

# AFGHANISTAN

## Forced returnees: Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kabul

On 3 January 2018, Pakistan granted Afghan refugees in Pakistan a residence extension until the end of January. This is the shortest extension ever given to Afghan refugees in Pakistan and raises concerns of imminent large-scale forced returns. Some 1.39 million Afghan refugees are registered in Pakistan, as well as an estimated one million unregistered Afghans. If returns are enforced, it is likely to have a major impact on shelter, protection, and food needs. However, previous deadlines have been threatened but not enforced, reducing the probability of the risk.

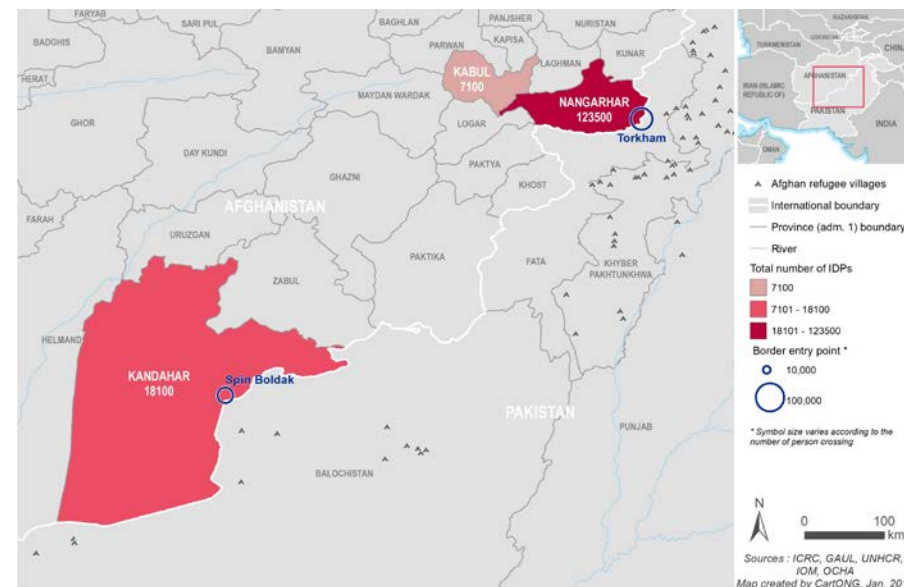
### PROBABILITY



### NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



### IMPACT



### Anticipated scope and scale

An increase in the number of forced returnees from Pakistan will likely result in **significant humanitarian impact** in Nangarhar, Kandahar and Kabul provinces, not only for returnees but also for existing IDPs and host communities, straining existing response capacities.

Forced returnees are very likely to face **secondary displacement** and therefore likely to face similar needs to current IDPs: shelter/NFIs, protection and food security.

**Winter** and **ongoing insecurity** are aggravating factors that are likely to worsen humanitarian needs and limit access.

### Key priorities



**shelter/NFIs**  
for new returnee arrivals



**secondary displacement**  
of forced returnees



**protection**  
concerns exacerbated

### Humanitarian constraints



Ongoing hostilities severely limit access to the likely affected areas. Ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers remains a challenge in areas near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Winter conditions constrain access until at least March.

#### Limitations

Precise figures on small border crossings is limited without further assessments. Accurate numbers on unregistered Afghan refugees in Pakistan are difficult to estimate. Lack of data on location of Afghans in Pakistan.

## Drivers of the crisis

Pakistan's stance towards Afghan refugees has hardened in recent months. The government of Pakistan granted on 3 January an extension until the end of January to Afghanistan refugees residing in Pakistan. Their permission to stay was due to expire on December 31, 2017 after the Pakistani government previously issued an eleven-month extension in early-February 2017 (Al Jazeera 07/02/2017). This latest extension is the shortest the government has ever given to Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, and raises concerns of imminent large-scale forced return (Tribune 09/01/2018). Local media reports suggest political stakeholders are discussing a possible extension to the deadline for the repatriation to June 2018, but no decision has been announced (Tribune 09/01/2018).

