



Afghan Nationals in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Central Asia



About This Report

This Mobility Trends Report by Ridgeway Information Ltd and Stop The Traffik was commissioned by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) in the context of the Taliban takeover of Kabul on 15 August 2021. This report provides up-to-date information on migration and mobility trends of existing and newly displaced Afghan nationals towards EU+ countries (EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland). It focuses on key transit countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Central Asian countries. This report aims to enhance the EUAA's understanding of flows of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants towards Europe; to develop its early warning capabilities and to enrich the quality and relevance of its analysis products. Mobility Trends Reports contain information and analysis of mobility trends in key transit countries, as well as an identification of upcoming events that may impact on mobility, and a forward-looking analysis of trends.

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The reference period for this report includes the months from April to August 2022. Reference may however also be made to developments in earlier periods to shed light on current trends. Some referenced articles may be behind a paywall. All sources used are referenced and where possible primary references are included. All information presented, except for undisputed/obvious facts, has been cross-checked, unless stated otherwise. The information provided has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited time frame. However, this document does not pretend to be exhaustive. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

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Cover photo: Afghan children sit on the ground in Paktika, Afghanistan, after an earthquake (4 August 2022) [Photographer: Waheedullah Jahesh, Shutterstock 2022]

Three interviews were conducted in the research for this report. These interviews are referenced as Interview 1, Interview 2, and Interview 3.

Interviewee 1 is a research specialist in Turkey working for an international NGO. They recently conducted research on Afghan nationals in Turkey.

Interviewee 2 is a member of an international humanitarian organisation delivering relief, assistance and protection to people of concern.

Interviewee 3 works for a local NGO providing support services and activities for Afghan nationals in Turkey.

Key Developments

The number of casualties as a result of conflict and violence has reduced significantly since the August 2021 takeover put an end to the protracted fighting between Taliban and forces of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. However, the number of incidents targeting civilians has increased in 2022. April 2022 saw a 7-month high in civilian casualties following a number of high-casualty attacks on civilian targets using improvised explosive devices.

Clashes between the Taliban and anti-Taliban forces, notably the National Resistance Front, have continued in recent months. Both sides report causing considerable numbers of fatalities among their opposition, though true figures are difficult to discern. The Taliban have stationed significant numbers of fighters in regions where fighting has been concentrated and have engaged in mass arrests. Some incidents of torture, cruel and degrading treatment, as well as extra-judicial killings in response to anti-Taliban activities have been reported.

Other security developments in recent months include airstrikes in eastern Afghanistan on 16 April attributed to Pakistan's military, in which at least 47 people were killed, and a drone strike on 31 July in Kabul by the US military in which al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed.

The rights of women, already significantly eroded by Taliban restrictions on women's access to education and freedom of movement, further deteriorated in May 2022 with a Taliban ruling stating that women must cover their faces in public. The order outlines the procedure through which women's 'guardians' will be punished if this rule is not obeyed.

Despite a significant reduction in aid, the Taliban have defied predictions of complete economic collapse since the August 2021 takeover and have successfully maintained much of the country's domestic revenue. However, the economy has been plagued by rapid inflation, reduced purchasing power and the global impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Year-on-year inflation of basic household goods was 52 % in June 2022. Some 47 % of the population are facing food insecurity at crisis level or above. For the first time, this included 20 000 people considered to be experiencing catastrophe conditions, the most severe of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's five phase classifications of food insecurity.

Earthquakes and flash floodings in some regions have led to loss of life and significant damage to infrastructure. This has further strained the already limited capacity to provide humanitarian relief in the country.

There remain high numbers of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan, including an estimated 400 000 new displacements over the first four months of the year. Newly displaced persons within Afghanistan cite economic reasons as the primary driver of displacement.

Authorities have been increasingly focused on returning displaced persons to their areas of origin, including through the closure of informal settlements and destruction of homes inhabited by displaced persons. An estimated 700 000 displaced persons returned to their area of origin in the first four months of the year, outnumbering new displacements. The Taliban have closed at least six informal settlements in Kabul as of June 2022, and at least 55 more settlements in the country are at imminent risk of closure. An estimated half a million families could be made homeless by efforts to forcibly return internally displaced persons to their area of origin. There has also been an increasing number of returns of irregular Afghan migrants from neighbouring countries in recent months.

The number of Afghan migrants detected by Frontex while irregularly crossing the EU external border increased significantly in May 2022 when 4 407 crossings were detected, out of a total of 13 369 detections of Afghan nationals between January and May 2022.

The number of asylum applications lodged by Afghan nationals in EU+ countries in April-June remained at similar levels as in the first quarter of the year. Over the first six months of 2022, 13 % of EU+ asylum applications came from Afghan nationals. Meanwhile, the recognition rate for Afghan applicants in EU+ countries fell to 53 % in May 2022, the lowest rate since July 2021.



The routes and modes of transport used by Afghan nationals to enter EU+ countries remain unchanged, with most travelling overland through Pakistan, then onwards through Iran and Turkey. Once in Turkey, most Afghan migrants travel either overland to Bulgaria, or by sea to Italy and Greece.

Afghanistan: Situational Update

One year on from the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, the country is experiencing a humanitarian crisis.¹ This has been compounded by natural disasters in recent months, which are estimated to have affected over 140 000 people in Afghanistan since late March 2022, including through the destruction of almost 8 000 homes.²

On 22 June, a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck south-eastern Afghanistan; over 1 000 people are known to have been killed, including 230 children.³ In addition to this, heavy rains and flash flooding were reported in the eastern, southern, south-eastern and central regions of Afghanistan in July and August.⁴ An estimated 131 people were killed, and over 9 373 homes are believed to have been damaged or destroyed.⁵ Crops, as well as hundreds of acres of agricultural land, were destroyed by the flooding.⁶ Flooding has disrupted earthquake response relief efforts in some areas.⁷

The population of concern in Afghanistan is significant, with an estimated 59 % of the population in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022.⁸ In addition to Afghan refugees abroad, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there were 67 200 refugees and asylum seekers in Afghanistan as of June 2022.⁹

Security Situation

Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the cessation of clashes between the Taliban and former Afghan military forces resulted in an overall drop in political violence.¹⁰ In 2022, however, violence targeting civilians has increased.¹¹ The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) attribute the majority (59 %) of civilian attacks in the first half of 2022 to the Taliban, with former security force personnel being the most common targets.¹²

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) noted that the nature of the threat to civilians has changed post-August 2021; while most civilian casualties were previously caused by ground engagements, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on soft targets such as mosques have caused the highest number of casualties in the 11 months following the August 2021 takeover.¹³ According to data collected by the ACLED, at least 4 215 people have been killed in conflict and violence since August

¹ UN News, *Humanitarian funding still needed for 'pure catastrophe' situation in Afghanistan*, 15 August 2022, accessed 29 August 2022; UNHCR, *Five things you should know about Afghanistan*, 15 August 2022, accessed 12 September 2022.

² OCHA Humanitarian Response, *Afghanistan: Overview of Natural Disasters (as of 21 August 2022)*, 21 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

³ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Earthquake Response Situation Report No.3*, 26 August 2022, accessed 12 September 2022, p. 6.

⁴ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Flash Update #4. Flash Flooding in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Regions*, 17 August 2022, accessed 17 August 2022, p. 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Earthquake Response Situation Report No.2, 5 August 2022*, accessed 17 August 2022.

⁸ Protection Cluster Afghanistan, *Protection Analysis Update – Q1 2022*, 15 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022, p. 3.

⁹ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁰ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, *Afghanistan Mid-Year Update: High Risk of Violence Targeting Civilians Under Taliban Rule*, 15 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, p. 10.



