



**UNHCR**  
The UN  
Refugee Agency

# VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



@ UNHCR/M. Haroon

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

FEBRUARY 2014

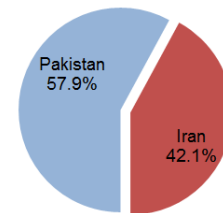
*From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of February 2014, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. Today, about a quarter of Afghanistan's population consists of returnees.*

## VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

**1 – 28 February 2014:** In February 2014, a total of 671 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 419 came from Pakistan and 252 from Iran.

**1 January – 28 February 2014:** During the first two months of 2014, a total of 965 Afghan refugees (averaging 16 individuals/day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return so far this year shows a sharp decrease (57%) compared to the 2,265 Afghans who returned during the same period in 2013.

Total returns 01 Jan - 28 Feb 2014



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	30,388	8,247	131	38,766
2014	559	406	0	965
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,807,165</b>	<b>915,810</b>	<b>15,880</b>	<b>4,738,855</b>

Extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2015 in Pakistan, uncertain situation of Afghanistan in the lead up to elections scheduled for April 2014 and reduced level of harassment by authorities in Pakistan and Iran could be the primary factors of low returns in 2013 and so far in 2014. Winter season might be another reason for low return so far this year. Normally the return trends decline during the winter season. The peak of return season is between May and September each year.

The renewal process of PoR cards for Afghan refugees in Pakistan has been started in February 2014. It is expected that some 1.34 million Afghan Refugees (PoR card holders) will be issued with new PoR cards. The remaining 280,000 Afghans who are below 5 years of age will be registered and their details will be recorded on the back of their parents PoR cards. The expiry-date (31 December 2015) will be reflected in the new PoR cards.

## 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 Pakhtunkhwa and Baleli located in Quetta, 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 to Afghanistan, returnees are 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 received approximately US\$ 200 per person (between US\$30 - US\$70 for transport and US\$150 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.

In view of rising commodities and transportations costs in Afghanistan, UNHCR, in 2014, increased the cash grant from US\$ 150 to US\$ 200 per person.

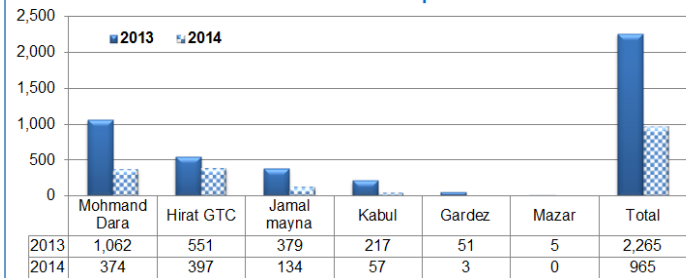
### Assisted returns by region of destination in Afghanistan 2014 & 2013

Region	No. of individuals returned - Comparison by year			
	Jan - Feb 2014		Jan - Feb 2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
East	364	37.7%	1,062	46.9%
Central	216	22.4%	372	16.4%
West	149	15.4%	198	8.7%
South	118	12.2%	333	14.7%
North	54	5.6%	128	5.7%
Northeast	45	4.7%	109	4.8%
Central Highlands	16	1.7%	5	0.2%
Southeast	3	0.3%	58	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>2,265</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### Assisted return by area of residence in Country of Asylum (CoA) - 2014

CoA	Province	%	
PAKISTAN	KPK	70.7%	
	Balochistan	24.0%	
	Sindh	4.1%	
	Punjab	1.3%	
	IRAN	Esfahan	30.0%
		Tehran	24.4%
Khorasan		15.8%	
Fars		5.7%	
Qom		4.4%	
Qazvin		3.9%	
Yazd		3.7%	
Markazi		3.4%	
Kerman		3.4%	
Semnan		2.5%	
Golestan		0.7%	
Bushehr		0.7%	
Khuzestan		0.5%	
Hormozgan		0.5%	
Mazandaran	0.2%		

