



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

VOLREP AND BORDER MONITORING MONTHLY UPDATE



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UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

OCTOBER 2013

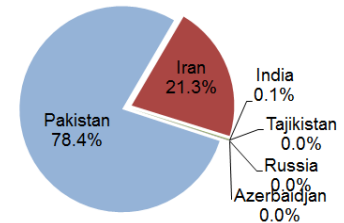
From the start of UNHCR's assisted voluntary repatriation operation in March 2002 to the end of October 2013, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned home, out of which over 4.7 million repatriated with assistance from the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR. Today, about a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

VOLUNTARY RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

1 – 31 October 2013: In October 2013, a total of 1,790 Afghan refugees voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. Of this, 1,309 came from Pakistan, 473 from Iran, and 8 from non-neighbouring countries (i.e. India: 4 and Tajikistan: 4).

1 January – 31 October 2013: During the ten months of 2013, a total of 36,194 Afghan refugees (averaging 119/day) voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. The rate of return so far this year is lower (51%) compared to the 73,757 Afghans who returned during the same period in 2012.

Total returns 01 January - 31 October 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	28,393	7,721	80	36,194
Total	3,804,611	914,878	15,829	4,735,318

The lower rate of return so far this year might be attributed to the following: Extension of the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards in Pakistan until 31 December 2015. In addition, no expansion of the “No Go Areas” in Iran, 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 indicated by the returnees in the decision to return so far this year. At the same time, 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.

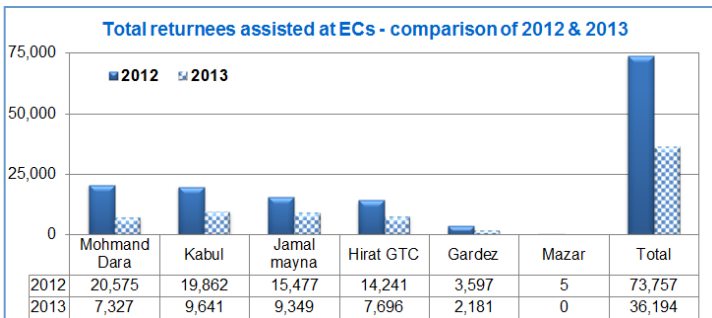
A refugee wishing to return to Afghanistan with the assistance of UNHCR must approach UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRCs) in the country of asylum to register for return and sign a Voluntary Repatriation Form (VRF).

Repatriation from Pakistan is facilitated through two VRCs: 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 in 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 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 - Oct 2013		Jan - Oct 2012	
	No.	%	No.	%
Central	10,355	28.6%	18,731	25.4%
East	7,047	19.5%	19,394	26.3%
Northeast	6,462	17.9%	14,173	19.2%
South	4,134	11.4%	5,475	7.4%
North	3,187	8.8%	6,847	9.3%
West	2,733	7.6%	5,234	7.1%
Southeast	2,119	5.9%	3,594	4.9%
Central Highlands	157	0.4%	309	0.4%
Total	36,194	100.0%	73,757	100.0%



Assisted return by area of residence in Country of Asylum (CoA) - 2013		
CoA	Province	%
PAKISTAN	KPK	54.5%
	Balochistan	27.7%
	Punjab	9.8%
	Sindh	6.8%
	Islamabad	0.7%
	AJK	0.5%
	Unknown	0.0%
IRAN	Tehran	33.1%
	Esfahan	13.7%
	Khorasan	10.5%
	Fars	9.6%
	Qom	8.3%
	Kerman	7.8%
	Yazd	4.5%
	Markazi	4.1%
	Hormozgan	2.7%
	Semnan	1.8%
	Qazvin	1.3%
	Bushehr	1.0%
	Golestan	0.6%
	Khuzestan	0.4%
	Mazandaran	0.3%
	Kordestan	0.0%
	Lorestan	0.0%
	Sistan va Baluchestan	0.0%
	Kohgiluyeh va Boyerahmad	0.0%
	Unknown	0.4%

GO AND SEE VISIT

UNHCR Sub Office Quetta in close coordination with UNHCR Afghanistan organized a “Go and See” visit to Balkh, Kunduz and Saripul provinces, north/n-east region, Afghanistan. A team composed of 3 refugee elders currently living in Baluchistan, Pakistan, UNHCR staff from both countries and MoRR representative in Quetta visited return areas in the above mentioned provinces. The main objectives of the go and see visit were: a) To get an insight of the overall situation in the areas of return, including the ongoing projects/reintegration activities for returnees, b) meetings with all concerned UNHCR, DoRR and other relevant Afghan government officials as well as returnees to exchange information and to develop key messages to be disseminated amongst refugees (currently living in Baluchistan) so that they could take an informed decision if they are willing to voluntarily return to Afghanistan in the near future.

