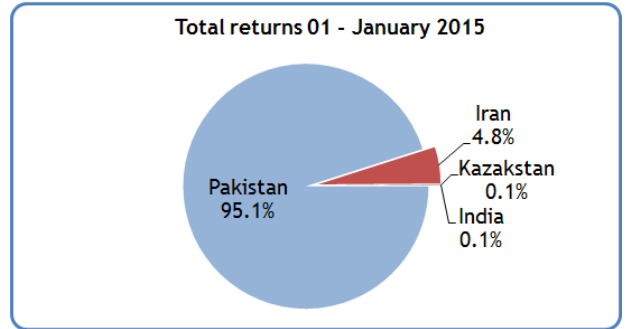


**VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN**

**01 - 31 January 2015:** A total of 3,311 Afghan refugees (559 families) returned to Afghanistan under UNHCR's assisted return program. Of these, the majority (3,148 Afghans) came from Pakistan followed by smaller numbers from Iran (159), from India (2) and from Kazakhstan (2).

The return trend so far this year represents a substantial increase compared to 324 Afghan refugees who returned during the same period in 2014. Normally the return trend from the main countries of asylum (Pakistan and Iran) is very low during the winter season and peak return starts in mid-April and continues until October.



However, since January 2015, the return trend from Pakistan has suddenly increased due to the recent measures taken by the Pakistani authorities following a terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar, KPK.

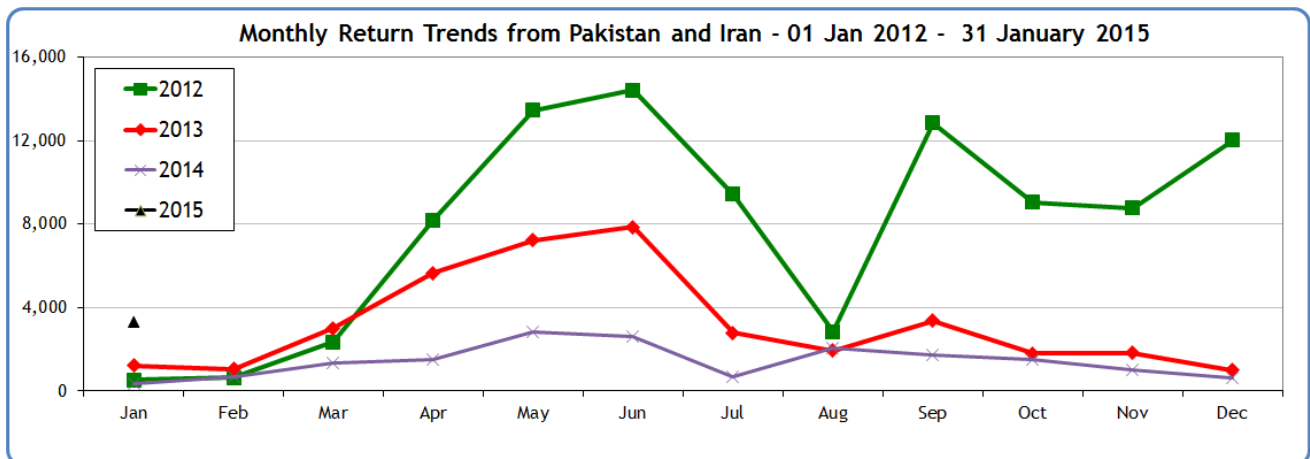
Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan 2015		Jan 2014	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	1,170	35.3%	108	33.3%
East	1,067	32.2%	70	21.6%
North	507	15.3%	22	6.8%
Northeast	269	8.1%	28	8.6%
Southeast	132	4.0%	0	0.0%
South	96	2.9%	40	12.3%
West	55	1.7%	50	15.4%
Central Highlands	15	0.5%	6	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,311</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Though the Pakistani authorities assured UNHCR that the measures will not impact registered Afghan refugees (PoR card holders), many returnees have reported arrests, detention, extortion, and harassment by local authorities, which have created pressure to return to Afghanistan. The areas\* which have been impacted the most are Haripur district in KPK and Mihrpur district in Azad Jamu and Kashmir.