1.39 million Afghans are registered in Pakistan (OCHA 31/10/2017). Estimates of the number of unregistered Afghan refugees vary, but may be around one million (IOM 03/04/2017). The government of Pakistan started a new registration campaign of undocumented Afghans on 16 August, and some sources suggest that 700,000 undocumented Afghans have been registered in six months (DAWN 17/1/2018). Registered refugees receive Proof of Registration (PoR) cards allowing them to temporarily reside in Pakistan. However, the 3 January decision will invalidate the permission to reside. (PT 08/01/2018, DAWN 16/08/2017, APRRN 10/02/2017, UNHCR 21/07/2017).

Previous agreements have allowed Afghan refugees to stay in Pakistan for up to 12 months at a time. Pakistani security officials justified cutting the time limit this year by claiming Afghan refugees pose a threat to the national security (DAWN 17/1/2018, Gandhara 13/01/2018, Tribune 09/01/2018). Security concerns about Taliban activities in border areas, including among the displaced population, have been elevated since an attack on a school in Peshawar in December 2014 which left more than 100 children dead. (VOA 09/03/2017). After the attack Pakistani authorities adopted a National Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism, which included a new policy to register and repatriate Afghans from Pakistan (HRW 13/02/2017).

A two-phased plan for full repatriation of Afghan refugees was prepared by the Pakistani government and scheduled to begin in 2016 and conclude by 2018. In the second half of 2016, more than 370,000 registered Afghan refugees and 230,000 undocumented Afghans returned home from Pakistan, compared to 58,000 registered Afghan returns in 2015 ((HRW 13/02/2017, UNHCR 03/02/2017). However, less than 59,000 registered and 98,000 undocumented Afghan refugees returned to Afghanistan between January and December 2017 (IOM 30/12/2017, UNHCR 13/01/2017).

Increasing marginalisation also spurs Afghan refugees to return (Reuters 19/12/2017). Incidents reported include: widespread police extortion, arbitrary detention, deportation

threats from Pakistani government officials, police raids on refugee shelters and apartments, exclusion of Afghan children from state schools and closure of Afghan refugee schools, and unlawful use of force (HRW 13/02/2017). This blurs the lines between voluntary repatriation, spontaneous returns, and forced returns (Reuters 19/12/2017, VOA 09/03/2017).

## Anticipated crisis impact

**Scale:** 98,591 people have returned from Pakistan since January 2017, of which 94,442 were spontaneous returns and 4,149 forced returns. Spontaneous returns are likely to continue, and forced returns could increase significantly. With 1.39 million registered and around one million unregistered refugees estimated in Afghanistan, the number of forced returns in 2018 is likely to range from tens to hundreds of thousands.

In addition, UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme is likely to resume in Spring. In 2017 UNHCR assisted more than 58,500 refugees from neighbouring countries through the voluntary repatriation program, which applies only for those who are registered refugees. The programme was suspended in December until March for winter. (UNHCR 12/12/2017)

**Timing:** Because of the imminent deadline, there is a risk some Afghan refugees in Pakistan will leave spontaneously sooner - but unassisted due to the winter break of UNHCR repatriation program, which will continue in April (UNHCR 01/12/2017). However, spontaneous returns will be constrained by the winter season, running from mid-October to March. Both Eastern and South Western regions are affected by road blockages due to floods, mud or snow. (LOG CLUSTER 10/01/2018)

Pakistan officials have mentioned a potential three-staged repatriation plan including preparation of repatriation lists, identification of refugee hosting areas and practical measures to implement returns (DAWN 17/1/2018). It has also been suggested to confine Afghan refugees to camps inside Pakistan, as was done by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) government in 2016 when up to 500,000 refugees returned between July and December (Tribune 09/01/2018). In both cases, the movement would likely take place in phases, but would nonetheless have a major impact on needs and response capacity due to its scale.