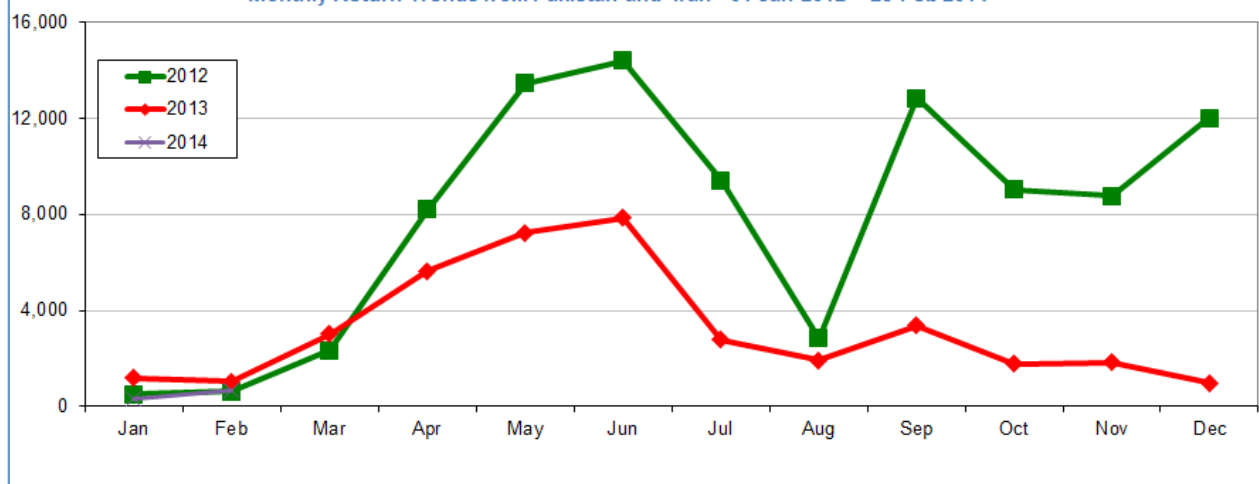
Total returnees assisted at ECs - comparison of 2013 & 2014



Monthly Return Trends - 03 Mar 2002 to 28 Feb 2014  
Pakistan 03 March & Iran 09 April 2002 - 31 January 2014

Year	Month												Total	Total %	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
2014	294	671												965	0.02%
2013	1,199	1,041	3,011	5,650	7,232	7,842	2,772	1,919	3,365	1,790	1,824	990	38,635	1%	
2012	514	631	2,326	8,196	13,450	14,412	9,425	2,843	12,850	9,036	8,762	12,025	94,470	2%	
2011	224	379	2,210	7,187	11,693	11,722	8,585	3,263	8,148	9,511	3,491	1,436	67,849	1%	
2010	305	112	2,843	24,026	30,505	21,521	12,542	8,268	5,639	6,230	546	281	112,818	2%	
2009	94	131	183	9,173	18,962	15,309	7,591	1,302	794	419	179	211	54,348	1%	
2008	76	120	13,570	47,508	62,472	42,051	34,898	40,758	10,525	25,583	173	122	277,856	6%	
2007	47	30	55,972	149,308	20,239	40,401	36,965	30,881	18,326	10,133	-	2,387	364,689	8%	
2006	130	231	9,047	22,717	38,723	25,414	19,131	12,733	7,929	1,903	220	424	138,602	3%	
2005	1,219	898	8,138	40,420	64,600	79,801	52,270	117,419	104,867	20,636	14,936	7,746	512,950	11%	
2004	2,621	2,256	33,168	69,339	107,359	110,350	118,839	170,881	101,856	25,816	11,072	6,916	760,473	16%	
2003	3,323	2,429	6,788	48,719	83,378	97,223	73,322	52,299	52,880	39,874	11,039	3,189	474,463	10%	
2002	-	-	121,227	305,965	417,483	298,955	306,587	205,109	96,376	49,202	15,730	8,224	1,824,858	39%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,046</b>	<b>8,929</b>	<b>258,483</b>	<b>738,208</b>	<b>876,096</b>	<b>765,001</b>	<b>682,927</b>	<b>647,675</b>	<b>423,555</b>	<b>200,133</b>	<b>67,972</b>	<b>43,951</b>	<b>4,722,976</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>		

Monthly Return Trends from Pakistan and Iran - 01 Jan 2012 - 28 Feb 2014



Note: A total of 15,880 Afghan refugees who returned since 2002 from other countries were not included in the monthly return trends table and chart.

## ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 28 February 2014, a total of 101 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (55) and Iran (46). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (94) and from those with obvious protection concerns (7) 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.

### RETURNS FROM PAKISTAN

During Jan and Feb, a total of 55 interviews were conducted at ECs with newly arrived returnees. Among these, 64% were Male and 36 % were Female, of whom:

- 2 % were minors (12 to 17 years old)
- 85 % between age of 18 and 59
- 13 % were elderly (60+ years)

Ethnicity: 94 Pashtun, 4% Uzbek and 2% Turkmen

Years in exile:

- 84 % left Afghanistan during Communist regime
- 6 % during Taliban regime
- 6 % during Mujahideen period
- 4 % during Transitional government

#### Push factors

Among interviewed returnees from Pakistan, 67% cited economic factors as the primary reason for their return, followed by Afghan refugees settlement (Matani settlement in KPK) closure or relocation campaign (25%), alleged harassment by authorities (5%) and fear of arrest and/or deportation (3%). According to the interviewed returnees, the Afghan refugees resided in Matani settlement in KPK had been issued eviction notice in 2012 after the military forces claimed the ownership of the land. Following the eviction notice, a number of meetings at provincial and federal government levels took place. As a result of these meetings and UNHCR Peshawar efforts, the eviction deadline was extended for almost 1.5 years. In addition, the Afghan refugees were provided an alternative site for relocation at Chandan Gari of KPK. However, none of them opted for relocation. A small group decided to return while the majority decided to move to the nearby private land in Mattani area. Reportedly the eviction notices are normally served by the land owners, and not by the government authorities. At this stage there are no plans or pending eviction notices issued in KPK and no settlement closure is foreseen in 2014. However, UNHCR offices in Pakistan is monitoring the situation and remains vigilant of such instances to ensure viable solutions including relocation options are available for the affected Afghan refugees.

Complaints of police harassment/arrests in Pakistan is also reported by returnees as a concerns. However, it is expected that the level of harassment/arrests would decrease as a result of the extension of PoR cards by the Government of Pakistan until 31 December 2015.

#### Pull factors

29% of interviewed returnees cited better employment opportunities in Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return, followed by the land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (25%), UNHCR's assistance package (24%), improvement of the security situation\* in some parts of Afghanistan (15%), none or reduced fear of persecution (4%) and re-union with the family/relatives in Afghanistan (3%).

#### 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 visits to Afghanistan (51%), from the Afghan community (36%) and from UNHCR (13%). Fifty five percent of the interviewed returnees said that they obtained information about UNHCR's repatriation operation directly from UNHCR, 29% said that they had been informed by the members of the Afghan community and 16% stated that they had visited Afghanistan.

#### Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Nearly 4% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan. Some 13% of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems (e.g. extortion by police) while traveling from the VRC to Torkham border point. Most of those faced problems alleged that they were asked by the Police to pay bribes because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks.

Since September 2013 UNHCR Sub Office Peshawar introduced a complain collection form along with hotline numbers. Returning families are provided with this form and hotline number to report any problem (bribery, transportation tax, theft cases on the road, losing belonging, traffic incident and etc.) to the UNHCR border monitors based at Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points. As a result of this new mechanism the level of extortion/bribery is reduced compared to 2013.

*\*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as primary pull factor of their return, 50% returned to Kabul province (mainly to Kabul district/city) and 50% returned to Kandahar province (mainly Kandahar city).*

## Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 55 respondents, 18 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (39%), insecurity (22%), lack of public services (17%), lack of land (11%) and other reasons (11%).

On accommodation, 67% of interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they plan to stay with relatives, 24% indicated that they will rent accommodation, and 9% said that they own a house in Afghanistan.

