



# VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

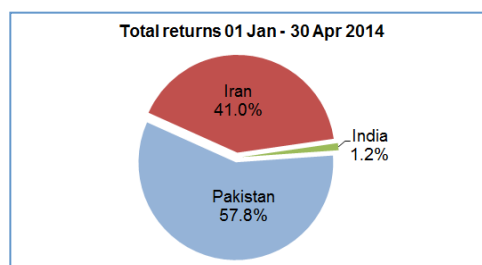
APRIL 2014

From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of April 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 – 30 April 2014:** In April 2014, a total of 1,513 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 1,118 came from Pakistan, 356 from Iran and 39 from India.

**1 January – 30 April 2014:** During the first four months of 2014, a total of 3,859 Afghan refugees (averaging 32 individuals/day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return so far this year shows a sharp decrease (65%) compared to the 10,936 Afghans who returned during the same period in 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	30,388	8,247	131	38,766
2014	2,231	1,583	45	3,859
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,808,837</b>	<b>916,987</b>	<b>15,925</b>	<b>4,741,749</b>

The decrease in the return figure so far this year is believed to be attributed to the extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards until 31 December 2015 in Pakistan, uncertainty regarding the Afghan elections, and concerns about security during the transitional period.

Overall return trends is depending on socio-economic and political developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. It is also assumed that the result of this year election will impact decision making among Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran for return. In addition, limited absorption capacity to gather with limited access to basic services, lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of shelter and land could be other obstacles which may discourage Afghans to make a decision for return.

Returnees from Pakistan are coming in family groups. While in the last 2 years the number of Afghan refugee students who return under volrep has increased. In 2014 alone nearly 35% of returnees are students. Among whom around 60% are males and 40% females.

Afghan students who want to continue their education in Iran normally surrender their Amayesh card, obtain a VRF and return to Afghanistan under volrep. After return they get a passport and visa to go back to Iran and continue their higher education in Iranian Universities. Reportedly Afghans who are willing to continue their education in Iran must obtain a passport and visa.

## 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.

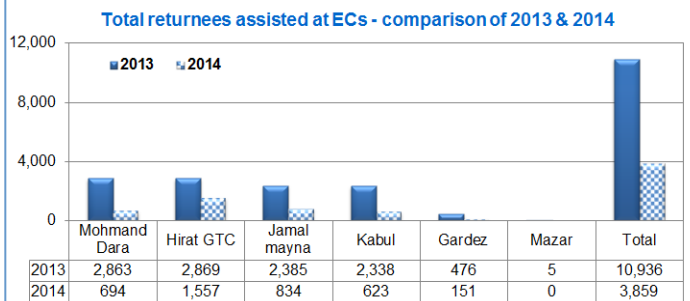
Upon return to Afghanistan, returnees are assisted at five encashment centres (ECs): Mohmand Dara (Nangarhar), Kabul (Kabul), Gardez (Paktya), Jamal Mayna (Kandahar) and Herat (Herat).

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 - Apr 2014		Jan - Apr 2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	947	24.5%	3,319	30.3%
West	778	20.2%	1,014	9.3%
East	682	17.7%	2,769	25.3%
South	477	12.4%	1,242	11.4%
Northeast	467	12.1%	1,511	13.8%
North	299	7.7%	577	5.3%
Southeast	151	3.9%	474	4.3%
Central Highlands	58	1.5%	30	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,859</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10,936</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