2021, with 46 % of these casualties reported during the period April to August 2022.¹⁴ Between 19 April and 29 April at least 150 people were killed by explosive devices that targeted civilians, including ethnic Hazaras as well as Shiite and Sufi Muslims.¹⁵ Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) have claimed responsibility for attacks targeting Shiite groups, while others were conducted by unknown groups.¹⁶ Due to a number of high-fatality IED attacks on civilian targets, a total of 295 civilians were killed in April 2022, the highest monthly total since July 2021.¹⁷ This reduced in May 2022 to 117 recorded civilian fatalities, before reducing further in June 2022 (90) and July 2022 (66) to levels similar to those experienced in the first quarter of 2022.¹⁸

Anti-Taliban resistance has heightened in recent months, with increased anti-Taliban attacks in May 2022 in the province of Panjshir and district of Andarab (Baghlan province).¹⁹ The Taliban are fighting insurgencies, coordinated by the National Resistance Front (NRF) and Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP), as well as by other smaller anti-Taliban groups such as the High Council of National Resistance and the Afghanistan Freedom Front.²⁰

Taliban officials have previously denied reports of fighting in the Panjshir Valley, but during a June 2022 visit by the American newspaper The Washington Post, they were noted to have stationed thousands of forces in the area.²¹ Non-profit organisation Afghan Peace Watch have linked the recent intensification of clashes between the Taliban and NRF to a number of subsequent new Taliban military appointments in the Panjshir and Andarab provinces in August 2022.²²

Reports of Taliban and anti-Taliban casualties are difficult to verify since both sides are accused of denying and exaggerating claims, and the access of independent reporters to areas where clashes are occurring is significantly restricted.²³ Unconfirmed reports from the NRF claim that 89 Taliban fighters were killed in Panjshir province on 15 August 2022.²⁴

In addition to conflict between Taliban and armed opposition groups on the ground, both the Pakistan and US military have conducted strikes in Afghanistan in 2022. Pakistan conducted air strikes in Khost and Kunar provinces in Afghanistan on 16 April, killing at least 47 people.²⁵ Speaking after the strikes, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry claimed that on 14 April seven Pakistani soldiers were killed in border areas by 'terrorists operating from Afghanistan'.²⁶ Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Pakistani Taliban, have carried out a number of cross-border attacks in Pakistan in recent years.²⁷

On 31 July, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri was killed by an American drone strike on the Kabul safe house where he was staying.²⁸ Zawahiri, the only fatality in the strike, had been the leader of al-Qaeda

¹⁴ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, *ACLED [Dataset]*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, *ACLED [Dataset]*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁷ ACLED, Humanitarian Data Exchange, *Afghanistan civilian targeting events and fatalities by month-year* [dataset], 24 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ BBC, *Afghanistan: In a quiet valley the Taliban face armed resistance*, 27 July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022; Vice, *The Armed Resistance Against the Taliban Is Still Here*, 17 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, Asia Report No.326: *Afghanistan's Security Challenges under the Taliban*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, pp. 8-14.

²¹ The Washington Post, *Inside the Taliban's secret war in the Panjshir Valley*, 8 June 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²² Afghan Peace Watch, *New military appointments reflect a hike in Afghan conflict*, 24 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

²³ BBC, *Afghanistan: In a quiet valley the Taliban face armed resistance*, 27 July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

²⁴ Afghan Peace Watch, *Weekly Briefing Aug 13 – 20*, 24 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

²⁵ France24, *Afghanistan death toll in 'Pakistan strikes' rises to at least 47: officials*, 17 April 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Al Jazeera, *Deadly border attacks test Pakistani relations with Taliban*, 27 April 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁸ BBC, *Ayman al-Zawahiri: Al-Qaeda leader killed in US drone strike*, 2 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.



since 2011.²⁹ Speaking after the strike, a Taliban spokesperson, according to the BBC, described the actions of the United States as a 'clear violation of international principles'.³⁰ Under the 2020 Joint Declaration between the former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, the Taliban affirmed that they would not cooperate with international terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, and would not host them in Afghanistan.³¹ US officials have reportedly claimed that the Taliban were aware that Zawahiri was in Kabul.³²

Human Rights

Between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022, UNAMA have recorded dozens of instances of arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial killings of former Afghan National Security and Defence Forces and former government officials, as well as individuals who are accused of being affiliated with armed groups.³³ Individuals do not need to have held official or senior positions in these organisations to be in danger of reprisals. For example, the Taliban allegedly carried out the killing of three men, who were former bodyguards of the District Governor in the Takhar province, Khwaja Ghar district in northeast Afghanistan on 18 May.³⁴

In July 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that alleged members and supporters of the ISKP had been summarily executed and forcibly disappeared, such as by covert abduction or imprisonment, by Taliban security forces.³⁵ The bodies of over 100 men have been discovered in Nangahar and Kunar provinces since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, although the total number of such executions is not known.³⁶ Bodies of executed ISKP members have been found to be severely disfigured.³⁷

Human Rights Watch stated in June 2022 that Taliban forces in Panjshir province have detained and tortured residents accused of being affiliated with the NRF, contrary to international humanitarian and human rights laws.³⁸ Instances of mass arrests of suspected NRF members have been recorded by UNAMA, including 40 men and boys in Baghlan province on 16 April, and 22 people in Panjshir province on 31 May 2022.³⁹

On 7 May 2022, the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced an order under which women are required to cover their faces, except their eyes, when in the company of any man who is not their husband or close relative.⁴⁰ The order states that the preferred method of adherence to so-called *Sharia hijab* is for women not to venture out of their homes unless they must do so.⁴¹ A woman's 'guardian' – her husband, father or brother – is responsible for ensuring the order is adhered

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ US State Department, *Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan*, 29 February 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

³² BBC, *Ayman al-Zawahiri: Al-Qaeda leader killed in US drone strike*, 2 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

³³ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, pp. 13-16.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 15.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Taliban Execute, 'Disappear' Alleged Militants*, 7 July 2022, accessed 18 August 2022.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, pp. 15-16.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Afghanistan: Taliban Torture Civilians in Panjshir*, 10 June 2022, accessed 18 August 2022.

³⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, pp. 16-17

⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, *Taliban orders Afghan women to cover their faces in public*, 7 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; Afghanistan Analysts, *"We need to breathe too": Women across Afghanistan navigate the Taleban's hijab ruling*, 1 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; United States Institute of Peace, *How the Taliban's Hijab Decree Defies Islam*, 12 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁴¹ Afghanistan Analysts, *"We need to breathe too": Women across Afghanistan navigate the Taleban's hijab ruling*, 1 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

to, and will face punishment in cases of transgression.⁴² Previous restrictions on women's ability to travel within the country⁴³ and their right to education⁴⁴ remain in place in Afghanistan.⁴⁵

Women have staged multiple protests against the restrictions introduced by the Taliban in recent months, organised by groups such as the Spontaneous Movement of Afghanistan Women Fighters, the Unity and Solidarity of Afghanistan Women Movement, as well as the Afghan Women's Civil Service Employment Organisation.⁴⁶ Protests called for action from the Taliban and the international community on issues such as girls' education, women's rights to work, forced hijab, and forced marriage as well as denouncing incidents of violence against women and girls.⁴⁷

UNAMA record at least 87 reports of murder, rape, suicide, forced marriage (including child marriage) and assault against women and girls in the year since the Taliban takeover, noting that none of these cases have been processed through a formal justice system.⁴⁸ Many of these cases have instead been resolved using traditional methods of dispute resolution.⁴⁹ In recent months both women and men are reported to have received punishments for violating moral codes, including corporal punishment, forced marriage between the victim and perpetrator following sexual offences, and extrajudicial killings.⁵⁰

On 27 April, a journalist and two civil society activists were convicted of 'spreading anti-regime propaganda and committing espionage for foreign media outlets', resulting in prison sentences of one to two years.⁵¹ On 22 July, the Taliban supreme leader issued a decree stating that those who 'slander' the government will be viewed as collaborating with the enemy and will be punished.⁵²

Reporters without Borders stated in August 2022 that Afghanistan has lost 40 % of media outlets and 60 % of journalists, including 76 % of female journalists, in the twelve months following the Taliban takeover of the country.⁵³ In the 2022 Press Freedom Index, Afghanistan was ranked 156 out of 180 countries and territories.⁵⁴

Economic Situation

Since August 2021, significant reductions in international grant support, reduced incomes and purchasing power, drought and natural disasters, as well as the economic and logistic impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, have led to significant economic decline in Afghanistan.⁵⁵

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a ban on Russian grain and fertilizer exports has had significant impacts on food prices and availability for countries such as Afghanistan.⁵⁶ Further to this, the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Al Jazeera, *No long-distance travel for women without male relative: Taliban*, 26 December 2021, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁴⁴ UNICEF, *Depriving girls of secondary education translates to a loss of at least US\$500 million for Afghan economy in last 12 months*, 14 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁴⁵ UN Women, *Gender alert no.2: Women's rights in Afghanistan one year after the Taliban take-over*, 15 August 2022, accessed 12 September 2022.

⁴⁶ Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, *ACLED [Dataset]*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, p. 34.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 34.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 17.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 28.

