

# 1.4.2. Returns from Europe

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After the Taliban takeover, many Western states halted deportations to Afghanistan, and IOM 511 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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