**Location:** In Pakistan, most Afghan refugee villages are concentrated around the areas of Peshawar and Kohat, and Quetta-Lorelai. (UNHCR 30/11/2017: OCHA 31/10/2017; IOM 03/04/2017) As both areas are near main border crossings, new forced returns in 2018 will most likely follow the same routes recorded in 2017, through the main re-entry points along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border: Torkham (Nangarhar province) and Spin

Boldak (Kandahar province). (Al Jazeera 05/05/2017) Between January 2017 and 6 January 2018 a total of 2,655 deportees have crossed the border in Torkham and 1,494 deportees in Spin Boldak. (IOM 06/01/2018)

A UNHCR assessment on repatriated Afghans shows Nangarhar and Kabul as the most intended destinations of return in 2017, so it is likely many returnees will move towards these locations in 2018. (UNHCR 12/12/2017)

There are existing IDP caseloads in the areas of return and resources are limited, meaning new returnee arrivals will further strain capacity. Nangarhar hosted 123,500 displaced people in 2017, half of whom were displaced in the last three months. Kandahar and Kabul also host 18,100 and 7,100 displaced people respectively. (OCHA 10/01/2018)

The number is possibly higher in Kabul, since in the first week of January 2018 more than 1,000 were displaced in this province from Nangarhar. (OCHA 08/01/2018) Areas of return are also insecure, which will likely exacerbate vulnerabilities and limit access. As of January 2018, Nangarhar is still reported as particularly insecure. (MENAFN 01/01/2018) Security in Kabul province and city remains concerning, due to regular suicide bomb attacks against civilians. Insecurity also causes secondary internal displacement, for example from Nangarhar to Kabul. (OCHA 08/01/2018; OCHA 10/01/2018)

Returnees also risk secondary displacement upon return, particularly if unable to reach their places of origin or to find safe housing or shelter, to access documentation, healthcare and other services. (IDMC 01/12/2017)

**Shelter and NFIs:** In Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces, IDPs are settled in informal settlements. (NRC 27/11/2017) Displaced and returnees in Kabul and Nangarhar are reported to live in very poor shelter conditions: shelter, squats in abandoned and ruined properties, tents or holes covered by tarpaulin. (OCHA 02/12/2017) Returnee-IDPs report the lack of decent land, housing and shelter as the major challenge. (IDMC 01/12/2017) An increase in the number of returnees is likely exacerbate shelter and NFI needs, particularly until the end of winter in March.

**Protection:** The displaced are more vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and denial of access to assistance, plus financial insecurity. In Nangarhar, Kandahar and Kabul, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) are present. (IMMAP 10/01/2018) Armed clashes in October and November 2017 exacerbated protection concerns in Nangarhar. Returnees will likely face heightened vulnerability because of their financial insecurity, lack of documentation, and re-integration challenges, including tensions between IDP and returnee communities (OCHA 02/12/2017; IDMC 01/12/2017)

**Food:** Food insecurity in Afghanistan is driven by conflict, population movement and climate factors. (OCHA 02/12/2017) Currently Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces face

Stressed (IPC 2) and Crisis (IPC 3) food security outcomes. The situation in Nangarhar is not likely to improve, parts of Kandahar are predicted to improve to a Minimal (IPC 1) food insecurity condition between February and May 2018. Kabul province is reported to be in Stressed (IPC 2) food security condition. (NRC 27/11/2017; FEWS NET 31/12/2017) IDPs tend to lack long-term food stocks. An increase in the number of displaced and returnees, especially in conflict affected areas, is likely to worsen the general food security outcomes in all three provinces. Displacement has disrupted livelihoods of the returnees, which left them in significant debt. In addition IDPs and returnees in Afghanistan have reported lack of land as a concern as they are unable to pursue agricultural activities (IDMC 01/12/2017)

**Health:** Nangarhar, Kandahar and Kabul provinces face severe healthcare needs. (OCHA 01/12/2017) A number of health facilities countrywide have been forced to close due to insecurity and attacks have affected access to health services for around 3 million people. Insecurity in Nangarhar in particular is likely to affect health access, while the growing number of displaced and returnees will likely strain existing services, including mental health services, which are limited. (WHO 19/08/2017)

Outbreaks raise further risks in the affected areas. In December 2017, a case of polio was recorded in Kandahar province and earlier in the year measles outbreaks were reported in Nangarhar. (Global Polio Eradication Initiative 05/01/2018; MOPH 31/07/2017)

**WASH:** More than 25% of health facilities lack of access to water, and 50% have insufficient sanitation facilities, including soap and places for handwashing for medical staff. (OCHA 02/12/2017) Access to water and sanitation are limited for IDPs and returnees. (IDMC 01/12/2017) Increased IDP and returnee caseloads are likely to cause further deterioration in WASH conditions. (OCHA 25/10/2016)