⁵² Reporters Without Borders, *Afghanistan has lost almost 60 % of its journalists since the fall of Kabul*, 10 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ IPC, *Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March – May 2022 and Projection for June – November 2022*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Foreign Policy, *Afghanistan's Hungry Will Pay the Price for Putin's War*, 1 April 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

invasion of Ukraine has increased fuel prices, which has also driven up the cost of food transportation.⁵⁷ Although not unique to Afghanistan, these factors have a significant impact on Afghanistan as the country imports a high percentage of its food and fuel and was already in a vulnerable situation due to the Taliban's August 2021 takeover.⁵⁸

According to data from the World Bank, the year-on-year inflation of basic household goods was 52 % in June 2022, driven by significant increases in diesel fuel (95 %), wheat flour (67 %) and cooking oil (51 %).⁵⁹ Despite rising prices, data collected from 48 markets in 21 provinces in June 2022 and published by the World Bank suggest that most basic food and non-food items remain available in Afghanistan.⁶⁰ IOM data from March and April 2022 state that those living in urban settlements are more likely to struggle to meet basic food needs compared to peri-urban and rural settlements.⁶¹

According to data from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 47 % of the population were facing high levels of acute food insecurity in the second quarter of 2022, including 20 000 people in the remote Ghor province who were classified as in Catastrophe conditions.⁶² Catastrophe conditions are the most severe of the IPC's five phase classifications of food insecurity, and this represents the first time such conditions have been detected in Afghanistan.⁶³ According to the World Food Programme Pre-Lean Season Assessment, in January and February 2022, 92 % of surveyed households reported having debt, of which 88 % stated that the primary reason for borrowing money was to purchase food.⁶⁴

In the six months prior to April 2022, extreme negative coping mechanisms such as selling organs, marrying off children, and selling children were reported in 1 % of households, although the frequency of such occurrences is likely underreported.⁶⁵ The reported coping mechanisms were most common in Sar-e-Pul province, accounting for 34 % of recorded instances of selling children as a food-related coping mechanism, as well as 32 % of selling organs and 30 % of child marriages as a food-related coping mechanism.⁶⁶

Employment opportunities in Afghanistan are mostly agriculture-related seasonal work.⁶⁷ The World Bank reports that daily nominal wages were approximately AFN 600 (EUR 6.32) for skilled labourers and AFN 300 (EUR 3.16) for unskilled labourers in June 2022, having bounced back from reduced rates experienced in the first five months of the year.⁶⁸ Despite this, reports suggest that a lack of regular work has significantly reduced income for many; in August 2022, Al Jazeera quoted one Afghan man as stating

⁵⁷ International Rescue Committee, 3 ways the Ukraine conflict will drive up hunger in other crisis zones, 21 March 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

⁵⁸ Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, *The Ukraine War and Food Security: Consequences for Norway's Partner Countries*, 10 August 2022, accessed 23 September 2022, p. 6; United States Institute of Peace, *Ukraine War Fallout Will Damage Fragile States and the Poor*, 22 March 2022, accessed 23 September 2022; Foreign Policy, *Afghanistan's Hungry Will Pay the Price for Putin's War*, 1 April 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

⁵⁹ World Bank, *Afghanistan Economic Monitor – July 19, 2022*, 19 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, *Baseline Mobility Assessment & Emergency Community-based Needs Assessment – Summary Results. Round 15: March – April 2022*, 10 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 23.

⁶² IPC, *Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March – May 2022 and Projection for June – November 2022*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 1

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 2. Sample size of survey not known.

⁶⁵ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, *Baseline Mobility Assessment & Emergency Community-based Needs Assessment – Summary Results. Round 15: March – April 2022*, 10 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 24.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ World Bank, *Afghanistan Economic Monitor – July 19, 2022*, 19 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 3. Currency conversion calculated using InforEuro June 2022 exchange rate data: European Commission, *Exchange rate (InforEuro)*, n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.



that, although he used to earn around EUR 6 per day as a day labourer, he has been struggling to find work since the Taliban takeover and is now lucky to earn EUR 0.69 per day.⁶⁹

Real wages in Afghanistan also decreased following the Taliban takeover in August 2021. However, by June 2022 real wages of skilled labourers had increased to approximately AFN 300 (EUR 3.16), a similar rate to June 2021.⁷⁰ For unskilled labourers the increase has been less pronounced, with real wages at approximately AFN 250 (EUR 2.63) in June 2022, around AFN 50 (EUR 0.53) lower than June 2021.⁷¹

The currency, the Afghan afghani (AFN), strengthened between March and August 2022 following highs of AFN 114.64 to the Euro at the beginning of February 2022; by the beginning of July 2022, the EUR/AFN exchange rate was 92.22.⁷² This is the lowest EUR/AFN exchange rate since April 2021.⁷³ The currency has similarly appreciated against the US Dollar in recent months, with a USD/AFN rate of 91.11 in August 2022 compared to AFN 102.92 to the dollar in February 2022.⁷⁴ This represents a 15 % annual depreciation compared to the USD/AFN rate of 79.23 in August 2021.⁷⁵

Availability of cash remains limited as banks continue to impose withdrawal limits.⁷⁶ Individuals are permitted to withdraw up to AFN 30 000 (EUR 335) per week, although this is subject to the availability of cash.⁷⁷ The World Bank reported on 23 August that cash accessibility, specifically for businesses, was much lower than the allowed limit.⁷⁸

Despite a significant reduction in aid and freezing of the central bank's reserves following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the regime have defied predictions of complete economic collapse.⁷⁹ As noted by The Economist in June 2022, the Taliban have largely succeeded in maintaining domestic revenues such as taxes.⁸⁰ The Taliban have experience in this area gained through collecting taxation in areas under their control over the past two decades, and assisted by the financial management software systems left behind by the US-backed government.⁸¹ While domestic revenue may have prevented entire economic collapse, the people of Afghanistan have seen little benefit from the Taliban's continued revenue flows, and the Taliban are expected to spend half of their budget for the 2022/23 financial year on defence and security.⁸²

⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, Photos: Afghans paying the price for peace since Taliban takeover, 10 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022. Currency conversion calculated using InforEuro August 2022 exchange rate data: European Commission, , n.d. accessed 24 August 2022. [Exchange rate \(InforEuro\)](#), n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.

⁷⁰ World Bank, [Afghanistan Economic Monitor – July 19, 2022](#), 19 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 3. Currency conversion calculated using InforEuro June 2022 exchange rate data: European Commission, [Exchange rate \(InforEuro\)](#), n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² European Commission, [Exchange rate \(InforEuro\)](#), n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Afghanistan International Bank, [Find up-to-date information on the bank's services and branches](#), 25 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ World Bank, [Afghanistan Economic Monitor \(August 23, 2022\)](#), 25 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022, p. 1.

⁷⁹ The Economist, [The Taliban government has proved surprisingly good at raising money](#), 8 June 2022, accessed 23 September 2022; International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, [One Year of Taliban Rule in Afghanistan: A Predictable Disaster](#), 26 August 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

⁸⁰ The Economist, [The Taliban government has proved surprisingly good at raising money](#), 8 June 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

Afghanistan: Mobility Update

In April and May, asylum applications from Afghan nationals remained stable compared to the first quarter of 2022.⁸³ Between January and May 2022, 13 % of asylum applications lodged in EU+ countries came from Afghan nationals.⁸⁴ This is significantly below the peak rate of Afghan applications in September 2021, when 25 % of applications in EU+ countries were lodged by Afghan nationals.⁸⁵ The recognition rate for Afghan applicants in EU+ countries fell to 53 % in May 2022, the lowest rate since July 2021.⁸⁶

As of April 2022, over 130 000 Afghan nationals are estimated to have been resettled in or evacuated to other countries, including at least 27 000 in EU countries.⁸⁷ In July 2022, the first Afghan nationals arrived in Italy as part of humanitarian corridors set up from Iran and Pakistan.⁸⁸ Some 270 Afghans, including activists, athletes, educators, and women and children were transported onboard three flights.⁸⁹

According to Frontex, some 13 369 Afghan nationals were detected irregularly crossing EU borders between January and May 2022.⁹⁰ This represents a 316 % increase in detections from the same period in 2021.⁹¹ Some 4 407 of detections in the first five months of 2022 occurred in May; this was the highest monthly total of Afghan detections since November 2019.⁹² For the period January to May 2022, Afghan nationals accounted for 15 % of Frontex detections.⁹³ The highest rate of Afghan detections as a proportion of total detections occurred during March 2022, when 18 % of total detections were Afghan nationals.⁹⁴

In line with trends from 2021, 74 % of the detections involving Afghans occurred along the Western Balkan route into the EU.⁹⁵ Through the first five months of 2022, an increasing proportion of Afghan detections occurred along the Central Mediterranean Route, accounting for 14 % of Afghan detections in April and 28 % of Afghan detections in May compared to an average of 12 % of Afghan detections for the year 2021.⁹⁶ As of July 2022, UNHCR has recorded the embarkation country for over 99 % of Afghan sea arrivals in Italy to be Turkey so far in 2022.⁹⁷ Further research is required to understand the journeys taken by Afghan migrants who have been detected along the Central Mediterranean route from Africa to Italy.