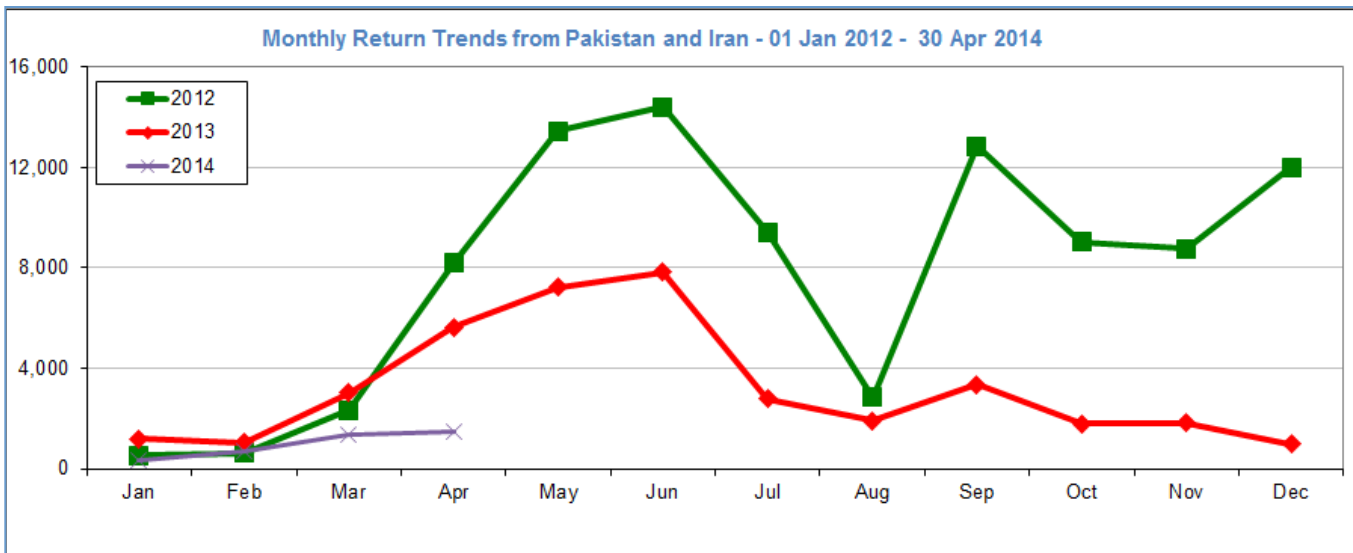


### Assisted return by area of residence in Country of Asylum (CoA) - 2014

CoA	Province	%
PAKISTAN	KPK	46.3%
	Balochistan	35.7%
	Sindh	9.3%
	Punjab	7.5%
	Islamabad	1.3%
IRAN	Tehran	39.7%
	Esfahan	19.5%
	Khorasan	8.8%
	Qom	7.5%
	Fars	5.4%
	Markazi	4.7%
	Yazd	4.0%
	Kerman	2.7%
	Qazvin	2.5%
	Semnan	2.2%
	Hormozgan	0.8%
	Bushehr	0.6%
	Golestan	0.5%
	Mazandaran	0.4%
	Khuzestan	0.1%
	Various	0.4%

### Monthly Return Trends - 03 Mar 2002 to 30 Apr 2014 Pakistan 03 March & Iran 09 April 2002 - 30 Apr 2014

Year	Month												Total	Total %	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec			
2014	324	671	1,345	1,474										3,814	0.08%
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	101,855	25,816	11,072	6,916	760,472	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>10,076</b>	<b>8,929</b>	<b>259,828</b>	<b>739,682</b>	<b>876,096</b>	<b>765,001</b>	<b>682,927</b>	<b>647,675</b>	<b>423,554</b>	<b>200,133</b>	<b>67,972</b>	<b>43,951</b>	<b>4,725,824</b>	<b>100%</b>	
%	0%	0%	5%	16%	19%	16%	14%	14%	9%	4%	1%	1%	100%		



Note: A total of 15,925 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 30 April 2014, a total of 425 interviews were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (270) and Iran (155). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (399) and from those with obvious protection concerns (26) 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 Apr, a total of 270 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)
- 91 % between age of 18 and 59
- 7 % were elderly (60+ years)

Ethnicity: 81% Pashtun, 9% Tajik, 5% Uzbek, 3% Hazara and 2% Turkmen

Years in exile:

- 72 % left Afghanistan during Communist regime
- 11 % during Taliban regime
- 9 % stated they were born in Pakistan
- 4 % during Mujahideen period
- 4 % during Transitional government

### Push factors

Among interviewed returnees from Pakistan, 78% cited economic factors as the primary reason for their return, followed by “the deteriorating security conditions in the country of asylum” (7%), Afghan refugees settlement (Matani settlement closure in KPK in February 2014) closure or relocation campaign (5%), alleged harassment by authorities (4%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (3%), and other reasons (3%).

