



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

AUGUST 2013

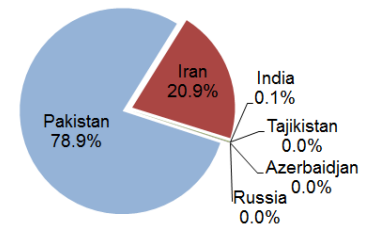
From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of August 2013, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. Today, about a quarter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

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

1 – 31 August 2013: In August 2013, a total of 1,932 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 1,254 came from Pakistan, 665 from Iran and 13 from non-neighbouring countries: Tajikistan: 7, Azerbaijan: 5 and India: 1.

1 January – 31 August 2013: During the first eight months of 2013, a total of 30,724 Afghan refugees (averaging 126/day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return so far this year is lower (40%) compared to the 51,864 Afghans who returned during the same period in 2012.

Total returns 01 January - 31 August 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 | 24,234 | 6,429 | 61 | 30,724 |
| Total | 3,800,452 | 913,586 | 15,810 | 4,729,848 |

The lower rate of return so far this year might be attributed to the following: Expectations among refugees (in Pakistan) that the PoR cards will be extended for another period. PoR cards being extended until 31 December 2015. In addition, no expansion of the "No Go Areas" in Iran and the uncertain situation of Afghanistan in the lead up to elections scheduled for April 2014 also could be other contributing factors of low returns this year.

Difficult economic conditions, deteriorating security conditions (in Pakistan) alleged harassment by authorities and fear of arrest and deportation constituted key push factors in the decision to return so far this year. On a more positive note, improved security in some parts of Afghanistan, none or reduced fear of persecution, improved employment opportunities in Afghanistan and UNHCR's assistance package were cited by many returnees as important pull factors in their decision to return.

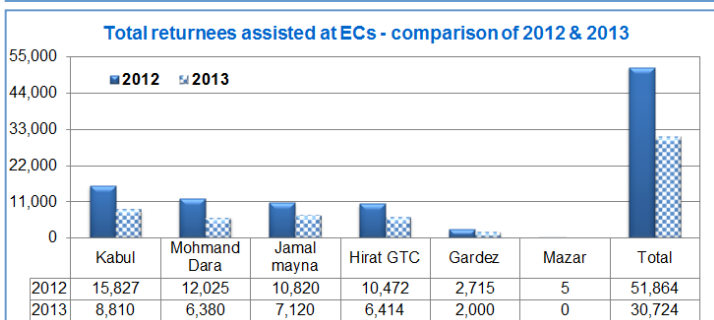
A refugee wishing to return to Afghanistan with the assistance of UNHCR must approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the country of asylum to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF).

Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through two VRCs located in Khyber Pakhtonkhuwa: Chamkani (Peshawar) and Timergara (Dir) 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): Mohmand 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 - Aug 2013 | | Jan - Aug 2012 | |
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Central | 9,375 | 30.5% | 15,700 | 30.3% |
| East | 6,114 | 19.9% | 11,091 | 21.4% |
| Northeast | 5,334 | 17.4% | 9,522 | 18.4% |
| South | 2,961 | 9.6% | 3,638 | 7.0% |
| North | 2,512 | 8.2% | 4,694 | 9.1% |
| West | 2,329 | 7.6% | 4,182 | 8.1% |
| Southeast | 1,957 | 6.4% | 2,760 | 5.3% |
| Central Highlands | 142 | 0.5% | 277 | 0.5% |
| Total | 30,724 | 100.0% | 51,864 | 100.0% |