Eviction notices by the authorities are cited as the primary push factor that influenced Afghan refugees to return from Pakistan. Discrimination, harassment and fear of arrest or deportation are mentioned as additional reasons for return so far in 2015.

The return trend from Iran remains similar to January 2014.

A total of 172,000 is the projected return figure for 2015, while UNHCR has prioritised funds for 50,000 individuals.



\*The majority of returns were recorded (based on VRFs data) from KPK (Haripur district) and Azad Jamu Kashmir (Mirpur district) with smaller numbers from Punjab province. No major return from the refugee settlements so far this year. Only 102 Afghans (3%) out of 3,148 returned from the refugee settlements mainly located in Haripur district.

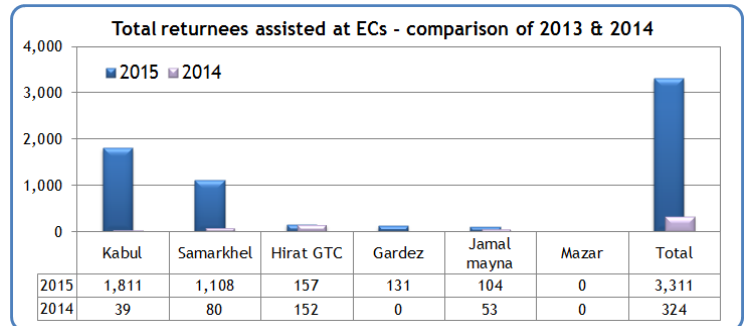
## RETURN PROCESS

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).

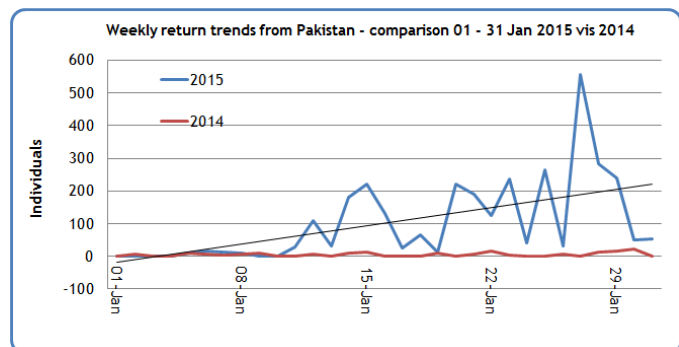
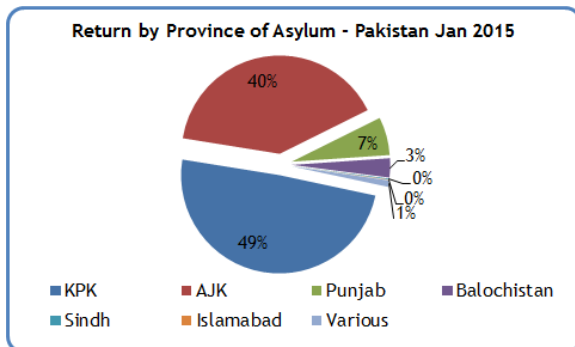
Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through two VRCs: Chamkani located in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtonkhuwa and Baleli located in Quetta, Baluchistan.

Repatriation from Iran is facilitated through So-leimankhani, Esfahan, Shiraz, and Mashhad VRCs, the Sub-Offices, or directly through the Border Crossing Station (BCS) at Dogharoun.

