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3.20. Individuals who were born in Iran or Pakistan and/or who lived there for a long period of time

COMMON ANALYSIS

Last update: May 2024

This profile refers to Afghans who were born in or have spent a very long period as a refugee or a migrant in Iran or Pakistan.

COI summary

According to IOM statistics, millions of people have crossed the borders of Afghanistan to and from the neighbouring countries Pakistan and Iran. Precise arrival numbers and the circularity of flows are, however, not known [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.11.1., p. 96].

As of January 2022, there were approximately 3 million Afghans living in Pakistan, around 1.4 million of them are Proof of Registration (PoR) cardholders, approximately 840 000 hold an Afghan Citizen Card (ACC), and an estimated 775 000 are undocumented. While PoR and ACC cardholders are offered limited protection, mainly from refoulement, undocumented Afghans are exposed to arrest, detention and deportation. As a result, many newly arriving Afghans had to rely on informal networks and try to keep a low profile for fear of being stopped by Pakistani authorities [[Pakistan – Situation of Afghan refugees 2022](#), 1.2.2., p. 22].

Since the Taliban takeover and as of 31 January 2023, the Government of Pakistan estimated that about 600 000 Afghans arrived in Pakistan. The so-called 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan' (IFRP) launched on 3 October 2023 by the Pakistan's interim government urged all 'illegal immigrants' to return to their countries of origin by 1 November 2023 to avoid being repatriated by Pakistani authorities. It is estimated that thousands of Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan before the end of the above deadline. The fact that the country was facing one of 'world's largest humanitarian crises' did not allow the *de facto* authorities to support these returnees as promised. Some also reported that the Taliban mistreated them and 'took away cash and mobile phones from their relatives'. The situation of women and girls arriving in Afghanistan was particularly vulnerable [[Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan](#) 2023, 1., p. 7; [Situation of Afghan returnees from Pakistan amid the 2023 'Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan](#), 1., pp. 2-3; 2., p. 6].

According to a source, the Taliban have minimal background information on returning individuals. The source stated that sometimes, upon return, individuals have been given travel money to reach their homes and may be lectured by a mullah on the dangers of leaving. Overall, the source found the Taliban 'lenient' in their handling of returnees. Moreover, upon return of individuals with criminal records in foreign countries, arriving from Pakistan and Iran, the Taliban note down details and then let most of them go. Additionally, more than 800 individuals with sentences to complete had been deported from Iran and were sent to prison. Most of them were however pardoned and released during Eid. The source added that it was not clear on the basis of which criteria they were released or if any of these individuals had been re-arrested. According to another source, the 'huge stigma' that exists around individuals deported from the West does not apply to deportations from countries such as Iran or Pakistan – as this is very common. However, sources have emphasised that it is of great importance for returnees to have a social network in Afghanistan [[Country Focus 2023](#), 4.11.4., p. 99; 4.11.5., pp. 100-101]. Not being accustomed to Afghan norms and expectations and having no support network in Afghanistan may add to the difficulties in finding job or shelter. Afghans who lived outside Afghanistan for a long period of time may also have a strong accent, which would be a further obstacle in finding a job. Moreover, Afghans who grew up in Iran and are perceived as 'Iranised' or 'not Afghan enough' may sometimes receive offensive comments [[Society-based targeting](#), 8.7., pp. 101-103].

Conclusions and guidance

Do the acts qualify as persecution under Article 9 QD?

In general, the treatment faced by individuals under this profile would not amount to persecution.