

AFGHANISTAN

UPDATE ON RETURN TRENDS

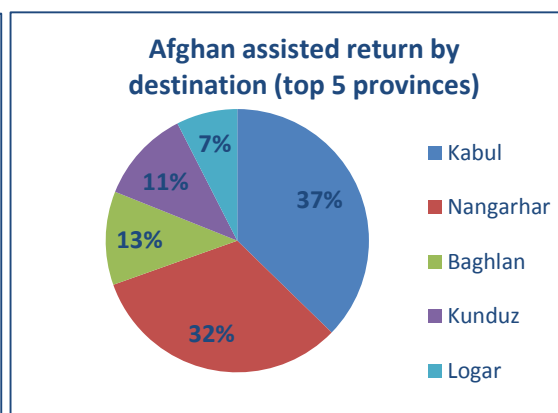
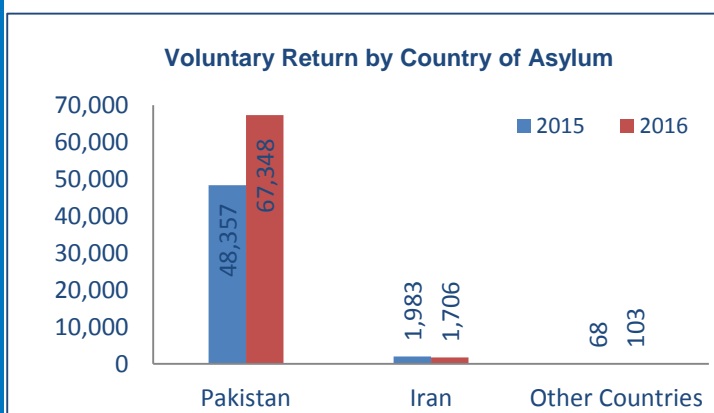
29 August 2016

RETURN TRENDS

- The rate of return of Afghan refugees through UNHCR’s organised repatriation is increasing significantly; 7,804 Afghans returned in the first six months, compared to over 61,000 in the following eight weeks – the previous week was the highest rate of return for 2016 with 18,283 Afghan refugees returning between 21 and 27 August.
- As of 27 August 69,162 Afghan refugees have returned with 67,348 (97%) from Pakistan, 1,706 from Iran, and 108 from other countries. Of those from Pakistan, 76% came from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province followed by 14% from Punjab.