ENCASHMENT CENTRE RETURNEE MONITORING

Between 1 January and 31 October 2013, a total of 2,390 interviews (represent 38% of total returnee families) were conducted with returning refugees from Pakistan (2,266) and Iran (124). Interviewees were selected in two ways: at random (2,109) and from those with obvious protection concerns (281) 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

Push factors

Among returnees from Pakistan, 71% cited economic factors as the primary reason for their return followed by “the deteriorating security conditions in the country” (13%), alleged harassment by authorities (10%), fear of arrest and/or deportation (2%), lack of school and health facilities (1%), and other reasons (3%): mainly eviction notices by land owners 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 from April through October. 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

43% of returnees cited improvement of the security situation* in some parts of Afghanistan as the primary reason influencing their decision to return followed by UNHCR’s assistance package (19%), better employment opportunities in Afghanistan (16%), the land allocation scheme and/or UNHCR shelter program (11%), none or reduced fear of persecution (8%), 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, 48% returned to relatively secure provinces such as Kabul, Parwan, Balkh, Takhar, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, Nangarhar, Herat, Samangan, Panjshir and Badakhshan. 52% returned to insecure provinces; Kunduz, Baghlan, Logar, Kandahar, Helmand, Wardak, Ghazni, Faryab, Zabol, Badghis 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 (43%), visits to Afghanistan (29%), from UNHCR (12%), through the media (2%), and from other sources (10%). Sixty one percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 25% 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 2% of the interviewed returnees alleged that they had been arrested and/or detained during their stay in Pakistan. Some 20% of interviewed returnees stated that they faced problems (e.g. extortion by police) while traveling from the VRC to Torkham border point (mainly between Karkhano to Torkham). In addition, complaints were also noted concerning extortions made by police mobile teams. Among those interviewed, 93% alleged that they had paid bribes (500 – 4,000 Pakistani rupees) because they were carrying livestock, construction material (used beams), or to avoid a search of the trucks. As a result of continued efforts by UNHCR offices in Pakistan the number of incidents have decreased in comparison to last year.

Since September this year 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. For instance one returnee family reported in October that upon arrival to Torkham border they submitted the complaint form to UNHCR Peshawar border monitors. As a result the border monitors intervened on time and retrieved the money taken by the Khasadars in a check point near Torkham and returned it back to the returnee family.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 2,266 respondents, 705 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their place of origin due to the following reasons: lack of housing (42%), lack of land (19%), insecurity (18%), 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 86% of the interviewed returnees said "Yes". 55% 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 124 returnees from Iran interviewed, 93% stated economic factors in Iran as the primary reason for return followed by alleged harassment by the authorities (6%) and other reasons (1%).

Pull factors

51% 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 (34%), none or reduced fear of persecution (5%), improvement in health and education facilities (1%), UNHCR's assistance package (1%) and other reasons (9%).

Information on the Voluntary Repatriation Program

89% 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 (87%), from UNHCR (2%), through the media (1%) and other sources (5%). Eighty three percent of the interviewed returnees said that they had been informed about UNHCR's repatriation operation by members of the Afghan community, 3% said that they obtained information directly from UNHCR and 3% said that they obtained information through the media.

Reasons for not returning to place of origin

Out of a total of 124 respondents, 34 returnees stated that they do not intend to repatriate to their area of origin due to the following reasons: lack of public services (38%), lack of housing (27%), lack of income generation opportunities (15%), insecurity (12%) and other reasons (9%).

On accommodation, 52% of those who returned from Iran said that they will rent accommodation, 44% indicated that they will stay with relatives and 3% 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". 59% cited the lack of job opportunities as a concern, 34% 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 co-ordination with other protection actors monitors their protection situation to ascertain that registered refugees are not deported.

IRAN:

1 - 31 October* 2013: A total of 8,252 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported (via Zaranj border points) from Iran.

1 January - 31 October 2013: The total number of deportees during the ten months of 2013, via Zaranj, is 53,301 individuals which is 22% lower compared to the same period last year when 68,623 Afghans were deported (via Zaranj) from Iran. Total deportees so far this year stands at 91,199. This includes 37,898 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 Oct 2013	Zaranj	191	448	480	928	7,299	25	0	0	7,324	8,252
	Islam Qala*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		191	448	480	928	7,299	25	0	0	7,324	8,252
01 Jan - 31 Oct 2013	Zaranj	1,501	3,389	3,797	7,186	45,879	236	0	0	46,115	53,301
01 Jan - 31 Mar 2013	Islam Qala	365	766	542	1,308	35,390	1,197	2	1	36,590	37,898
Total		1,866	4,155	4,339	8,494	81,269	1,433	2	1	82,705	91,199

PAKISTAN:

1 - 31 October 2013: A total of 804 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham (186) and Spin Boldak (618) border points. This figure reflect 45% decrease compared to 1,466 deportees in September 2013.

1 January - 31 October 2013: During the ten months of 2013, a total of 1,720 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Torkham Border. This figure reflects an increase (17%) compared to 1,428 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, 6,050 undocumented Afghan nationals (non-refugees) were deported via Spin Boldak (SB). This figure is 16% higher compared to the 5,100 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 Oct 2013	Torkham	0	0	0	0	186	0	0	0	186	186
	Spin Boldak	0	0	0	0	618	0	0	0	618	618
Total		0	0	0	0	804	0	0	0	804	804
01 Jan - 31 Oct 2013	Torkham	0	0	0	0	1,718	0	2	0	1,720	1,720
	Spin Boldak	7	10	12	22	6,028	0	0	0	6,028	6,050
Total		7	10	12	22	7,746	0	2	0	7,748	7,770

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 - October 2013.