Between 1 January and 31 July 2022, there were 3 309 arrivals of Afghan nationals in Italy by boat, with Afghans accounting for 8 % of sea arrivals in Italy during this time period.⁹⁸ Afghanistan was therefore the fourth most common country of origin over the first seven months of the year.⁹⁹ Afghan sea arrivals

⁸³ Eurostat, *Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex - monthly data (rounded)*, 16 August 2022, accessed 17 August 2022.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ European Union Agency for Asylum, *Latest Asylum Trends - May 2022*, 28 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

⁸⁷ Government of Canada, *AFGH – International Comparison on Afghan Refugee Resettlement Commitments – April 25 2022*, 25 April 2022, accessed 25 August 2022; UK Home Office, *Transparency data: Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data*, 25 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

⁸⁸ UNHCR, *Italy Fact Sheet July 2022*, 16 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Frontex, *Detections of illegal border-crossings statistics download (uploaded monthly)* [database], 5 August 2022, accessed 18 August 2022. Frontex data illustrates number of detections, not number of unique individuals, and Individuals may attempt to cross borders multiple times and therefore may appear multiple times in the data.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ UNHCR, *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard July 2022*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022. Of the 3 309 Afghan arrivals in Italy recorded by UNHCR between January and July 2022, 3 301 embarked from Turkey.

⁹⁸ UNHCR, *Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard July 2022*, 12 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

to Italy peaked in May (1 239) and June (1 102), before reducing significantly to just 27 monthly in July.¹⁰⁰ UNHCR notes that the decline coincides with a reduction in the percentage of departures taking place from Turkey for the month of July.¹⁰¹ Significant routes towards the EU being followed by Afghans are mapped in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Routes taken by Afghan nationals, April – August 2022

Source: Frontex, Turkish Coast Guard Command, UNHCR.

Among Afghan sea arrivals in Italy between January and July 2022, 52 % were adult men, 10 % were adult women, 12 % were accompanied children, and 27 % were unaccompanied and separated children.¹⁰² Afghan arrivals in Italy had one of the highest proportions of unaccompanied and separated children among the top ten countries of origin.¹⁰³

The Turkish Coast Guard (TCG) intercepted 3 161 Afghan migrants in the second quarter of 2022, a 105 % increase compared to the previous quarter and a 122 % increase compared to the same period in 2021.¹⁰⁴ Over the first seven months of 2022, TCG intercepted 5 593 Afghan migrants, which made Afghanistan the most common country of origin accounting for 23 % of interceptions during this time period.¹⁰⁵

As of 31 May 2022 there were 2 070 956 registered Afghan refugees in Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.¹⁰⁶ This was an increase of 1 253 refugees compared to two months earlier (2 069 703 Afghan refugees on 31 March 2022).¹⁰⁷ Neighbouring countries received an estimated 182 590 newly arrived Afghans in need of international protection between 1 January 2021 and 31 July 2022, although the actual number is likely higher than that because the data from Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan have not been updated since at least February 2022.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Turkish Coast Guard Command, *Latest Activities and Archive*, [All 'Current Operations' between April and June 2021 and 2022], 25 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation*, 31 May 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁰⁷ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation*, 31 March 2022, accessed 12 May 2022.

¹⁰⁸ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation*, 31 May 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that between 1 January and 30 June 2022, approximately 30 205 people were displaced due to conflict in Afghanistan, predominantly within the Sar-e-Pul province in the north of the country.¹⁰⁹ All displacements within this period occurred between 10 April and 30 June, with 96 % of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) displaced between 23 and 30 June.¹¹⁰

In a survey of 3 075 IDP households conducted by REACH between February and April 2022, 65 % stated that their main reason for displacement was due to unemployment or poverty, overtaking active conflict and violence as the main reason for displacement.¹¹¹ According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), there was a total of 394 576 new IDPs in Afghanistan between January and April 2022.¹¹² During the same timeframe, IOM estimate that 698 640 IDPs returned to their place of origin.¹¹³ Among IDP households surveyed by REACH, 5 % stated in April 2022 that they intended to return to their area of origin compared to 17 % in 2021.¹¹⁴

As reported by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in June 2022, the authorities are placing increasing pressure on IDPs to return to their area of origin, including through the closure of makeshift settlements.¹¹⁵ By early June, at least six informal settlements in Kabul had been closed by the authorities and 600 homes had been demolished.¹¹⁶ The NRC reports that 47 of the 52 informal settlements housing displaced persons in Kabul are at risk of closure,¹¹⁷ while eight settlements in Badghis province, housing approximately 18 000 individuals, are at imminent risk of closure.¹¹⁸ The NRC estimates that up to half a million families could be made homeless by efforts to forcibly return displaced people to their areas of origin.¹¹⁹

Pakistan: Afghan Mobility Update

Nature and Scale of Migration

Between April and July 2022, movements between Afghanistan and Pakistan continued to follow a general downwards trend since peak figures were recorded in December 2021.¹²⁰ During this time period, IOM data indicate that there were 978 729 movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan and 913 065 movements from Pakistan to Afghanistan.¹²¹ However, there are indications that movements may be increasing; between 1 and 15 August, movements from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Pakistan to Afghanistan experienced respective 27 % and 24 % increases when compared to the previous two-week

¹⁰⁹ OCHA Humanitarian Response, *Afghanistan – Conflict Induced Displacements in 2022*, 21 August 2022, accessed 12 September 2022.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ REACH, *Evolving Driver and Needs in Afghanistan: Whole of Afghanistan Mid-Year 2022 Key Findings*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 9; REACH, *Mid-Year Whole of Afghanistan Assessment (WoAA) – Key Sectoral Findings*, April 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 1.

¹¹² IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, *Baseline Mobility Assessment & Emergency Community-based Needs Assessment – Summary Results. Round 15: March – April 2022*, 7 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 2.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ REACH, *Evolving Driver and Needs in Afghanistan: Whole of Afghanistan Mid-Year 2022 Key Findings*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council, *Afghanistan: Eviction threats put hundreds of thousands of vulnerable families at risk of homelessness*, 30 June 2022, accessed 25 June 2022.

¹¹⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council, *Homes of internally displaced people demolished in Kabul*, n.d., accessed 25 August 2022.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Norwegian Refugee Council, *Afghanistan: Eviction threats put hundreds of thousands of vulnerable families at risk of homelessness*, 30 June 2022, accessed 25 June 2022.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹²¹ Ibid.



period.¹²² However, further data is required in order to determine whether this is a temporary fluctuation or a deviation from the current trend.

As of 31 May 2022 there are 1.28 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan.¹²³ This represents a moderate decrease compared to the 1.44 million Afghan refugees registered in Pakistan on 31 August 2021.¹²⁴ Of those registered in Pakistan in May 2022, 670 499 were registered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northern Pakistan, with smaller populations registered in provinces of Balochistan (313 882), Punjab (184 258), Sindh (71 723), Islamabad (38 294) and the Pakistan administered side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir (4 245).¹²⁵ In addition to these refugees, who are holders of Proof of Registration cards issued by the Pakistani government, there were 5 733 Afghan refugees and 24 559 asylum seekers under UNHCR's mandate in Pakistan as of 30 June 2022.¹²⁶

Profile of Migrants

Between 30 April and 15 August 2022, 69 % of Afghans recorded by IOM travelling from Afghanistan to Pakistan were male.¹²⁷ During the same period, 69 % of Afghan nationals returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan were male.¹²⁸ Throughout the reporting period, the percentage of women and girls crossing the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was higher at the Torkham border crossing than at the Spin Boldak crossing in the south.¹²⁹

Among the Afghan population within Pakistan, approximately one in every four are adult males.¹³⁰ Further to this, over two-thirds of Afghans in Pakistan are believed to be of Pashtun ethnicity, according to one interviewee who has conducted research in the area.¹³¹ Previous reports indicate that Afghan Hazaras in Pakistan are at risk of violence.¹³²

UNHCR estimate the 32 % of Afghans registered in Pakistan live in refugee villages.¹³³ There are 54 such villages in Pakistan, mostly concentrated in the north of the country.¹³⁴

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Pakistan (Islamic Republic of)*, 31 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹²⁴ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Pakistan (Islamic Republic of)*, 31 August 2022, accessed 31 November 2021.

¹²⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR- Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylums-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022.

¹²⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR- Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylums-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022.