| Assisted return by area of residence in Country of Asylum (CoA) - 2013 | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------|
| CoA | Province | % |
| PAKISTAN | KPK | 57.4% |
| | Balochistan | 23.9% |
| | Punjab | 10.2% |
| | Sindh | 7.0% |
| | Islamabad | 0.8% |
| | AJK | 0.6% |
| | Unknown | 0.0% |
| IRAN | Tehran | 32.9% |
| | Esfahan | 13.7% |
| | Khorasan | 10.4% |
| | Qom | 9.2% |
| | Fars | 9.0% |
| | Kerman | 8.2% |
| | Yazd | 4.8% |
| | Markazi | 3.7% |
| | Hormozgan | 2.8% |
| | Semnan | 1.8% |
| | Qazvin | 1.1% |
| | Bushehr | 0.8% |
| | Golestan | 0.5% |
| | Khuzestan | 0.5% |
| | Mazandaran | 0.3% |
| | Sistan va Baluchestan | 0.0% |
| | Kohgiluyeh va Boyerahmad | 0.0% |
| Unknown | 0.3% | |

EXTENSION OF TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT

On 16th August 2013 in Islamabad, Pakistan, the Governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan and Pakistan together with UNHCR, extended the validity of the Tripartite Agreement (TPA) until 31 December 2015. The TPA is governing the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The parties also reaffirmed their commitment to the principle of VolRep gradually, in safety and dignity as the best solution to end the protracted Afghan refugee situation and urged that all efforts should be undertaken to enhance VolRep and make returns sustainable.

The Cabinet of the Government of Pakistan, on 25 July 2013, formally endorsed the new policy on Afghan refugees in Pakistan, including an extension of PoR cards and volrep until 31 December 2015.

ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 August 2013, a total of 1,976 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (1,876) and Iran (100). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (1,717) and from those with obvious protection concerns (259) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Herat (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, 69% 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%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (2%), settlement closures (1%), lack of school and health facilities (1%), and other reasons (3%): mainly eviction notices by land owners, Afghan national army employees, possible expiration of PoR cards and lack of sufficient water and electricity in the settlements.

Complaints of police harassment/arrests were recorded as one of the key concerns during interviews in April through August. The expiration of the PoR cards has made Afghan refugees more vulnerable to police harassment and arrests since January 2013. However, it is expected that the level of harassment/arrests will decrease as a result of extension of PoR cards by the Government of Pakistan until 31 December 2015.

Pull factors

42% of returnees cited improvement of the security situation* in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return followed by better employment opportunities in Afghanistan (18%), UNHCR's assistance package (17%), the land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (11%), none or reduced fear of persecution (9%), improvements in health and education facilities (2%) and improved weather conditions for agricultural activities (1%).

*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as primary pull factor of their return, 51% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Parwan, Balkh, Takhar, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, Nangarhar, Herat, Samangan and Badakhshan. 49% returned to insecure provinces: Kunduz, Baghlan, Logar, Kandahar, Helmand, Wardak, Ghazni, Faryab, Zabul and Kunar.

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

97% 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 (46%), visits to Afghanistan (28%), from UNHCR (10%), through the media (3%), and from other sources (10%). Sixty two percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 22% obtained information directly from UNHCR, 8% stated that they had visited Afghanistan and 5% were informed through the media (TV, radio and newspapers).

Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Some 1% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan. Some 21% of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems while traveling from the VRC to Torkham border point (mainly between Karkhano to Torkham). Though the number of incidents have decreased in comparison to last year, yet some of the check points are problematic. In addition, complaints were also noted concerning extortions made by police mobile teams. Among those interviewed, 93% alleged that they had paid bribes (500 – 15,000 Pakistani rupees) because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks. UNHCR Afghanistan is in touch with UNHCR Peshawar in sharing these findings for necessary follow-up with government officials in KPK.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 1,876 respondents, 591 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (44%), lack of land (20%), insecurity (17%), lack of livelihood/income generation opportunities (13%), lack of public services (3%), personal disputes (1%) and other reasons (2%).

On accommodation, 49% of those who returned from Pakistan said that they plan to stay with relatives, 37% indicated that they will rent accommodation, and 13% said that they own a house in Afghanistan.

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" nearly 84% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes". 54% of the concerns related to not having land to start agricultural activities while 33% related to having land but no shelter. 8% indicated lack of job opportunities and only 4% noted security as a concern.