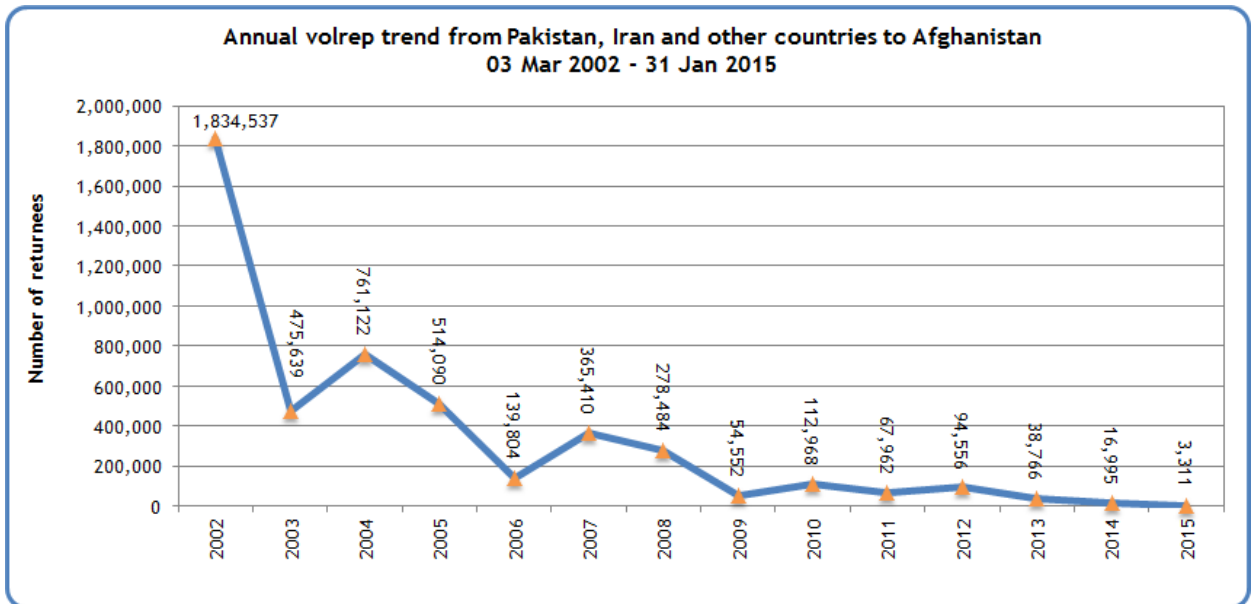
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five Encashment Centers (ECs): Mohmand Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).



At the ECs, depending on the province of origin, all Afghan returnees with VRFs received approximately US\$ 200 per person (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 as a short-term integration 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.