## Vulnerable groups affected

**Children:** The 57% of IDPs in Nangarhar and Kandahar, and 48% in Kabul, are under 18. (OCHA 10/01/2018) Displaced minors are more likely to be exposed to child labour, early and forced marriage, and other forms of exploitation. Displaced children risk lacking access to education: tuition can be unaffordable and insecurity limits access to schools, especially in Nangarhar. (OCHA 02/12/2017)

**Women:** Displaced women may be exposed to sexual and gender based violence, difficulties in accessing documentation, and lack livelihoods. Forced marriages, poverty, illiteracy and violence are concerns for displaced women in the eastern provinces. (UNAMA 09/01/2018; OCHA 02/12/2017)

## Humanitarian constraints

Security for humanitarian workers, continuously targeted by violence, is low. (AID WORKER SECURITY 10/01/2018) Violence is particularly high in Nangarhar province, which will likely continue to constrain response. Winter is likely to hamper humanitarian access until winter ends in March, as roads are exposed to floods, mud and snow. (LOG CLUSTER 10/01/2018)

## Potential aggravating factors

### Elections in Pakistan 2018

The 2018 national legislative elections are likely to impact Afghans in Pakistan as parties seek to scapegoat them. Domestic politics in Pakistan have been on unstable ground since July 2017 when Nawaz Sharif was forced to step down as Prime Minister over corruption charges (FT 10/01/2018) . His Pakistan Muslim League continues to rule, but the party is internally divided and has tensions with the powerful Pakistani military (FT 03/10/2017). If political developments further strengthen the military's position, it could impact the situation of the Afghan refugees, as the security officials have been strongly pushing for Afghan refugee returns (Diplomat 03/05/2017, NPR 10/10/2017).

### Winter conditions

The winter season runs from mid-October to March. Freezing temperatures will worsen living conditions for IDPs and returnees and will likely interfere with movements, increasing shelter and NFI needs in particular, as well as humanitarian access. (LOG CLUSTER 10/01/2018; OCHA 02/12/2017)

### Tensions with IDPs and host-communities

Tensions exist between IDPs and host-communities in areas likely to receive returnees. Although IDPs and returnees are likely to face the similar vulnerabilities, there is a perception returnees receive better assistance, which can cause tensions. (IDMC 01/12/2017)

### The India–Pakistan–Afghanistan triangle

Pakistan has been concerned by strengthening India–Afghanistan relations (RadioFreeEurope 24/10/2017). Simultaneously, historically tense India–Pakistan relations have deteriorated in recent years (DAWN 15/09/2017, Al Jazeera 16/07/2017). Afghanistan–Pakistan relations have been also deteriorating (Al Jazeera 15/01/2018, RadioFreeEurope 24/10/2017, Tribune 25/06/2017). Pakistani authorities started to build a fence along the

Afghanistan border in June 2017 to regulate the movement of people, but also to stop the claimed infiltration of terrorists from the Afghanistan side (Tribune 20/06/2017).

In addition, the US recently suspended an estimated 2 billion dollars in security aid to Pakistan after accusing it of continuing to provide sanctuary to the Taliban. Afghan leaders have been pleading with the US to tackle alleged Taliban sanctuaries on the Pakistan side of the border for many years (BBC 14/01/2018, Reuters 03/01/2018, FT 10/01/2018). Some analysts suggest Pakistani officials could enforce the repatriation of Afghan refugees in retaliation against the US decision and to complicate the situation in Afghanistan (GlobalResearch 08/01/2018).

## Key characteristics of host population and area

**Demographic profile** - Afghanistan has a total population of 34.6 million people (UNICEF 10/12/2017).

**Nutrition** - Countrywide statistics: stunting 41%; severe wasting 4% (UNICEF 10/12/2017). Nangarhar: SAM rates between 4.01-12% reported; Kandahar: SAM rates between 3.01-4% reported; Kabul SAM rates between 1.2-2% reported (Nutrition Cluster 10/2017).

**Health** - Countrywide statistics: under-5 mortality rate 70 deaths/ 1,000 births; neonatal mortality rate 40 deaths/ 1,000 births.(UNICEF 10/12/2017)..

