

# Pakistan : Afghan Refugee Return Monitoring Update (1st Mar - 30th Sep 2019)

## Introduction



**UNHCR** Pakistan facilitates the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees as part of its mandate to provide durable solutions. It operates two Voluntary Repatriation Centres (VRC) in Quetta, Balochistan and Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At the VRC, families who wish to repatriate are counselled, to ensure the voluntary nature of the return, and scheduled for their return to Afghanistan. In addition, UNHCR also administers an exit questionnaire to understand the profiles of individuals wishing to return, the push and pull factors, special needs, and intended place of return.

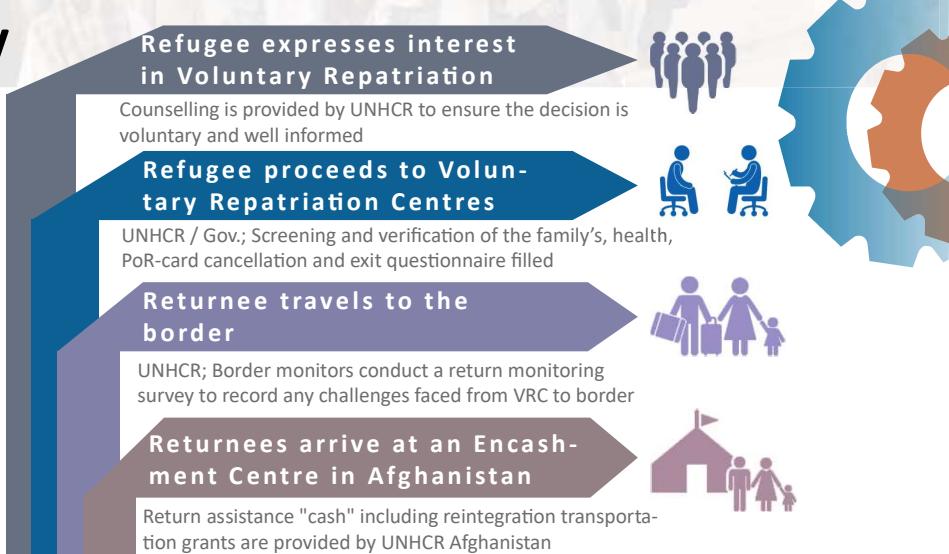
In May 2018, UNHCR strengthened its monitoring of returns at the border. This includes a returnee interview, which allows UNHCR to gather information on any protection issues faced in between the time the families depart the VRC and arrive at the border. In addition to interviewing returnees, UNHCR staff systematically report on the protection situation and changes in procedures or practices of border authorities to better inform UNHCR's advocacy, planning, and protection interventions.

## Purpose

- 1 To capture any protection issues and concerns faced by returnees between the Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) and the Afghan border, including detention, delays, etc.
- 2 To monitor the quality of services provided at the Voluntary Repatriation Centre (VRC) to ensure that persons of concern are adequately prepared for their return.

## Process and Methodology

- Monthly narrative reports are completed by UNHCR protection staff to analyse key security developments, changes in practices of the border authorities, and any protection concerns.
- Border monitors conduct return monitoring interviews with a random selection of returning families. Data from these interviews is recorded in KOBO (an online/mobile data collection tool) for analysis and reporting.



## Border Situation and Observation (Jul - Sep 2019)



### Key Political and Security Developments:

**Torkham, KP;** The security situation at Torkham border remained on high-alert during the reporting period due to the provincial assembly elections and visits of high-level officials including Pakistan's Prime Minister. Pakistani authorities deployed extra security personnel at various checkpoints on the way to Torkham border. The increased security did not noticeably affect UNHCR's operations. During 18 September PM's visit to the Torkham border, the PM ordered the abolishment of all unnecessary check posts in Khyber district by 5 October through a formal Government Circular. Check posts in Takhta Beg and Torkham will remain, while other check posts from Mechini, Charwazgai, Ziaray and Prang Sang will be closed. The removal of the check-posts will reduce possibility of unauthorized money solicitation.