¹²⁷ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 July 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 July to 15 July 2022*, 27 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 June to 30 June 2022*, 6 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 June to 15 June 2022*, 22 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 21 May to 31 May 2022*, 10 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 14 May to 20 May*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 7 May to 13 May 2022*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 30 April to 6 May 2022*, 17 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ UNHCR, *UNHCR- Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylums-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022; Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹³¹ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹³² France24, *Freedom's choice for Afghans: Over the wall or through the desert*, 9 March 2022, accessed 26 August 2022; Mixed Migration Centre, *The impact of the Afghanistan crisis on migration: Increasingly securitized borders will only make migration riskier and more dangerous*, 18 October 2021, accessed 12 September 2022.

¹³³ UNHCR, *UNHCR- Pakistan Overview of Refugee and Asylums-Seekers Population as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Routes and Modes of Transport

Movement overland through Pakistan and then onwards via Iran and Turkey remains the most common route for Afghan nationals wanting to reach Europe.¹³⁵ After entering Pakistan, Afghan nationals travel overland to the eastern border with Iran and cross using official border points at Mirjaveh/Taftan and Jalq Kalagan, as well as unofficial border crossing points along the northerly section of the Iran-Pakistan border.¹³⁶

The cost of smuggler-facilitated movement towards Pakistan and Iran is believed to currently be approximately EUR 10 to EUR 100.¹³⁷

Situation at the Borders

Between April and August 2022, the two official land border crossing points between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Torkham crossing in the north-east of Afghanistan and the Spin Boldak crossing in the south-east, have experienced temporary blockages due to various protests and changes in opening times and documentation requirements due to Eid celebrations. COVID-19 testing for travellers entering Pakistan through the Torkham border crossing was stopped on 25 May.¹³⁸

Cross-border movements reduced between 30 April and 6 May at both official bordering crossing points due to Eid, but subsequently increased as of 7 May following the end of festivities.¹³⁹

At the Torkham border crossing, for the periods of 30 April to 25 May and 2 July until 9 July, only individuals with Tazkira, Afghan identity cards, were permitted to enter Afghanistan.¹⁴⁰ Normal restrictions, requiring a valid passport to enter Afghanistan, have been in place outside this period.

Torkham border crossing was temporarily closed on 5 July as well as 18 and 19 July due to protests against the ban on the import of goats, and later against recent power outages.¹⁴¹ Further protests took place at Torkham on 10 August with local labourers protesting against the possible implementation of crossing visas.¹⁴²

Daily labour and trade activities at the Spin Boldak border were stopped by border authorities on 8 July.¹⁴³ Small business traders and local labourers were subsequently allowed to resume activities on 23 and 24 July.¹⁴⁴ The Spin Boldak border crossing was closed on 18 and 19 July due to protests against the authorities by transporters,¹⁴⁵ as well as on 13 June by travellers and drivers demanding all five crossing points be opened.¹⁴⁶ On 14 June, authorities opened three crossing points for inbound and outbound movements.¹⁴⁷ The highway was once again blocked in protest on 15 June, by transporters protesting

¹³⁵ Interview 1, 11 August 2022; Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹³⁶ UNHCR, *UNHCR Iran: Afghanistan Situation Update – 30 June 2022*, 30 June 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹³⁷ Interview 2, 18 August 2022; European Commission, *Exchange rate (InforEuro)*, n.d., accessed 26 August 2022.

¹³⁸ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 21 May to 31 May 2022*, 10 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹³⁹ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 30 April to 6 May 2022*, 17 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 7 May to 13 May 2022*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴⁰ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 30 April to 6 May 2022*, 17 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 June to 15 June 2022*, 22 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 June to 15 June 2022*, 22 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴¹ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 July to 15 July 2022*, 27 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 August 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴² IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴³ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 July to 15 July 2022*, 27 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴⁴ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 August 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴⁵ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 14 May to 20 May*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴⁶ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 June to 15 June 2022*, 22 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

against unnecessary restrictions from the authorities,¹⁴⁸ as well as by further protests on 22 June and 5 August.¹⁴⁹

Flooding caused the temporary closure of the highway in Torkham on 24 July and Spin Boldak on 28 July.¹⁵⁰ There was a shooting incident between Afghan and Pakistani security forces at the Spin Boldak border on 28 July.¹⁵¹

Ease of Travel

Previous research by Trafig in August 2021 found that an estimated 57 % of Afghans in Pakistan faced mobility restrictions within the country.¹⁵² Proof of Registration cards afford the holder freedom of movement within Pakistan but are not considered valid travel documents and card holders may not use them to cross international borders.¹⁵³

In Trafig's 2021 research, Afghan nationals were found to experience harassment and extortion at police checkpoints in Pakistan.¹⁵⁴ Fear of abuse and detention at the hands of the authorities was found to decrease mobility and leave Afghans immobilised within the country.¹⁵⁵ In February 2022, the CEO of the Pakistani Society for Human Rights and Prisoners Aid stated in interview that the number of cases of police harassment against Afghan refugees in Pakistan had reduced since 2018.¹⁵⁶ More up to date research is required to understand the current attitudes of Afghans in Pakistan on this topic in the context of increasing deportations.

Returns

Between January and July 2022, OCHA recorded that 46 300 Afghan nationals returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan.¹⁵⁷ Returns from Afghanistan in the first seven months of 2022 therefore outnumber the total annual number of returns for the year 2021 (29 000 returns), as well as for all other years since 2018.¹⁵⁸

On 31 July, 213 Afghan nationals were deported across the Spin Boldak border crossing for not having valid documentation.¹⁵⁹ The deportees had been detained in the District Zhob jail for two days prior to deportation.¹⁶⁰

Between 1 January and 30 June, UNHCR had assisted with the voluntary return of 1 067 Afghan refugees from Pakistan, with voluntary returns in the first six months of 2022 therefore outnumbering total annual voluntary returns for the year 2021.¹⁶¹ Some 90 % of the voluntary returns recorded in the first six months

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 June to 30 June 2022*, 6 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁵⁰ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 August 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Trafig, *Now more than ever: Afghans in Pakistan need more mobility and durable solutions to stay*, August 2021, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁵³ UNHCR Help Pakistan, *Proof of Registration Card (PoR)*, n.d., accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁵⁴ Trafig, *Now more than ever: Afghans in Pakistan need more mobility and durable solutions to stay*, August 2021, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ European Union Agency for Asylum, *Pakistan – Situation of Afghan refugees*, May 2022, accessed 12 September 2022, p. 40

¹⁵⁷ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Snapshot of Population Movements (January to July 2022)*, 26 July 2022, accessed 17 August 2022.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 August 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR: Pakistan Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

of 2022 took place in May and June.¹⁶² Over half (54 %) of refugee returnees between January and June 2022 were female, with women between the ages of 18 and 59 accounting for 21 % of total returnees.¹⁶³

Local Response and Human Rights

Afghans experience a number of challenges in Pakistan, including lack of access to employment, high rent prices, and expiration of visas without opportunities to extend them.¹⁶⁴

Iran: Afghan Mobility Update

Nature and Scale of Migration

Since April 2022, movements from Afghanistan into Iran have been outnumbered by movements from Iran into Afghanistan; between April and July, IOM recorded 79 900 movements from Afghanistan to Iran, and 282 390 movements from Iran to Afghanistan.¹⁶⁵ During the period 1 to 15 August 2022 there was an average of 403 daily crossings into Iran, of which one in five were part of a circular movement pattern between the two countries.¹⁶⁶ While the Iranian government has been conducting a significant number of deportations and forced returns, IOM returns data show that there is also a high number of voluntary movements back to Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ The reason for this high level of movement is difficult to ascertain, and individual returnee's decision-making may be impacted by push factors such as fear of deportation in Iran or pull factors such as Taliban policies that encourage return. UNHCR estimates that by the end of 2022, 274 000 Afghan nationals who arrived since August 2021 will remain in Iran.¹⁶⁸

There are 780 000 Afghan Amayesh card holders in Iran, a temporary residence status that provides holders with protections afforded to refugees.¹⁶⁹ This figure is correct as of October 2020, but it is unlikely to have experienced significant fluctuations since then as it is a status that can only be held by Afghan nationals registered in the initial 2001 Amayesh registration database and by the children of two Amayesh card holders.¹⁷⁰

Profile of Migrants

In line with trends observed in the first seven months of 2022, the majority (70 %) of Afghan nationals crossing into Iran between 1 and 15 August 2022 were male.¹⁷¹ Between 30 April and 15 August 2022,

¹⁶² Ibid; UNHCR, *UNHCR Afghanistan: Voluntary Repatriation – Response Snapshot (01 January – 30 April 2022)*, 7 June 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

¹⁶³ UNHCR, *UNHCR: Pakistan Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees as of June 30, 2022*, 25 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

¹⁶⁴ Tolo News, *Afghan Refugees in Iran, Pakistan Call for UNHCR to Act*, 31 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁶⁵ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid; UNHCR, *Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and Response in Iran, 16 May - 30 June 2022*, 18 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁶⁸ UNHCR, *UNHCR Iran: Iran at a Glance*, 18 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Help: Iran*, n.d. accessed 24 August 2022; UNHCR, *Protection Dashboard – Jan to Jun 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 August to 15 August 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 July to 31 July 2022*, 4 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 July to 15 July 2022*, 27 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 16 June to 30 June 2022*, 6 July 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 1 June to 15 June 2022*, 22 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 21 May to 31 May 2022*, 10 June 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 14 May to 20 May*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 7 May to 13 May 2022*, 27 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022; IOM, *Movements in and out of Afghanistan 30 April to 6 May 2022*, 17 May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.