**WASH** - Sanitation countrywide statistics: 43% population using unimproved sanitation facilities; 13% population practising open defecation; 12% population using shared sanitation facilities. Water countrywide statistics: 12% population using piped drinking water supply; 43% population using other improved drinking water sources; 36% population using unimproved drinking water source (UNICEF 07/12/2017).

**Literacy** - 15-24 years old: 47%. 15-24 male: 62%, 15-24 female: 32%. (UNICEF 07/12/2017; UNICEF 10/12/2017).

**Communications and infrastructure:** GSM signal covers 94% of the population in Kabul, 85% in Nangarhar and 73% in Kandahar. (IMMAP 10/01/2018)

Key indicators	Nangarhar	Kandahar	Kabul
Total population	1,820,000	1,630,000	4,760,000
Population in rural areas	219,000	279,000	233,000
State capital	Jalalabad	Kandahar	Kabul
IDPs (since January 2017)	123,500	18,100	7,100
Health facilities	130	100	222
Food Security (current)	IPC 2 Stressed IPC 3 Crisis	IPC 2 Stressed IPC 3 Crisis	IPC 2 Stressed
Food Security (Feb / May))	IPC 2 Stressed IPC 3 Crisis	IPC 1 Minimal IPC 2 Stressed	IPC 2 Stressed

Sources: OCHA 10/01/2018; IMMAP 10/01/2018; FEWS NET 31/12/2017

## Response capacity

### Humanitarian response capacity

UNHCR has suspended the voluntary repatriation programme in Pakistan from December to March 2018 for winter, meaning that any voluntary returns during this period will be spontaneous and unassisted. When assisted, returnees can redeem cash assistance at Encashment Centres located in Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Herat. Unregistered refugees are not covered by this assistance. (OCHA 10/01/2018) As of September 2017, organisations active in the Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) and in the Humanitarian Response Plan numbered 37 in Kandahar province, 64 in Nangarhar and 34 in Kabul. The biggest response is under the Protection cluster. (OCHA 10/01/2018)

### Information gaps and needs

The unstable political situation in Pakistan makes it challenging to anticipate the outcome of political negotiations that will determine whether the Afghan refugees' permission to stay in the country is extended or forced returns to Afghanistan will begin.

Information gaps regarding the precise number of unregistered Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan.

Limited information on specific locations and needs of informal settlements in Afghanistan.

## Lessons learned

Violence and insecurity often prevents returnees from being able to return to their place of origin and they become secondary displaced. This creates major reintegration challenges (IDMC 01/12/2017). Baseline mapping of the social, economic, and security situation for residents in different localities in Afghanistan is therefore important to inform expectations for returning refugees and prepare return and reintegration programming (MPI 11/2017)

Economic hardship was a main driver of Afghan returns in 2016, together with harassment and fear of deportation. UNHCR's monitoring survey has shown that the USD 400 cash grant for voluntary returnees typically lasts two to three months and supports people with their initial needs. However, after that period there is a remaining need for cash assistance and livelihood support to ensure adequate reintegration (UNHCR 03/02/2017).

A large number of returnees have been in protracted displacement. Having grown up outside Afghanistan may result in social and cultural challenges upon return (IDMC 01/12/2017, USIP 13/01/2016).

Host communities require support to receive returnees and accept them as part of the local society without increased tensions (IDMC 01/12/2017, USIP 13/01/2016).

Most returnees have little knowledge of their rights under the complex Afghan legal system. Response focused on rights-awareness can improve reintegration prospects. (IDMC 01/12/2017)

Returnees often resettle in urban areas, putting additional strain on services and local communities. However, many Afghan returnees who face secondary displacement, also try to rebuild their lives in rural areas. Assistance and protection needs, particularly in terms of registration and access to housing, aid and health services, vary greatly between urban and rural environments in Afghanistan (IDMC 01/12/2017).

Both IDPs and returnees struggle to secure safe and dignified housing or shelter, and to access documentation, education and other services, and both groups lack the information they need to make well-informed choices about their future. This can at times cause tensions between returnees and IDPs, in addition to tensions between displaced populations and local host communities. (IDMC 01/12/2017).