### Practice of the Border Authorities:

**Torkham, KP;** Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, visited the Torkham border on 18 September to inaugurate the 24-hour service at the border. The 24-hour services are expected to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. The services were operational at the border on a trial basis from 2 September. Also, at Torkham, observers noted that border officials continue to punch holes in the documents of Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan, including PoR and AC cards holders. Observers also noted that Tazkiras would be stamped at the departure point. The World Health Organization (WHO) polio vaccination campaign also continues at Torkham border. **Chaman, Balochistan;** The Government of Pakistan suspended operations at Chaman border during 27-28 September due to the Afghan Presidential Elections.



## Key Political and Security Developments:

**Chaman, Balochistan**, During the reporting period, two blasts were reported at the Chaman border on 28 September and 30 July resulting in the deaths of 7 civilians and many injuries. To date, no party has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The incidents did not have any direct impact on UNHCR's operations at the border, but stronger security measures by LEAs, including stricter checking of individuals and luggage, was observed. On 23 July, a shooting occurred between two rival groups near Chaman border. Due to the incident, all traffic was suspended, and thousands of passengers and vehicles were left stranded. The UNHCR aided the refugee's families who were stranded. The District Administration and LEAs intervened and resolved the situation on the same day.



## KPractice of the Border Authorities:

The Friendship Gate remained closed for all kind of vehicular movement and only pedestrian movement was facilitated. The border was also closed on 14 August (Pakistan's Independence Day) and on 19 August (Afghanistan's Independence Day). It was noted that border movements were low during elections and officials practiced enhanced security measures. In August, the official border timings at Chaman were changed following an agreement between government officials in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The new border timings are 07:00am to 5:00pm. UNHCR's Field Team have shared the updated information with the PoCs. The timing change is viewed as positive as it will allow UNHCR's assisted returnees to have adequate time during the day to travel from Chaman and return to their intended destinations.



## Protection and Other Concerns of Afghan Returnees:

**In Chaman, Balochistan** the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Frontier Corps (FC) arrested 26 undocumented Afghan nationals during the reporting period. The arrests took place at Friendship Gate, while they were trying to enter Pakistan illegally. They were charged under Foreigners Act 3/14 for crossing illegally into Pakistan. The driving forces behind their arrival to Pakistan included business ventures, economic opportunities, medical assistance and visiting relatives. The FIA border authorities deported 24 undocumented Afghan nationals, after the completion of their sentences ranging 2-3 days in prison and financial penalties ranging from Rs.1000 to 6000/ per detainee endowed by the different Judicial Magistrates of the concerned Courts. The UNHCR observers at **Torkham border** did not report any arrests, detentions or deportations of UNHCR POCs or any other Afghan nationals during the reporting period.



## Ongoing Actions:

### Torkham, KP and Chaman, Balochistan

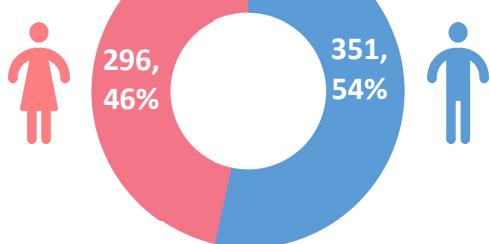
At both Torkham and Chaman borders, UNHCR border monitors and protection staff will continue to:

- Ensure regular coordination with local authorities at the border for smooth, safe, and dignified passage of UNHCR assisted POCs returning through the border checkpoints;
- Visit and coordinate with security personnel at checkpoints on route to the border to ensure that UNHCR POCs are not harassed or mistreated on their journey back to Afghanistan.

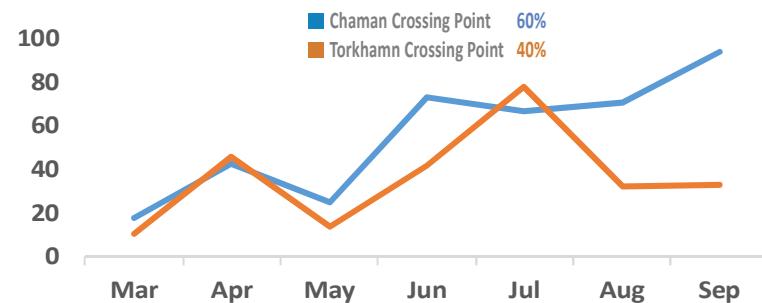
## Return Monitoring Interview Statistics (Mar - Sep 2019)