RETURNS FROM IRAN

Push factors

Among the 100 returnees from Iran interviewed, 93% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return followed by alleged harassment by the authorities (5%) and other reasons (2%).

Pull factors

63% indicated improvements of the security situation* in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return, followed by land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (25%), none or reduced fear of persecution (2%), improvement in health and education facilities (1%), UNHCR's assistance package (1%) and other reasons (8%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

86% 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 (84%), from UNHCR (2%), through the media (1%) and other sources (6%). Seventy nine percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 4% said that they obtained information directly from UNHCR and 4% said that they obtained information through the media.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 100 respondents, 31 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of public services (42%), lack of housing (26%), lack of income generation opportunities (13%), insecurity (13%) and other reasons (6%).

On accommodation, 54% of those who returned from Iran said that they will rent accommodation, 42% indicated that they will stay with relatives and 4% said that they own a house.

When asked "Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?" nearly 94% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes". 67% cited the lack of job opportunities as a concern, 28% cited insecurity as a concern and 1% said that the lack of education facilities is a concern.

**Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary pull factor of their return, 63% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Herat, Takhar, Parwan, Samangan, Balkh, Sari Pul, Bamyan, Panjshir and Nangarhar. While 37% returned to insecure provinces; Farah, Ghazni, Baghlan, Kunduz, Faryab, Wardak and Kandahar.*

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 - 31 August* 2013: A total of 5,173 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Zaranj border points) from Iran.

1 January - 31 August 2013: The total number of deportees during the first eight months of 2013, via Zaranj, is 33,960 individuals which is 32% lower compared to the same period last year when 54,877 Afghans were deported (via Zaranj) from Iran. Total deportees so far this year stands at 71,866. This includes 37,906 Afghans deported via Islam Qala between 01 January and 31 March 2013.

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 assists with their transportation costs from the cities of Herat and Zaranj to their final destinations.

| Deportations from Iran | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| Reporting Period | Entry Point | Family Groups | | | | Single | | | | Total | Total Individuals |
| | | Families | Individuals | | | Male | | Female | | | |
| | | | M | F | Total | Adult | UAM | Adult | UAM | | |
| 01 -31 Aug 2013 | Zaranj | 137 | 274 | 346 | 620 | 4,504 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 4,553 | 5,173 |
| | Islam Qala* | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | | 137 | 274 | 346 | 620 | 4,504 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 4,553 | 5,173 |
| 01 Jan - 31 Aug 2013 | Zaranj | 1,060 | 2,400 | 2,699 | 5,099 | 28,669 | 192 | 0 | 0 | 28,861 | 33,960 |
| 01 Jan - 31 Mar 2013 | Islam Qala | 365 | 766 | 542 | 1,308 | 35,398 | 1,197 | 2 | 1 | 36,598 | 37,906 |
| Total | | 1,425 | 3,166 | 3,241 | 6,407 | 64,067 | 1,389 | 2 | 1 | 65,459 | 71,866 |

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 August 2013: A total of 910 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (49) and Spin Boldak (861) border points. This figure reflect a sharp increase compared to 255 deportees in June 2013.

1 January - 31 August 2013: During the first eight months of 2013, a total of 1,467 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure reflects an increase compared to 1,119 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, 4,033 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 4% higher compared to the 3,863 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 -31 Aug 2013 | Torkham | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 49 |
| | Spin Boldak | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 861 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 861 | 861 |
| Total | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 910 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 910 | 910 |
| 01 Jan - 31 Aug 2013 | Torkham | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1,465 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1,467 | 1,467 |
| | Spin Boldak | 7 | 10 | 12 | 22 | 4,011 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4,011 | 4,033 |
| Total | | 7 | 10 | 12 | 22 | 5,476 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5,478 | 5,500 |

UNHCR would like to extend its deep appreciation for the continuing support and generous contributions of donors to its operation in Afghanistan.

*Data on deportation via Islam Qala is not available for April - August 2013.