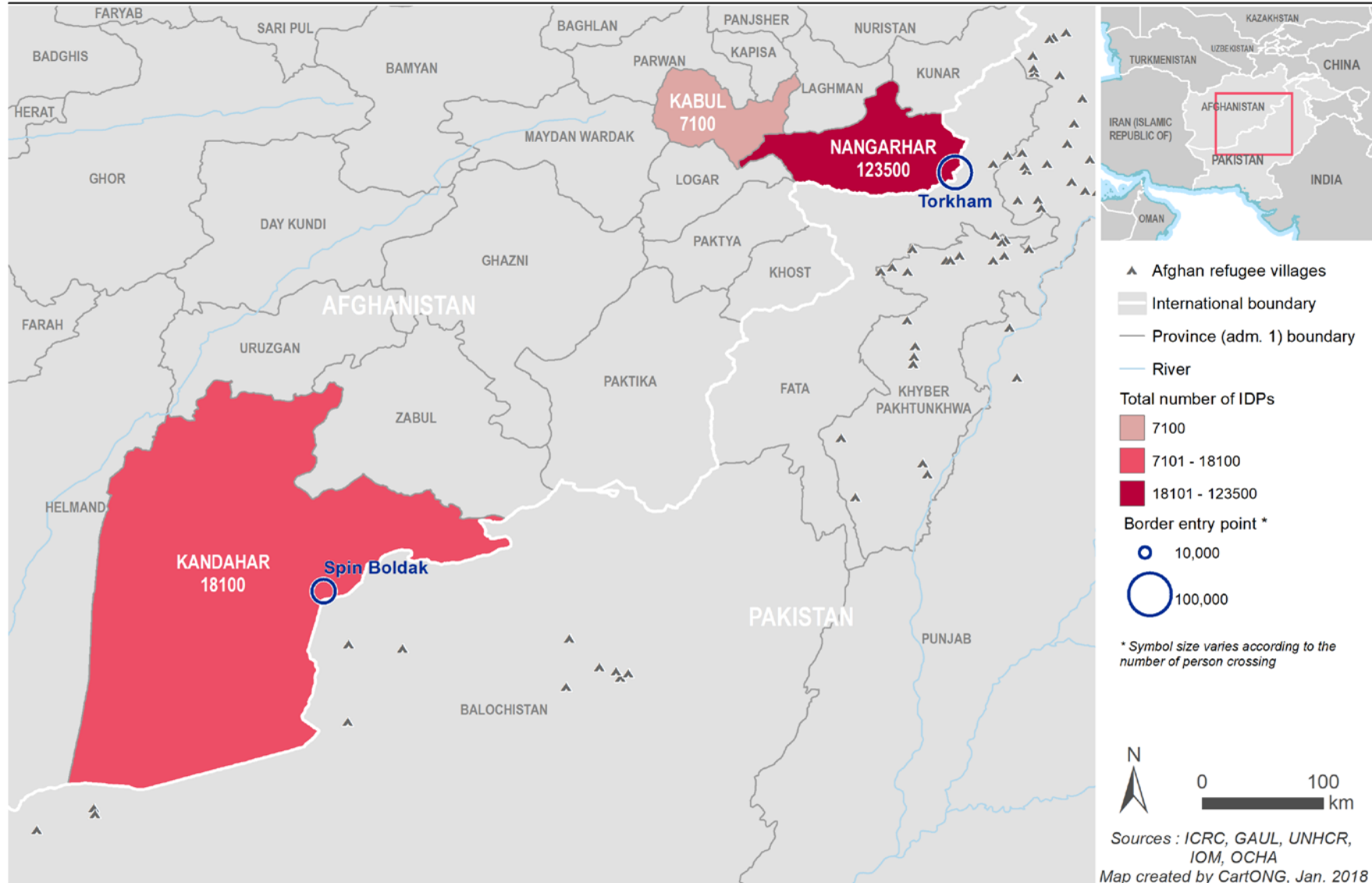
### **Methodology**

ACAPS anticipatory briefing notes provide a brief outline of the likelihood and impact of a particular crisis or spike in crisis. Likelihood describes the certainty that a particular outcome will happen, and is therefore a subjective measure. The objective of estimating likelihood is to indicate how certain we are that the identified risk will occur. Likelihood estimates help prioritise the most significant risks. This can contribute to better decision making with regards to preparedness.