68 % of those crossing from Afghanistan into Iran were male, while 73 % of those crossing from Iran to Afghanistan were male.¹⁷²

Among those currently settled in Iran, one interviewee noted that their research suggests just one in every four is an adult male, with half of all Afghans in Iran under the age of 18.¹⁷³ They note that just under half of Afghans in Iran are of Tajik ethnicity, while approximately a third are Hazara.¹⁷⁴

UNHCR reported in August 2022 that many Afghan children in Iran are engaged in child labour.¹⁷⁵ Child labour among Afghan migrants is understood to have increased in recent months due to the deteriorating economic situation of Afghan families in Iran.¹⁷⁶

Routes and Modes of Transport

The most common route for Afghans moving through Iran continues to be movement overland, first entering south Iran through Pakistan and subsequently exiting northwest Iran into Turkey's Van province, although a smaller number of Afghan nationals will directly cross the Afghanistan-Iran border.¹⁷⁷

The routes between Afghanistan and Iran are all facilitated and operated by smuggling networks.¹⁷⁸ As noted previously, the cost of smuggler-facilitated movement towards Pakistan and Iran is believed to currently be approximately USD 10 to USD 100 (EUR 9.88 to EUR 98.79).¹⁷⁹ One interviewee noted that the majority of smugglers in Iran are believed to be Afghan nationals who work in coordination with smugglers in Turkey.¹⁸⁰

Situation at the Borders

There are three official border crossings along the 572-mile border between Afghanistan and Iran; Dogharoun/ Islam Qala in the north, Abu Nasr-e-Farahi in the centre, and Milak/Zaranj in the south.¹⁸¹ There are a number of unofficial border crossings between Afghanistan and Iran, although these crossing points change often and are difficult to monitor.¹⁸²

One interviewee noted that at the Zaranj border crossing point, the Taliban's requirement that women must travel with a guardian is not strictly enforced.¹⁸³ Islam Qala crossing is understood to strictly enforce requirements for women travelling abroad to be accompanied by a guardian.¹⁸⁴ The interviewee additionally noted however that restrictions and requirements at border crossing points are often changed at the discretion of the officials at the crossing at any time.¹⁸⁵

One interviewee stated that a reduction in regular movements across the Afghanistan-Iran border has been observed in July 2022, with authorities imposing increased restrictions along key border routes in Afghanistan.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ UNHCR, *Protection Dashboard – Jan to Jun 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.2022.

¹⁷⁷ Interview 1, 11 August 2022; Interview 2, 18 August 2022; Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

¹⁷⁸ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Interview 2, 18 August 2022; European Commission, *Exchange rate (InforEuro)*, n.d., accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁸⁰ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

¹⁸¹ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022, p. 4;

¹⁸² Interview 2, 18 August 2022; Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

¹⁸³ Interview 2, 18 August 2022; E-International Relations, *Iran and Afghanistan: Growing Tensions after the Return of the Taliban*, 23 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁸⁴ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

Afghan nationals attempting to cross the Iranian border face a number of dangers and challenging conditions including a lack of food and potable water, poor accommodation, dangerous transportation, a lack of gender sensitivity and privacy for washroom facilities, and lack of access to healthcare.¹⁸⁷

There are frequent clashes between Taliban and Iranian forces at the shared border, including an incident in July 2022 that is reported to have led to a fatality.¹⁸⁸ Iranian sources claim that the incident was caused by Taliban forces attempting to raise a flag in territory they deem to belong to Iran.¹⁸⁹ In addition to this, thieves in the border area pose a security threat to those attempting to cross into Iran.¹⁹⁰

Ease of Travel

The majority of Afghans in Iran do not hold valid travel documents; UNHCR data indicate that 2.1 million of the estimated 3.5 million Afghans in Iran are undocumented.¹⁹¹ In addition to undocumented Afghans and Amayesh card holders, there are an estimated 311 000 passport holders with valid visas, and 275 000 Afghan family passport holders.¹⁹²

While Amayesh card holders are afforded certain rights, including the right to work, there are restrictions on their freedom of movement: Amayesh card holders are not permitted to obtain a driving license and are required to obtain a travel permit from the Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants in order to travel outside of their province of registration.¹⁹³ Those travelling outside of their province of registration or attempting to irregularly cross borders are at risk of arrest and deportation.¹⁹⁴

Returns

Between January and July 2022, 462 300 Afghan nationals returned from Iran to Afghanistan.¹⁹⁵ UNHCR estimated in June 2022 that 65 % of newly arriving Afghan asylum seekers are deported from Iran by the government.¹⁹⁶ In July, Iran is understood to have deported an average of 700 Afghans per day.¹⁹⁷ July 2022 demographic data on returnees from Iran remains unchanged compared to previous months, with some 43 % of returnees recorded as children under the age of 18.¹⁹⁸

Between 1 January and 7 July 2022, UNHCR recorded 226 voluntary returns from Iran to Afghanistan.¹⁹⁹ Monthly voluntary returns from Iran are still below levels prior to the August 2021 Taliban takeover, however have been increasing in recent months; May (34 monthly repatriations), June (49) and July (52) had the highest monthly voluntary returns since July 2021.²⁰⁰

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Reuters, *One dead in clashes between Taliban, Iran border forces, Afghan police official says*, 31 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022; Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹⁹¹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Iran: Iran at a Glance*, 18 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁹² UNHCR, *Protection Dashboard – Jan to Jun 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

¹⁹³ Ibid, p. 4; UNHCR, *Help: Iran*, n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁹⁴ UNHCR, *Help: Iran*, n.d. accessed 24 August 2022.

¹⁹⁵ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Snapshot of Population Movements (January to July 2022)*, 26 July 2022, accessed 17 August 2022.

¹⁹⁶ UNHCR, *Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and Response in Iran, 16 May - 30 June 2022*, 18 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

¹⁹⁷ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

¹⁹⁸ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Snapshot of Population Movements (January to July 2022)*, 26 July 2022, accessed 17 August 2022.

¹⁹⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Iran: Voluntary Repatriation Dashboard – July 2022*, 23 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Local Response and Human Rights

Afghans experience a lack of labour opportunities and adequate housing in Iran.²⁰¹ One interviewee noted that there are help pages and hotlines to provide assistance to Afghan nationals in Iran, although a significant amount of information and support likely comes from within communities.²⁰²

Iranian authorities engaged in a headcount exercise for undocumented Afghans between April and June 2022.²⁰³ All those who participated in the headcount have received headcount slips, which are valid until at least 22 October 2022 and are understood to offer the holders temporary protection against forced returns.²⁰⁴ The government of Iran has indicated their intention to deport those who have not participated in the headcount.²⁰⁵ One interviewee stated that this may have serious implications for the safety of Afghan nationals who arrive in Iran after the completion of the headcount, as they will not benefit from the same protections.²⁰⁶

Turkey: Afghan Mobility Update

Nature and Scale of Migration

Afghanistan is the most common country of origin for irregular migrants detected by Turkish authorities; the Turkish Ministry of Interior reported that as of 18 August 78 109 Afghan irregular migrants have been detained in Turkey in 2022, accounting for 44 % of irregular migrants captured during this period.²⁰⁷

One interviewee noted that, while Turkey is not typically considered a final destination country for Afghan nationals who flee their country, many are simply thankful to be alive and outside of the Taliban government control despite the challenging situation they face within Turkey.²⁰⁸ The interviewee noted that, while many Afghan nationals do go on to attempt to enter EU+ countries, better opportunities and protection for Afghans within Turkey, including improved access to legal protection and working status, would likely convince many to stay in Turkey.²⁰⁹ The interviewee stated that, in addition to the impact on Afghan national's decision to migrate onwards to the EU+, they believe that the restrictions on Afghan nationals' ability to obtain legal protection and to access basic services such as healthcare and schools result in many Afghan nationals in Turkey being reluctant to declare themselves to the authorities.²¹⁰

Profile of Migrants

As noted by one interviewee, Afghan men often travel the dangerous route to Turkey alone with the intention of later undergoing family reunification process for their family members to join them.²¹¹ An increase in the number of families fleeing along these routes has been noted since May 2022.²¹²

A significant proportion of Afghans fleeing to Turkey are understood to be former members of the Afghan army or police force who are under threat of violence if they remain in Afghanistan.²¹³

²⁰¹ Tolo News, *Afghan Refugees in Iran, Pakistan Call for UNHCR to Act*, 31 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁰² Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

²⁰³ UNHCR, *Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and Response in Iran, 16 May - 30 June 2022*, 18 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

²⁰⁷ Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, *Irregular Migration*, 18 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁰⁸ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²¹² Ibid; Interview 2, 22 August 2022.