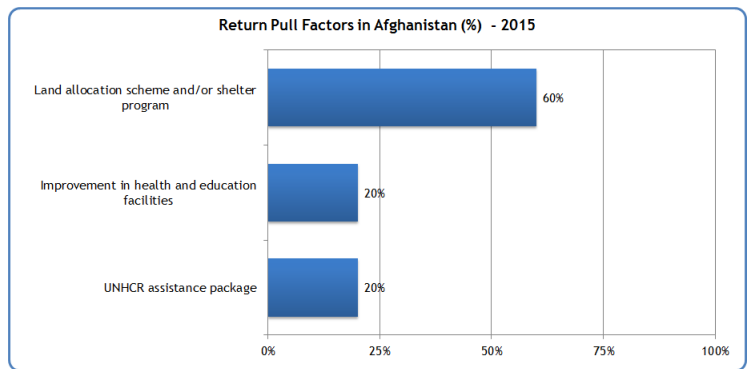
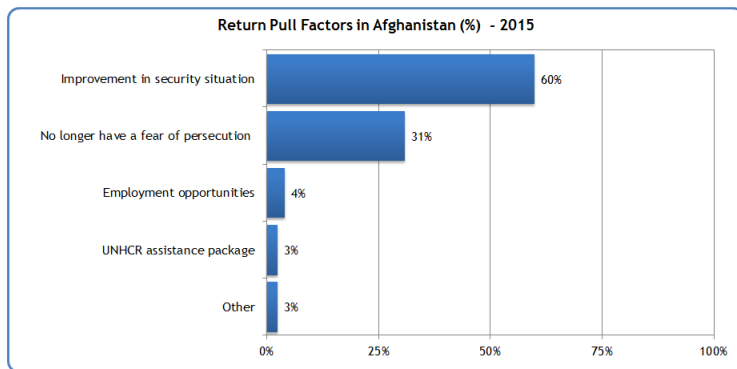
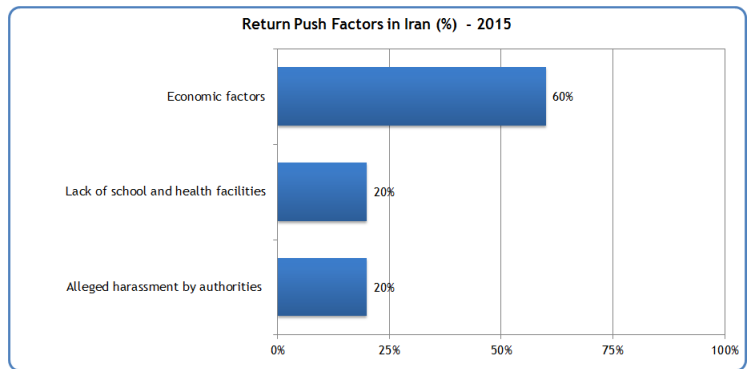
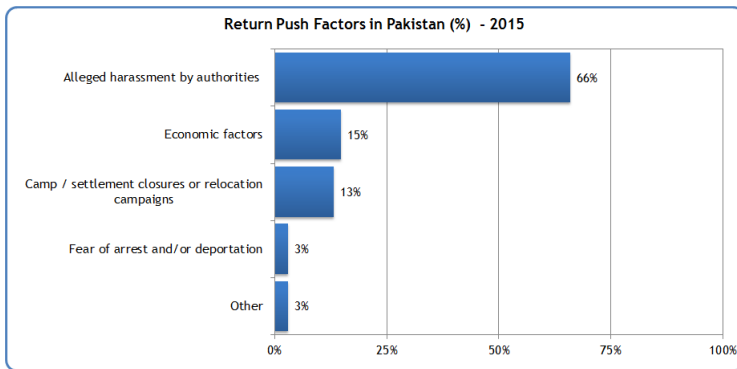
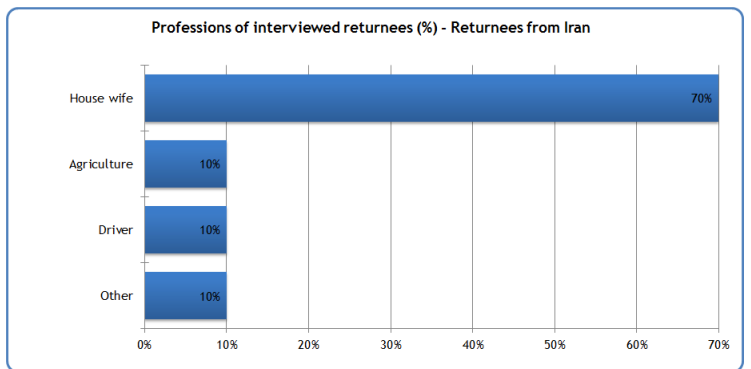
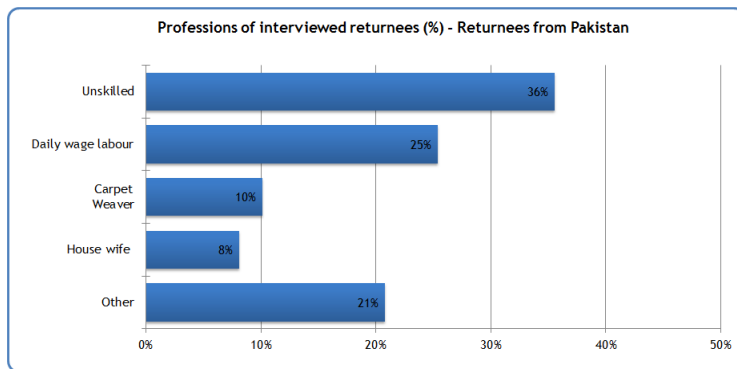
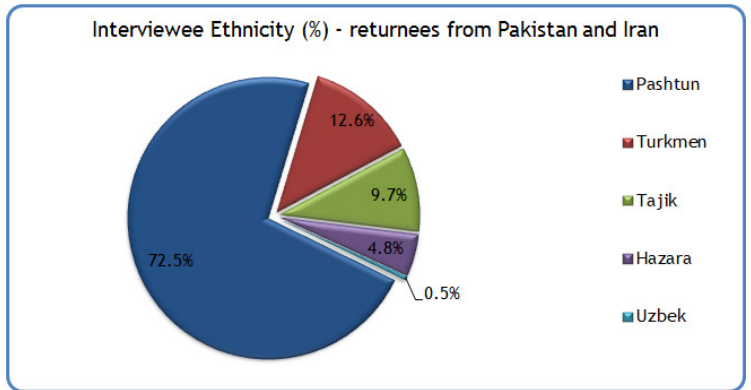
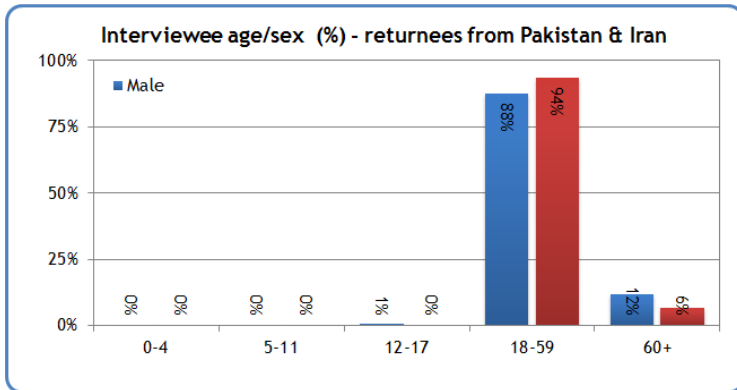