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. The renewal process of PoR cards for Afghan refugees in Pakistan has been started in February and will be concluded in June 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. Since the start of PoR cards renewal process (14 Feb 14) **until 12 May 14**, a total of **775,618** Afghans received new PoR cards. This represent some 60% of the overall registered Afghan refugees caseload in Pakistan.

### Pull factors

36% of interviewed returnees cited improvement of the security situation\* in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return, followed by the UNHCR’s assistance package (26%), better employment opportunities in Afghanistan (16%), land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (13%), re-union with the family/relatives in Afghanistan (4%), improvement in health and education facilities (3%), and none or reduced fear of persecution (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 visits to Afghanistan (48%)**, from the Afghan community (26%), from UNHCR (10%), through media (3%) and other sources (13%). Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 53% said they had visited Afghanistan few months ago, 31% said they had visited Afghanistan one year ago, 8% said two years ago, 7% said three years ago and 1% said more than five years ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 53% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 22% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return, 16% said they participated in a ceremony and 9% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

Similarly, **50%** of the interviewed returnees said that they obtained information **about UNHCR’s repatriation operation** from the members of the Afghan community, **25%** said that they obtained information directly from UNHCR, 17% stated that they learned about volrep when they visited Afghanistan, 2% said the obtained information through the media and 6% said they obtained information from other sources.

### Alleged arrests/detentions and intimidations in Pakistan

Nearly 2% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan due to unknown reasons e.g. expiration of PoR cards etc. Money extortion/bribery, by the Pakistani police, which was a challenge for returnees in the past has been decreased (over 70% compared to 2013) since September 2013 when UNHCR Offices/VRCs in Pakistan started issuing complain collection form. Returning families are provided with a 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. However, it is still remains a concern. **Some 13%** of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems (e.g. extortion by police) while traveling from the VRC to Torkham crossing point. In addition, two families reported in March and April that they paid bribe to border police (Pakistani side) based in Spin Boldak in order to cross the border. This is new as this problem was not reported in the past by those returnees came via Spin Boldak. 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.

\*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as primary pull factor of their return, some 77% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Takhar, Balkh, Nangarhar, Herat, Samangan, Sari Pul, Baghlan and Kunduz. While 23% returned to insecure provinces such as Kandahar (mainly Kandahar city), Logar, Helmand (mainly Lashkargah), Wardak, Paktya, Farah (Farah city), and Faryab (Maimana).

## Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 270 respondents, 106 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (38%), lack of land (26%), insecurity (13%), lack of income generation opportunities (10%), lack of public services (8%), and other reasons (5%).

On accommodation, 46% of interviewed returnees from Pakistan said that they plan to stay with relatives, 36% indicated that they will rent accommodation, and 18% said that they own a house in Afghanistan.

When asked “ Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?” 90% of the interviewed returnees said “Yes”. 60% of the concerns related to not having land to start agricultural activities while 29% related to having land but no shelter. 8% indicated lack of job opportunities, 2% indicated lack of education and health facilities, and only 1% 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 Mar, a total of 155 interviews were conducted at Herat EC with newly arrived returnees from Iran. Among these, 79% were Male and 21 % were Female, of whom:

- 93% between age of 18 and 59
- 7 % were elderly (60+ years)

Ethnicity: 53 Tajik, 31% Hazara, 14% Pashtun and 2% Uzbek

Years in exile:

- 47 % left Afghanistan during communist regime
- 34 % during Taliban regime
- 16 % stated they were born in Iran
- 2% during Mujahedding period
- 1 % during Transitional government

## Push factors

Among the 155 interviewed returnees from Iran, 86% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return, followed by fear of arrest and/or deportation (7%), alleged harassment by the authorities (5%), lack of school and health facilities (1%) and other reasons (1%).

## Pull factors

75% on interviewed returnees from Iran indicated the Government land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program as the primary reason influencing their decision to return, followed by improvements of the security situation\* in some parts of Afghanistan (20%), none or reduced fear of persecution (1%), UNHCR’s assistance package (1%), improvement in health and education facilities (1%) and other reasons (2%).

## Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

All of the interviewed returnees from Iran said that they had received adequate information to make an informed decision to return. **Information on place of origin** was mainly obtained from the Afghan community (81%) and through visits to Afghanistan (19%). Among those who mentioned that they obtained information through visits to Afghanistan, all of them stated they travelled to Afghanistan on their own; 83% said they had visited Afghanistan five years ago, 11% said they had visited Afghanistan three years ago and 6% said they had visited Afghanistan more than five years ago. When they were asked about the purpose of their visit; 56% said they came to Afghanistan to visit their relatives, 28% said they visited Afghanistan in order to assess the situation to make an informed decision prior to the return, 11% said they participated in a ceremony and 5% said they visited Afghanistan for business purpose.

It is been noted that returnees from Iran, compared to returnees from Pakistan, did not have the chance or opportunity to visit their places of origin recently. Majority of the returnees from Iran mentioned that they had visited Afghanistan five years ago. While majority (over 80%) of the interviewed returnees from Pakistan mentioned they had visited Afghanistan recently. This might be the case with returnees from Iran mainly due to strict border control, long distance and probably changes in the security situation in Afghanistan.

Similarly, **81%** of the interviewed returnees said that they obtained information **about UNHCR’s repatriation operation** from the members of the Afghan community, 17% stated that they learned about volrep when they visited Afghanistan and 2% said they obtained information from the media (TV).

## Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 155 respondents, 49 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (49%), lack of public services (25%), lack of income generation opportunities (24%) and insecurity (2%).

On accommodation, 85% of those who returned from Iran said that they will stay with relatives, 12% indicated that they will rent accommodation and 3% said that they own a house.

When asked “ Do you have any concerns about your return to Afghanistan?” nearly 76% of the interviewed returnees said “ Yes”. Among them, 42% cited the lack of job opportunities as a concern, 41% cited insecurity as a concern and. Only 9% of concerns related to not having land to start agricultural activities (which is very low compared to returnees from Pakistan) and 8% mentioned other reasons (mainly lack of shelter).

\*Of those who cited the improvement of security situation in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary pull factor of their return, 87% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Herat, Takhar, Balkh, Kunduz and Parwan. While 13% returned to insecure provinces; Farah, Ghazni 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 - 30 April 2014:** A total of 15,498 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Islam Qala: 65% and Zaranj: 35% border points) from Iran. This figure is 16% lower compared to 18,484 deportees in March 2014.

**1 January - 30 April 2014:** The total number of deportees during the four months of 2014 is 62,950 individuals which is 7% lower compared to the same period last year when 67,947 Afghans were deported (via Zaranj) from Iran.

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 - 30 Apr 2014	Zaranj	115	230	257	487	4,946	15	0	0	4,961	5,448
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10,050
<b>Total</b>		<b>115</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>4,946</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,961</b>	<b>15,498</b>
01 Jan - 30 Apr 2014	Zaranj	398	848	955	1,803	20,526	88	0	0	20,614	22,417
	Islam Qala	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40,533
<b>Total</b>		<b>398</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>1,803</b>	<b>20,526</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20,614</b>	<b>62,950</b>

### PAKISTAN:

**1 - 30 April 2014:** A total of 705 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (380) and Spin Boldak (325) border points. This figure reflect 31% decrease compared to 1,023 deportees in March 2014.