²¹³ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

Routes and Modes of Transport

Afghans are typically understood to choose to transit through Turkey as a result of shared knowledge from others who have made the journey or from family and friends who are living irregularly in Turkey.²¹⁴

Afghan nationals travelling to or transiting through Turkey predominantly arrive using the overland route through Pakistan via Iran.²¹⁵ A small proportion travel to Turkey by plane. However, this is extremely rare since the price and the relevant documentation requirements are a barrier.²¹⁶

Smuggling of Afghan nationals into Turkey is extremely prevalent since very few Afghans are able to enter the country through legal routes.²¹⁷ Migrants are understood to primarily make contact with smugglers through word of mouth within communities, and to subsequently maintain contact using social media.²¹⁸

For those transiting through Turkey to Europe, the two major routes are overland through Turkey's northern border with Bulgaria near the town of Igneada, and by boat to Greece through Izmir province on the Aegean coast.²¹⁹ One interviewee estimated that for every six boats that depart Turkey's coast headed for Greece, just one will reach its destination.²²⁰ The majority are intercepted by Greek or Turkish police, or sink during the crossing.²²¹

Situation at the Borders

The main entry points for Afghan nationals in Turkey are in the Van province along the Iran-Turkey border where there are several formal and informal border crossing points.²²²

One interviewee noted that Afghans face many dangers along unofficial border crossings on the Iran-Turkey border, including violence and looting by thieves.²²³ The interviewee reported that several Afghan nationals are believed to have been killed by thieves in border areas in recent months, while those who have crossed the border report that Afghan nationals have been victims to violence when they did not pay excessive amounts of money demanded from them.²²⁴

Ease of Travel

Although the Turkish consulate in Afghanistan remains open as of August 2022, obtaining a visa is very rare.²²⁵ Visas are expensive and so travel to Turkey using a valid visa is only a viable option for wealthy Afghan nationals.²²⁶

For irregular migration, two interviewees estimated the journey overland from Afghanistan to Turkey to cost up to USD 1 000 (EUR 988) based on recent findings.²²⁷

One interviewee noted that, while documentation is not required for cross-border movement into Turkey, Afghans may require documentation when entering Turkish cities.²²⁸ Smugglers supply Afghans with

²¹⁴ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid; Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

²¹⁸ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²¹⁹ Ibid..

²²⁰ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²²³ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid; Interview 3, 22 August 2022; European Commission, *Exchange rate (InforEuro)*, n.d., accessed 26 August 2022.

²²⁸ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.



fraudulent documentation to allow them to move within Turkey.²²⁹ Those found to be in possession of fraudulent documents will be deported by Turkish authorities.²³⁰

Returns

Following a reduction in forced returns after the Taliban takeover in August 2021, the Turkish government has increased weekly deportations in 2022.²³¹ According to media reports, Turkey deported over 59 000 irregular migrants over the first seven months of 2022, representing a 136 % increase compared to the same period of 2021.²³² This includes 35 728 deportations to Afghanistan on 144 private flights.²³³ According to one interviewee, increased deportations of Afghan nationals have contributed to a culture of fear of the Turkish authorities among Afghans.²³⁴

Local Response and Human Rights

As noted by one interviewee, in order to remain in Turkey without holding official registration status Afghan nationals rely on community connections.²³⁵ Obtaining legal status or international protection in Turkey is difficult.²³⁶ Data from Turkey's Ministry of Interior indicate that, as of 18 August 2022, there were 54 129 Afghan nationals with residence permits in Turkey as well as 43 116 on short-term residence permits.²³⁷ In 2021, 21 926 Afghan nationals applied for international protection in Turkey.²³⁸ The proportion of applications that were successful is not known.

Afghan nationals who use smuggling services to enter Turkey are at risk of pushbacks, exploitation, harassment, and violence as well as the dangers faced by traversing difficult terrain in often harsh conditions.²³⁹ Smugglers are understood to often use threats and physical violence against migrants, and one interviewee noted hearing reports of smugglers abandoning migrants in remote areas.²⁴⁰

One interviewee noted that they have witnessed an increase in allegations against the Turkish army and police of violence against migrants at Turkey's borders.²⁴¹ Media outlets report growing resentment against refugees and irregular migrants in Turkey as the country faces an economic and financial crisis.²⁴² As the 2023 elections approach, a number of Turkish politicians are running on anti-refugee messages, including the right-wing opposition Victory Party, which has gained increased popularity under the slogan 'Victory will come to power, all refugees and illegals will go'.²⁴³ In an April 2022 survey of 1 500 Turkish citizens conducted by ArtiBir Research, 78 % of respondents stated that they wanted asylum seekers to return to their country of origin, while 15 % stated that refugees were currently the most important

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²³² Daily Sabah, *Turkey has deported over 59,000 irregular migrants in 2022 so far*, 31 July 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Interview 3, 22 August 2022.

²³⁵ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²³⁶ Ibid; The New Humanitarian, *One year on, few options for Afghans escaping hunger and Taliban persecution*, 10 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²³⁷ Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, *Residence Permits*, 18 August 2022, 26 August 2022.

²³⁸ Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management, *International Protection*, 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²³⁹ Interview 1, 11 August 2022.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² VOA, *Turkey Deports Thousands to Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan*, 16 June 2022, accessed 26 August 2022; Al Jazeera, *As Turkey's economic crisis grows, politicians spar over refugees*, 14 May 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁴³ Al Jazeera, *As Turkey's economic crisis grows, politicians spar over refugees*, 14 May 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.



problem in Turkey.²⁴⁴ Some 55 % of respondents stated that having a refugee as a neighbour would be a problem for them.²⁴⁵ The situation for refugees in Turkey remains precarious as the international media reports a rise of nationalism amid violence and protests against refugees, predominantly Syrian refugees, in the past year.²⁴⁶ A number of groups have expressed concern that refugees will be used as a scapegoat for domestic problems within Turkey during the 2023 election,²⁴⁷ and the attitude towards Afghan and other third country nationals in Turkey is unlikely to improve in the run-up to the elections.

Central Asia: Afghan Mobility Update

The current number of Afghan nationals in Central Asian countries is difficult to determine. Since January 2021, at least 13 020 Afghan are known to have arrived in Uzbekistan, while 5 710 are recorded as having arrived in Tajikistan.²⁴⁸ The true number of arrivals is likely much higher: as of August 2022, these figures are at least six months old, and updated figures are not available.²⁴⁹

Indian newspaper The Hindu has reported that as of August 2022 the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan all have diplomatic missions in operation in Kabul.²⁵⁰

There were 8 028 Afghan refugees registered in Tajikistan as of 31 December 2021.²⁵¹ As of mid-2021, there were 14 registered Afghan refugees in Uzbekistan and 13 in Turkmenistan.²⁵² In line with low numbers of refugees, voluntary returns of Afghans from Central Asian countries in 2022 are known to be very low.²⁵³

Uzbekistan

There is one official border crossing between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, the Hairatan/Termез crossing.²⁵⁴ Disputes over islands on the Afghanistan-Uzbekistan border led to Uzbek border guards opening fire on 21 August, reportedly killing three civilians and wounding and capturing several others.²⁵⁵ This has reportedly led to an increase of both Taliban and Uzbek forces in the area.²⁵⁶

Uzbekistan's border area with Afghanistan remains a major hub for UN emergency operations supplying aid to Afghanistan.²⁵⁷ Up to 1 000 tonnes of aid are known to have been sent to Afghanistan through the Termez Regional Humanitarian Logistics Hub near the Uzbek-Afghan border since it was set up in October 2021.²⁵⁸

²⁴⁴ Medyafaresi, *ArtıBir Anket Sonuçlarını Açıkladı: Yüzde 14 Kararsız* [ArtıBir Announces Survey Results: 14 Percent Undecided], 10 May 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ The Washington Post, *With nationalism rising, Turkey turns against refugees it once welcomed*, 21 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁴⁷ Alarabiya News, *Turkey aims for one million refugees to return to Syria*, 3 May 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

²⁴⁸ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Refugee Situations: Afghanistan*, 9 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. Uzbekistan data was published 30 November 2021. Tajikistan data was published 28 February 2022.