When asked “ Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?” All of the interviewed returnees said “Yes”. 64% of the concerns related to not having land to start agricultural activities while 24% related to having land but no shelter. 10% indicated lack of job opportunities and only 2% noted security as a concern. The primary obstacles discouraging Afghan refugees to make a decision for return have been lack of shelter and land.

## RETURNS FROM IRAN

During Jan and Feb, a total of 46 interviews were conducted at Herat EC with newly arrived returnees from Iran. Among these, 67% were Male and 33 % were Female, of whom:

- 96% between age of 18 and 59
- 4 % were elderly (60+ years)

Ethnicity: 50 Tajik, 35% Hazara, 13% Pashtun and 2% Uzbek

Years in exile:

- 44 % left Afghanistan during Taliban regime
- 35 % during Communist regime
- 17 % stated they were born in Iran
- 4 % during Transitional government

## Push factors

Among the 46 interviewed returnees from Iran, 85% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return, followed by alleged harassment by the authorities (9%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (3%) and other reasons (3%).

## Pull factors

57% on interviewed returnees from Iran 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 (39%), none or reduced fear of persecution (2%) and UNHCR’s assistance package (2%).

## Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

All 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 (78%) and visits to Afghanistan (22%). Eighty percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR’s repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 17% stated that they had visited Afghanistan and 3% said that they obtained information through the media (TV and Radio).

## Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 46 respondents, almost half of the interviewed returnees (22) stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of income generation opportunities (46%), lack of housing (36%) and lack of public services (18%).

On accommodation, 61% of those who returned from Iran said that they will stay with relatives, 30% indicated that they will rent accommodation and 9% said that they own a house.

When asked “ Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?” nearly 96% of the interviewed returnees said “ Yes”. 59% cited the lack of job opportunities as a concern, 30% cited insecurity as a concern, 5% of concerns related to not having land to start agricultural activities and 6% mentioned other reasons.



Mine awareness briefing at Kabul EC



Returnee verification process at Kabul EC

\*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary pull factor of their return, 77% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Herat and Balkh. While 33% returned to insecure secure provinces; Farah, Ghazni, Kunduz and Logar.



## 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\* 2014:** A total of 5,119 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Zaranj border point) from Iran.

**1 January - 28 February 2014:** The total number of deportees during the two months of 2014, via Zaranj, is 9,861 individuals which is 26% higher compared to the same period last year when 7,251 Afghans were deported (via Zaranj) from Iran. Total deportees so far this year stands at 19,769. This includes 9,908 Afghans deported via Islam Qala during January 2014.

A total number of 222,710 Afghans were deported from Iran in 2013, averaging 610 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 Individuals
		Families	Individuals			Male		Female		Total	
			M	F	Total	Adult	UAM	Adult	UAM		
01 - 28 Feb 2014	Zaranj	92	202	222	424	4,673	22	0	0	4,695	5,119
	Islam Qala*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>		<b>92</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>4,673</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,695</b>	<b>5,119</b>
01 Jan - 28 Feb 2014	Zaranj	172	359	417	776	9,046	39	0	0	9,085	9,861
01 -31 Jan 2014	Islam Qala*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9,908
<b>Total</b>		<b>172</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>9,046</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,085</b>	<b>19,769</b>

### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 28 February 2014:** A total of 627 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (132) and Spin Boldak (495) border points. This figure reflect 43% increase compared to 357 deportees in January 2014.

**1 January - 28 February 2014:** During the two months of 2014, a total of 281 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 46% lower compared to 517 deportees during the same period in 2013.