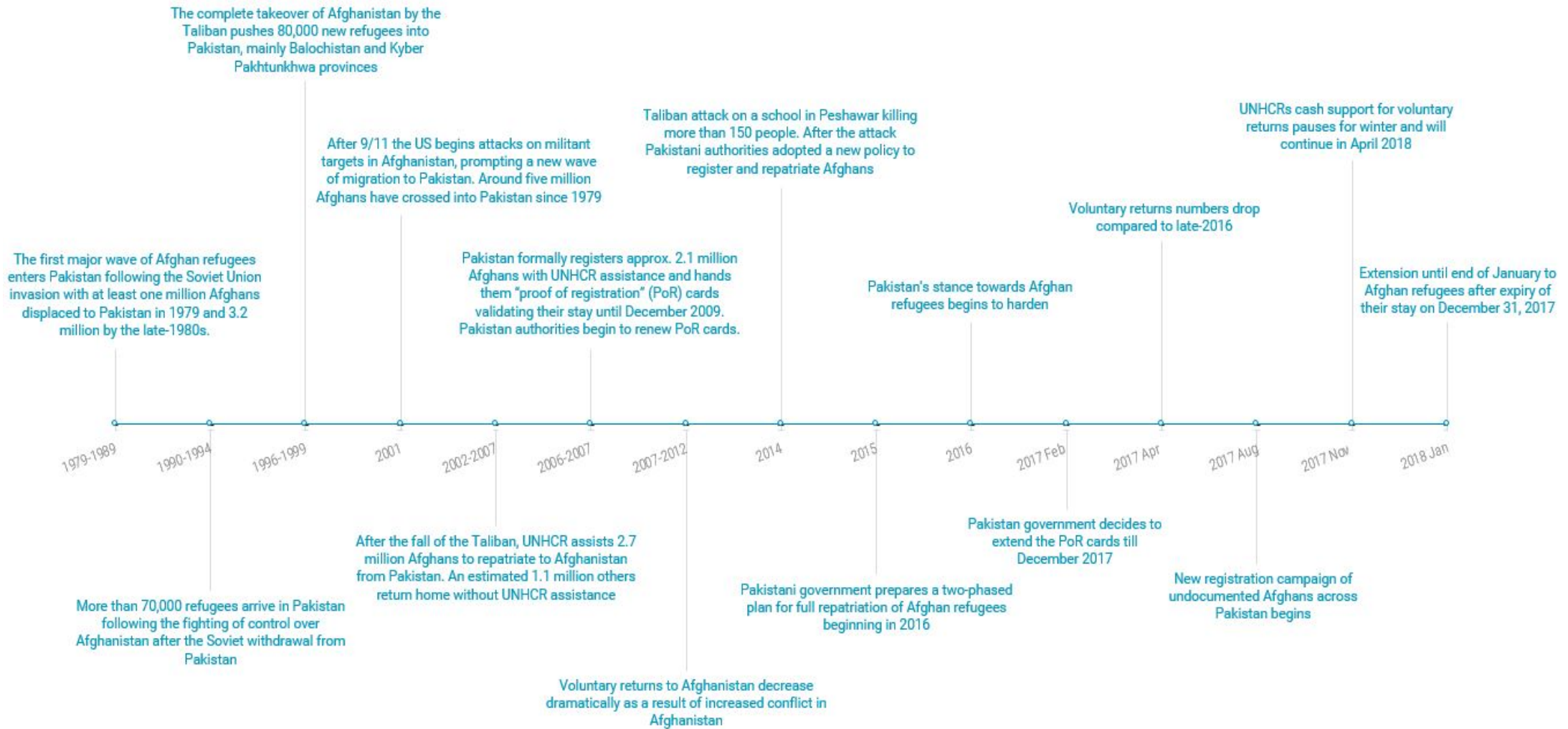
Map

# Afghanistan - Pakistan : Border area

## Cross-border displacement and entry points since January 2017



# Timeline



Sources: Tribune 09/01/2018 ; UNHCR 01/12/2017 ; DAWN 07/11/2017 ; UNHCR 03/02/2017 ; Tribune 05/10/2016 ; VOA 02/11/2015 ; IRIN 27/02/2012