²⁵⁰ The Hindu, *One year of Taliban: How far has Afghanistan fallen behind*, 19 August 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

²⁵¹ UNHCR Operational Data Portal, *Refugee Situations: Afghanistan*, 9 August 2022, accessed 23 August 2022

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ UNCHR, *Afghanistan: Voluntary Repatriation Response Snapshot*, August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022, p. 4.

²⁵⁵ Artsakh News, *Taliban Reportedly Seize Border Island in Uzbekistan*, 22 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ United Nations Afghanistan, *Uzbekistan steps up to support neighbor Afghanistan at critical humanitarian juncture*, 1 June 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

Tajikistan

There are two main official passenger border crossings between Afghanistan and Tajikistan; the Sherkhan-Bandar/ Panj-e-Payon crossing, in southwest Tajikistan, and the Ishkashim border crossing, in southeast Tajikistan.²⁵⁹ Prior to August 2021, Afghan nationals wanting to apply for protection in Tajikistan would typically obtain a visa and enter the country by plane.²⁶⁰ A lack of available air routes following the closure of Kabul airport for a significant time period resulted in a change in the route taken, with Afghans now predominantly travelling to Tajikistan overland.²⁶¹

UNHCR reported in August 2022 that around 400 refugees per day were attending the Verification Centres in Vahdat and Dushanbe.²⁶²

According to one interviewee who has conducted research in the region, just over half (54 %) of Afghans in Tajikistan are of Tajik ethnicity, while approximately a quarter are Hazara.²⁶³ The proportion of children among Afghan nationals in Tajikistan is understood to be lower than among Afghan populations in Iran and Pakistan; 31 % of Afghan nationals in Tajikistan are adult women, 29 % are adult men and 40 % are children.²⁶⁴

In August 2022, UNHCR voiced concerns over the detention and deportation of Afghan refugees from Tajikistan.²⁶⁵ On 23 August, five Afghans, including three children and their mother, were returned to Afghanistan across the Panj-e-Payon crossing despite intervention from UNHCR to stop the deportations.²⁶⁶ According to research conducted by one interviewee, 49 Afghans have been returned from Tajikistan between November 2021 and August 2022.²⁶⁷

Turkmenistan

There are two official crossing points between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, at Turgundi, in southwest Turkmenistan, and Aqinah, in southeast Turkmenistan.²⁶⁸ As of 15 March 2022, Turkmenistan is only open to Afghan nationals if they enter with a valid passport and visa.²⁶⁹ No significant developments for Turkmenistan were found during this reporting period.

Outlook and Implications

As noted by UNAMA, the political, security and socio-economic future of Afghanistan remains uncertain.²⁷⁰ With an ongoing humanitarian crisis in the country and persistent security, human rights and economic push factors influencing migration decision-making, EU+ countries will likely continue to experience high levels of Afghan arrivals over the coming months.

Early indications in the number of detections and interceptions by Frontex and the Turkish Coast Guard suggest that a growing number of Afghan nationals are attempting to reach the EU+, despite falling recognition rates for Afghan asylum applicants. Future arrival rates of Afghans will depend heavily on the policies and actions of the transit countries crossed by Afghan nationals notably Pakistan, Iran and

²⁵⁹ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022, p. 4.

²⁶⁰ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022, p. 3.

²⁶³ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

²⁶⁴ Ibid; UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁶⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR raises concerns over Afghan refugee forced return from Tajikistan*, 25 August 2022, accessed 12 September 2022.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Interview 2, 18 August 2022.

²⁶⁸ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 1 August 2022*, 17 August 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation Update – 15 March 2022*, 22 March 2022, accessed 26 August 2022.

²⁷⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *UNAMA Human rights in Afghanistan report – July 2022*, July 2022, accessed 23 August 2022, p. 41.



Turkey. The impact that recent increases in deportations and returns will have on mobility flows of Afghan nationals is yet to be determined.

An increase in voluntary movements back to Afghanistan may be influenced by a variety of factors, and long-term trends in this area are difficult to predict. The high levels of forced returns from neighbouring countries may act as a push factor influencing irregular Afghan nationals residing there to choose to return to Afghanistan. Further to this, pull factors within Afghanistan, including the Taliban's focus on returning displaced population as well as a potential level of acceptance of the Taliban regime may also influence the decision-making of returnees. It should be noted that potential acceptance should not necessarily be interpreted as approval of the Taliban regime, but instead may represent an attempt to return to a form of normality. Opposition to Taliban rule in Afghanistan remains significant, including from women and groups such as the NRF.²⁷¹

There are no signs that the human rights situation in Afghanistan will improve in the short- or medium-term. Women will continue to experience significant restrictions on their everyday lives, and the discrimination and violence faced by minority groups, notably ethnic Hazaras, will likely continue.

While armed anti-Taliban groups such as the NRF are not currently in a position to pose a significant threat to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan, NRF leader Ahmad Massoud has persevered in expressing the group's condemnation of the Taliban and their willingness to fight.²⁷² Clashes between the two sides continue, but some analysts suggest that anti-Taliban forces will eventually fail unless they receive foreign support.²⁷³

After the recent July 2022 drone strike that killed al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, the impact on the Taliban's relationship with the outside world, as well as with the armed groups within its territory and the surrounding area, is yet to be determined. The discovery that Zawahiri lived in Kabul highlights the relationship that the Taliban have with such groups and casts doubt on their commitment to uphold the responsibilities they agreed to under the 2020 US-Afghan deal.

According to the data from the IPC, food security is predicted to marginally improve in Afghanistan in the second half of 2022, with a reduction of acute food insecurity from 19.7 million people at crisis level or above for the period March to May, to 18.9 million for the period June to November 2022.²⁷⁴ This 2 % decrease, coinciding with expected increases in food availability and livelihood opportunities in semi-urban and rural areas due to the harvest, will leave an estimated 45 % of the population facing acute food insecurity by November 2022.²⁷⁵ The IPC predicts that, due to lack of funding, Humanitarian Food Assistance in Afghanistan will decrease in the coming months, from 38 % of the population receiving an average of two third food ration for the period March to May 2022 to just 8 % in June to November.²⁷⁶ This reduction in humanitarian assistance is predicted to contribute to deteriorating conditions that outweigh the marginal decreases in acute food insecurity and result in a higher number of people facing increases in acute food security in urban areas.²⁷⁷

So far, the Taliban have struggled to form a fully functioning government that can provide Afghan citizens with decent economic opportunities and services such as healthcare.²⁷⁸ Given that the leadership within the Taliban government consists primarily of religious hardliners with little experience in economic policy

²⁷¹ Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, *Why Do People in Afghanistan Object to Taliban Rule?*, 22 September 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

²⁷² VOA, *Do the Taliban Face Potent Armed Resistance in Afghanistan?*, 14 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022; Atlantic Council, *Afghan resistance leader Ahmad Massoud: There is 'no other option' but to fight on against the Taliban*, 12 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁷³ VOA, *Do the Taliban Face Potent Armed Resistance in Afghanistan?*, 14 August 2022, accessed 25 August 2022.

²⁷⁴ IPC, *Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March – May 2022 and Projection for June – November 2022*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 9.

²⁷⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, *The Taliban in Afghanistan*, 17 August 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.



or national governance,²⁷⁹ it is unlikely that the functioning of the state will see significant improvements without international help.

Although Afghan citizens have felt significant economic stressors since the Taliban takeover, the regime has managed so far to avoid the economic collapse that many experts predicted would happen. While domestic revenue has so far been largely maintained, there is predicted to be a shortfall of between USD 500 million and USD 900 million for the 2022/23 financial year and it is unclear how the Taliban will make up for this.²⁸⁰

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predict that Afghanistan's economy may contract by up to 30 % this year due to reductions in imports, currency depreciation and increasing inflation.²⁸¹ The IPC predict that the availability and the cost of food, fuel and fertilizers will continue to be impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and potential export bans on Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan – all major trading partners of Afghanistan – may further impact price and availability of commodities.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, *One Year of Taliban Rule in Afghanistan: A Predictable Disaster*, 26 August 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

²⁸⁰ The Economist, *The Taliban government has proved surprisingly good at raising money*, 8 June 2022, accessed 23 September 2022.

²⁸¹ IPC, *Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for March – May 2022 and Projection for June – November 2022*, May 2022, accessed 24 August 2022, p. 5.

²⁸² Ibid, p. 5.