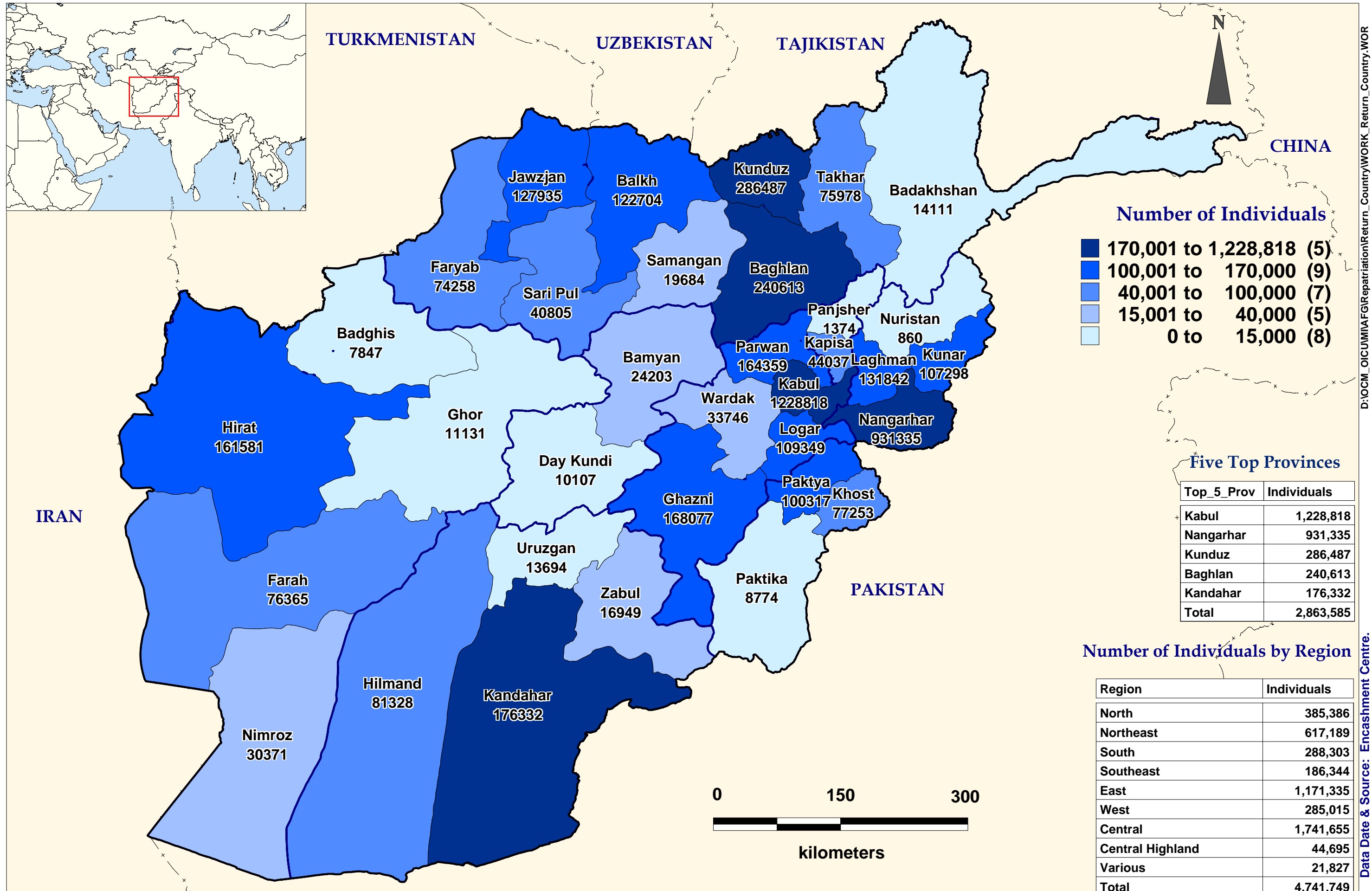
**1 January - 30 April 2014:** During the four months of 2014, a total of 989 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure is 8% lower compared to 1,079 deportees during the same period in 2013.

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, 1,723 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 21% lower compared to the 2,176 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 -30 Apr 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	380	0	0	0	380	380
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	325	0	0	0	325	325
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>705</b>
01 Jan - 30 Apr 2014	Torkham	0	0	0	0	989	0	0	0	989	989
	Spin Boldak	1	4	4	8	1,715	0	0	0	1,715	1,723
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>2,712</b>

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



**Number of Individuals**

170,001 to 1,228,818	(5)
100,001 to 170,000	(9)
40,001 to 100,000	(7)
15,001 to 40,000	(5)
0 to 15,000	(8)

**Five Top Provinces**

Top_5_Prov	Individuals
Kabul	1,228,818
Nangarhar	931,335
Kunduz	286,487
Baghlan	240,613
Kandahar	176,332
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,863,585</b>

**Number of Individuals by Region**

Region	Individuals
North	385,386
Northeast	617,189
South	288,303
Southeast	186,344
East	1,171,335
West	285,015
Central	1,741,655
Central Highland	44,695
Various	21,827
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,741,749</b>

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

Sources: UNHCR, Global Insight digital mapping - © 1998 Europa Technologies Ltd.

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Data Date & Source: Encashment Centre.