

1.4.2. Returns from Europe

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After the Taliban takeover, many Western states halted deportations to Afghanistan, and IOM⁵¹¹ and Frontex suspended activities facilitating accompanied returns.⁵¹² As reported by SEM, there have only been isolated cases of repatriations and voluntary returns from European countries and North America.⁵¹³ Initially, this included a few cases of people being forcibly returned from the US (two persons in 2022),⁵¹⁴ Belgium (February 2023),⁵¹⁵ Sweden (via Uzbekistan in 2023), and Switzerland (two persons in October 2024).⁵¹⁶ There have also been cases of voluntary returns from EU states,⁵¹⁷ and many Afghans residing abroad, including in Western countries, have been going on short-term visits to Afghanistan.⁵¹⁸

Some EU states have sought to deport Afghans whose asylum applications have been rejected, with Germany and Austria resuming deportations in 2024⁵¹⁹ and 2025 respectively.⁵²⁰ Germany deported 28 Afghans with criminal records on 30 August 2024.⁵²¹ According to Der Spiegel, these individuals were detained upon their return, but most were released about a week later, after their families assured the de facto authorities that they would not commit future crime. A handful of individuals were kept in house arrest-like conditions, while being interrogated.⁵²² One deported person was reportedly killed, although the perpetrating actor was not specified.⁵²³ Germany conducted a second deportation on 18 July 2025, this time of 81 Afghans with criminal records.⁵²⁴ The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan said that he had no information on the treatment of these individuals upon their return.⁵²⁵ According to the German media outlet Tagesschau, the de facto authorities have used this opportunity to promote a positive image of themselves by publishing videos featuring these individuals being welcomed back to Afghanistan.⁵²⁶ Austria deported one man convicted of crime on 21 October 2025.⁵²⁷

The de facto authorities reportedly see engagement over migration management as a way to build relations in the absence of diplomatic recognition.⁵²⁸ An anonymous source interviewed by ACCORD noted that, unlike under the former government, European countries are no longer in position to push for a system supporting deported Afghans ‘to provide a landing’, such as mental health support, housing, job training, and more. This leaves returnees more vulnerable for re-traumatisation due to displacement.⁵²⁹

Being interviewed on the topic of ‘westernization’, Ruttig told ACCORD that individuals perceived as ‘infected’ by Western values have been met with suspicion, and the Taliban have been targeting such individuals, including urban residents, civil society activists, individuals having a Western education or who had adopted a lifestyle deviating from local customs.⁵³⁰

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CoE Parliamentary Assembly, The humanitarian crisis emerging for Afghanistan and Afghan refugees, 25 September 2023, [url](#), para. 37; IOM, Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration, n.d., [url](#)

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