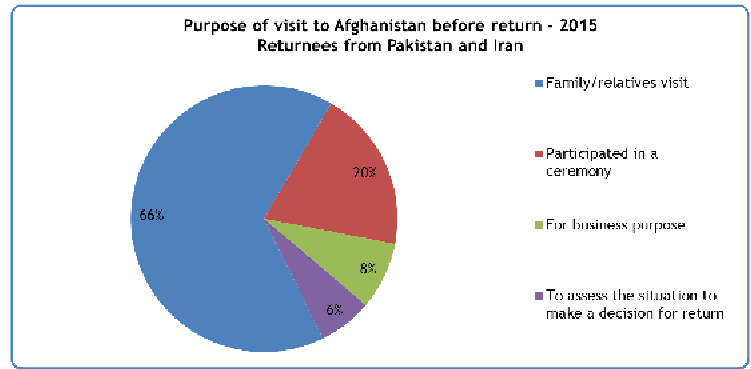
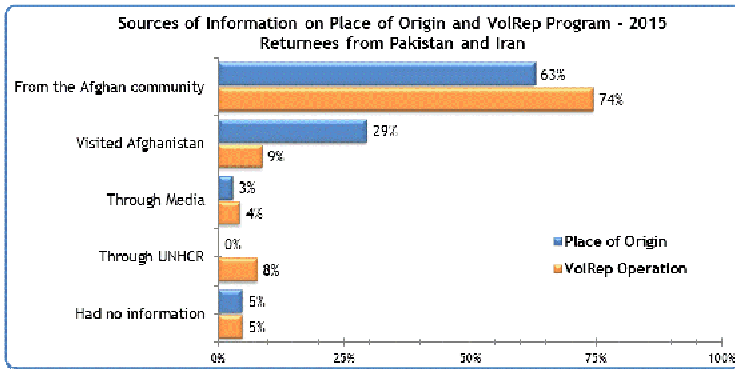
From the start of UNHCR’s assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of January 2015, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. In total, returnees comprise 20% of the Afghanistan’s population.



## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

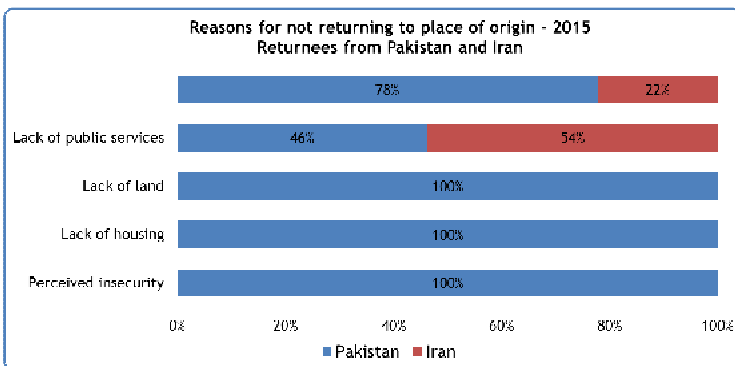
Between 1 - 31 January 2015, a total of 207 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (197) and Iran (10). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (104) and from those with obvious protection concerns (103) at the first point of contact in Afghanistan, the UNHCR Transit/Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad (Mohmand Dara), Kandahar (Jamal Mayna), Gardez and Herat (GTC). This monitoring exercise helps UNHCR to identify return trends, push/pull factors and check on the level of information returnees received to make an informed choice to return home.