### Gender Breakdown (HoH)



### Overall Monthly Interview Trend (HoH)

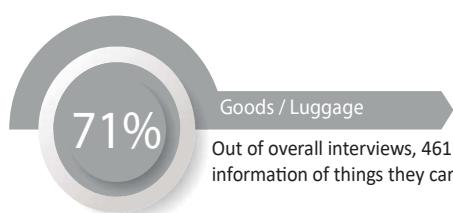




	Older Person at Risk	39%
	Women at Risk	39%
	Disability	8%
	Serious Medical Condition	8%
	Child at Risk	6%



	Shelter	32%
	Non Food Items	21%
	Food Items	17%
	Health	10%
	Education	10%
	Legal	1%
	Other	9%



	Household Items / Personal Belongings	77%
	Medicine / Medical Item	20%
	Livestock (Animal)	3%



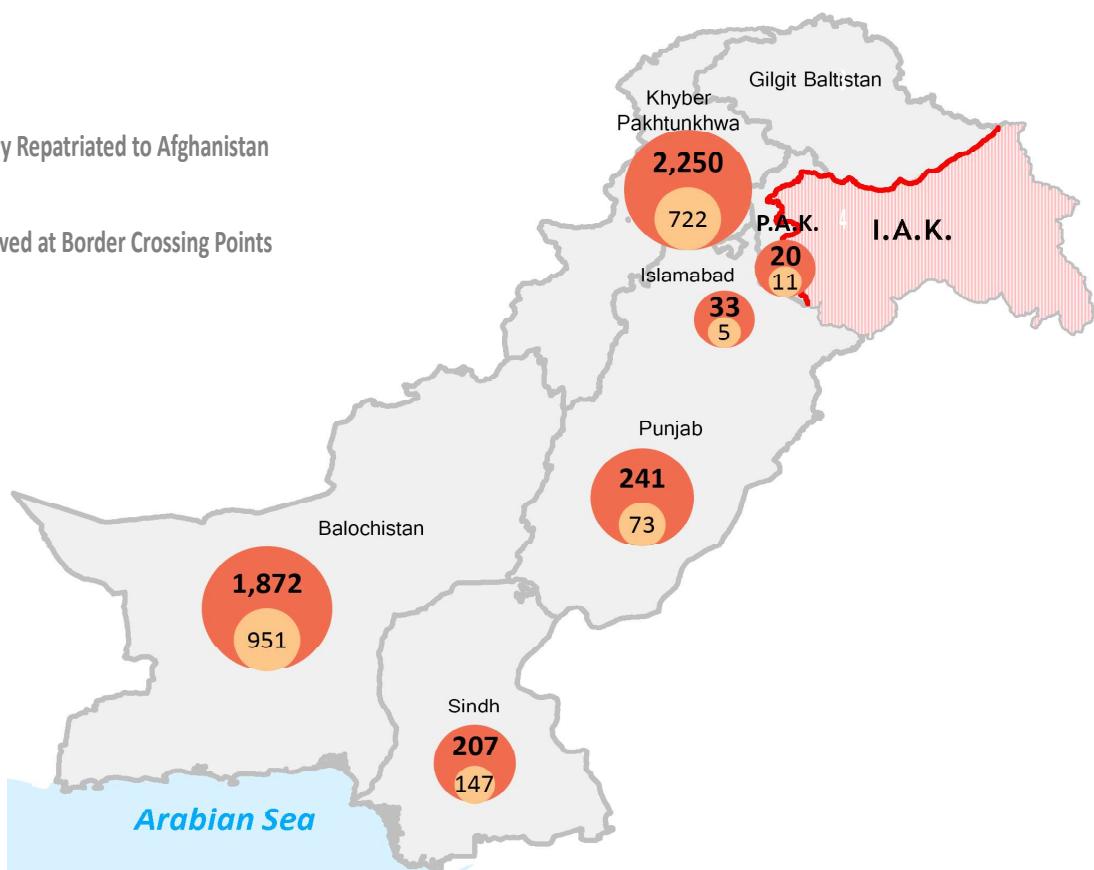
## Places of Return from Pakistan



No. of Individuals Voluntary Repatriated to Afghanistan



No. of Individuals Interviewed at Border Crossing Points  
(Chman, Torkham)



More information is available on UNHCR: data portal, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/pak> | website: <http://www.unhcrpk.org>

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