Weekly Comparison of Return Between 2015 and 2016

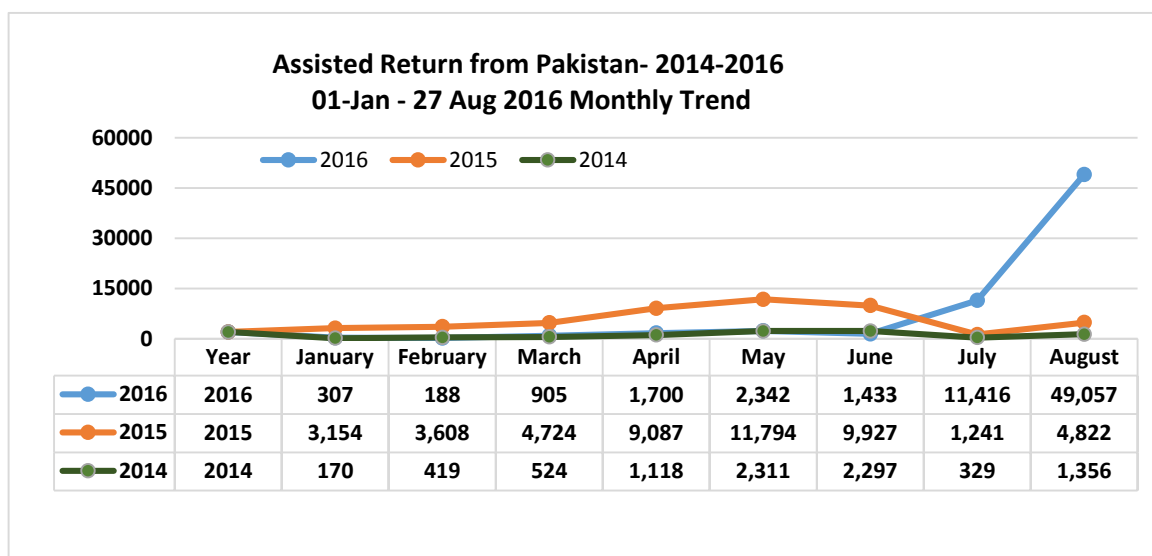
Date	Pakistan				Iran			
	2015	2016	Difference compared to 2015		2015	2016	Difference compared to 2015	
	Individuals	Individuals	Weekly Ind	Weekly %	Individuals	Individuals	Weekly Ind	Weekly %
15 May - 21 May	1,994	668	(1,326)	-66%	29	25	(4)	-14%
22 May - 28 May	3,730	625	(3,105)	-83%	67	57	(10)	-15%
29 May - 04 Jun	4,807	769	(4,038)	-84%	20	25	5	25%
05 Jun - 11 Jun	3,100	532	(2,568)	-83%	57	11	(46)	-81%
12 Jun - 18 Jun	3,029	59	(2,970)	-98%	50	14	(36)	-72%
19 Jun - 25 Jun	679	198	(481)	-71%	33	10	(23)	-70%
26 Jun - 02 Jul	251	190	(61)	-24%	64	22	(42)	-66%
03 Jul - 09 Jul	176	81	(95)	-54%	47	50	3	6%
10 Jul - 16 Jul	134	982	848	633%	58	156	98	169%
17 Jul - 23 Jul	31	2,929	2,898	9348%	52	104	52	100%
24 Jul - 30 Jul	839	6,182	5,343	637%	162	107	(55)	-34%
31 Jul - 06 Aug	1,150	10,101	8,951	778%	76	141	65	86%
7 Aug - 13 Aug	1,365	11,967	10,602	777%	70	106	36	51%
14 Aug - 20 Aug	846	9,979	9,133	1080%	78	97	19	24%
21 Aug - 27 Aug	1,461	18,185	16,724	1145%	74	93	19	26%
Total	48,357	67,348¹	18,991	39%	1,983	1,706	(277)	-14%



¹ As of 27 August and compares recent weekly trends between 2015 and 2016; total return between 1 January – 27 August 2016 is 69,162.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- The current trends and expectation of a continued high-level of return are based on the regional security and political dynamics. This has a direct impact on the protection/asylum space for refugees in Pakistan, notwithstanding UNHCR's continuous advocacy and interventions.
- The significant spike in return has coincided with a deterioration of the environment for Afghan refugees in several areas of Pakistan, in particular Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with decreased acceptance by hosting communities and local authorities, loss of self-reliance opportunities and the uncertainty of the renewal of PoR cards beyond 2016. Undocumented Afghans remain even more exposed to episodes of harassment and detention.
- This changing dynamic has immediate negative repercussions on income and economic opportunities for Afghan refugees. The self-imposed restriction of movement to avoid harassment and intimidation hinders access to job markets, essential for Afghan refugees who mainly rely on daily labour. Economic hardship linked to loss of access to job markets is regularly cited as the first factor motivating return.



RESPONSE

- UNHCR currently provides a cash grant of approximately USD 400 to every returnee. The grant aims to cover transport costs, initial expenses upon return and facilitate the initial stages of reintegration. Emergency medical services, vaccinations, mine risk awareness education and protection monitoring are provided at the Encashment Centres.
- Based on recent trends, UNHCR Afghanistan is anticipating an additional 160,000 returnees (or 15,000 per week) by the end of the year. UNHCR Afghanistan is scaling up the capacity of reception and processing at the Encashment Centres in Jalalabad and Kabul. Aside from the grant, the surge involves more staff, equipment and services through partners.
- As a result a significant gap in resources is expected (an estimated USD 64 million) which is critical in order to provide the cash grant to individuals returning, maintain the encashment facilities and scale up services.
- UNHCR and IOM have initiated discussions with HCT members to activate the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) under the rapid response window to address the sudden increase and corresponding immediate needs of registered and undocumented returnees. In addition, UNHCR is liaising with donors in-country and in the respective headquarters to ensure their continuous support.

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Links: Updated weekly information and monthly reports <http://www.unhcr.af/Applications/SitePages/Default.aspx?idx=0&sitepageid=28>