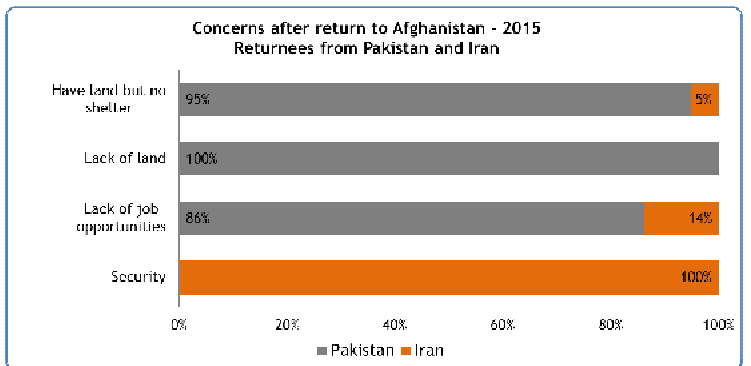


Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, 59% said they had visited Afghanistan few months ago, 16% said they had visited Afghanistan one year ago, 13% said two years ago, 3% said three years ago and 8% said five years ago.

\* Most of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan within the past few months, while a majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five or more years ago. The reason for this discrepancy could include strict border control by Iran and longer distances.



Out of a total of 207 respondents, 87 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin



The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees to make a decision for return have been lack of land, employment and shelter.

### Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Interviewed returnees alleged that they faced harsh treatment by the Pakistani authorities following the terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar. Many of them reported being subjected to detention and held until their families showed up with a truck full of their belongings in front of the police station. A number of interviewed returnees also alleged that they received notification to leave their accommodation and move to designated refugees settlements/camps or return to Afghanistan. Some returnees reported that despite the fact that they wanted to stay in Pakistan and had visited the refugee settlement, they were not accepted by the local authorities due to lack of space and limited absorption capacity in the settlements, leaving them no option but to return. According to interviewed returnees, authorities also made announcements addressed to land owners who were asked not to extend rental agreement with Afghans living in Haripur district of KPK and areas in Azad Jamu Kashmir. Reportedly landlords can be penalized (RS 200,000/ approximately USD 2,000 plus one year in jail) if they do not abide to this instruction.

In addition to the reported harassment by authorities, interviewed returnees also made complaints about extortion and bribery on the road from UNHCR VRC (Chamkani) up to Torkham crossing point. Police check points located in Karkhano up to Torkham, Charikas, Attock and Gujar Khan districts of Punjab province were mentioned as problematic areas.

## 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 co-ordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.*

#### IRAN:

**1 - 31 January 2015:** A total of 13,949 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Islam Qala: 52% and Zaranj: 48% border points) from Iran. This figure is 5% lower compared to 14,650 deportees in January 2014.

A total number of 206,149 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2014.

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 Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 Jan 2015	Zaranj	224	435	490	925	5,753	0	0	0	5,753	6,678
	Islam Qala	23	44	44	88	7,088	95	0	0	7,183	7,271
<b>Total</b>		<b>247</b>	<b>479</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>1,013</b>	<b>12,841</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,936</b>	<b>13,949</b>

#### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 31 January 2015:** A total of 1,472 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is almost ten times higher compared to 149 deportees during January 2014.

A total number of 3,800 Afghans were deported from Pakistan via Torkham in 2014.

Recent measures taken by the Pakistani authorities following a terrorist attack on a school in Peshawar, KPK seems to be driving the high number of deportees so far in 2015.

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.

Deportations from Pakistan											
Reporting Period	Entry Point	Family Groups				Single				Total Individuals	
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female			Total
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 31 Jan 2015	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,472	0	0	0	1,472	1,472
	Spin Boldak	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,472</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,472</b>	<b>1,472</b>

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

# Assisted Voluntary Repatriation to Afghanistan

## Return by Province of Destination - 03 March 2002- 31 January 2015

