insecurity (27%), lack of land (24%), lack of livelihood/income generation opportunities (6%), lack of public services (3%), personal disputes (2%) and other reasons (3%).

On accommodation, 51% of those who returned from Pakistan said that they will rent accommodation, 33% indicated that they plan to stay with relatives, and 11% said that they own a house in Afghanistan.

RETURNS FROM IRAN

Push factors

Among the 22 returnees from Iran interviewed, 91% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return followed by alleged harassment by the authorities (5%) and other reasons (4%).

Pull factors

90% indicated improvements of the security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return, followed by none or reduced fear of persecution (5%) and land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (5%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

73% of the interviewed returnees from Iran reported that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. Information on place of origin was mainly obtained through the Afghan community (86%) and through the media (5%). Regarding information on UNHCR's repatriation operation, 59% of the interviewed returnees stated that they have been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 14% cited that they obtained information through the media and 5% cited that they obtained information directly from UNHCR.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 22 respondents, 5 interviewed returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (60%) and lack of public services (40%).

On accommodation, 63% of those who returned from Iran said that they will rent accommodation, 32% indicated that they will stay with relatives and 5% said that they own a house.

BORDER MONITORING DEPORTATION OF UNDOCUMENTED AFGHAN NATIONALS (NON-REFUGEES)

Afghan nationals returning from Iran or Pakistan due to eviction, conflict, military operations, natural disasters, or other reasons do not fall under UNHCR's mandate, and all international response to their needs will be led by IOM. However, UNHCR in coordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 28 February 2013: A total of 16,860 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Islam Qala: 79% and Zaranj: 21% border points) from Iran. This figure is 4% lower compared to the 17,485 Afghans were deported during last month and 23% lower compared to the 20,762 deportees during February 2012.

1 January - 28 February 2013: The total number of deportees during the first two months of 2013 is 34,345 individuals which is a decrease of 23% compared to the same period last year when 42,244 Afghans were deported from Iran. The average daily number of Afghans deported in 2013 is 582, compared to the daily average of 704 during the same period in 2012.

A total number of 258,146 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2012, averaging 705 persons per day.

The vast majority of deportees (98%) were single males who entered Iran illegally, to look for work.

Since April 2009, IOM has been present in Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossing points and has procedures in place to screen and identify Persons with Special Needs (PSNs) among the deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees).

IOM provides PSNs with transportation, transit and health services at the border and to assist with their transportation costs from the cities of Herat and Zaranj to their final destination.

Deportations from Iran											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single					Total Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female		Total	
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 -28 Feb 2013	Zaranj	113	257	317	574	2,973	31	0	0	3,004	3,578
	Islam Qala	147	313	209	522	12,249	510	1	0	12,760	
Total		260	570	526	1,096	15,222	541	1	0	15,764	16,860
01 Jan - 28 Feb 2013	Zaranj	214	474	556	1,030	6,168	53	0	0	6,221	7,251
	Islam Qala	251	547	380	927	25,298	866	2	1	26,167	27,094
Total		465	1,021	936	1,957	31,466	919	2	1	32,388	34,345

PAKISTAN:

1 - 28 February 2013: A total of 469 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (161) and Spin Boldak (308) border points. This figure is 34% lower compared to 628 deportees in January 2013 as well as 37% lower compared to 644 deportees during February 2012.

1 January - 28 February 2013: During the first two months of 2013, a total of 517 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure reflects a sharp increase compared to 247 deportees during the same period in 2012.

Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to screen, identify and assist PSNs among deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees). IOM provides PSNs with NFIs and free transportation from Torkham to their final destination.

In addition, 580 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 79% lower compared to the 1,039 deportees during the same period in 2012.

Deportations from Pakistan												
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total	Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female				
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM			
01 - 28 Feb 2013	Torkham	0	0	0	0	161	0	0	0	161	161	
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	308	0	0	0	308	308	
Total		0	0	0	0	469	0	0	0	469	469	
01 Jan - 28 Feb 2013	Torkham	0	0	0	0	517	0	0	0	517	517	
	Spin Boldak	1	1	1	2	578	0	0	0	578	580	
Total		1	1	1	2	1,095	0	0	0	1,095	1,097	