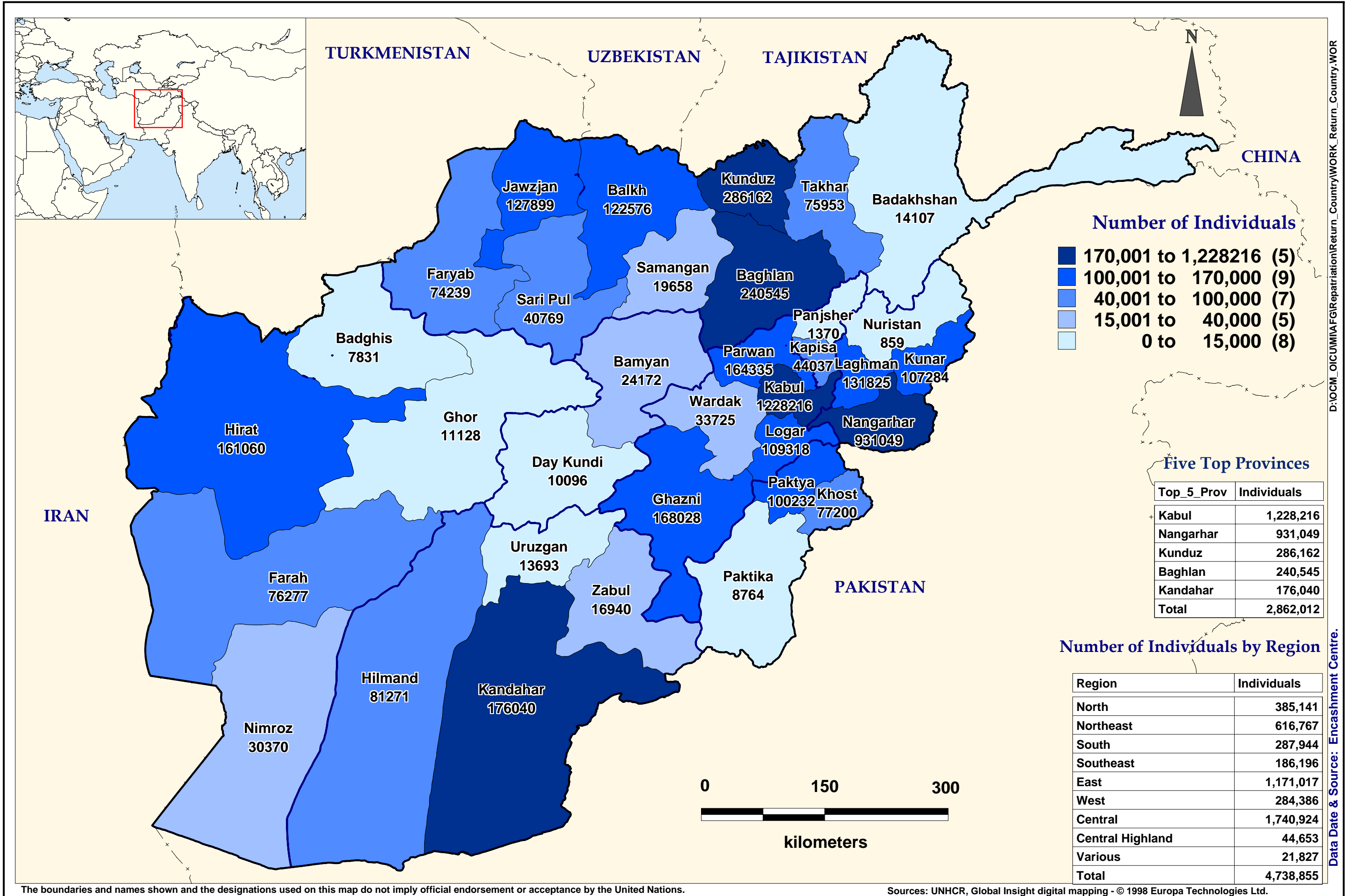
Since November 2012, IOM has established a transit centre in Torkham to screen, identify and assist PSNs among deported undocumented Afghans (non-refugees). IOM provides PSNs with NFIs and free transportation from Torkham to their final destination.

In addition, 703 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 17% higher compared to the 580 deportees during the same period in 2013.

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 -28 Feb 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	132	0	0	0	132	132
	Spin Boldak	1	4	4	8	487	0	0	0	487	495
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>627</b>
01 Jan - 28 Feb 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	281	0	0	0	281	281
	Spin Boldak	1	4	4	8	695	0	0	0	695	703
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>984</b>

*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 February 2014.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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