



UNHCR Staff in a session on with refugee community in Islamabad Sector H-11. Photo Credit - © UNHCR/Country Office Islamabad

Legal Assistance

36,628

Arrests & detentions

1,344 *

Interventions

1,001 **

Releases

1,347***

Key findings

Nine Advice and Legal Aid Centres (ALAC) are operational in the main refugee-hosting areas of four provinces and provide free legal support to persons of concern (PoCs): four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), one in Sindh and three in Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) through partnership agreements with SHARP and one in Balochistan run by SEHER.

In December 2018, UNHCR and its partners provided legal assistance to a total of **2,534** persons of concern. During the month, UNHCR and its partners intervened at police stations for **61** arrested/detained persons of concern and secured the release of all. In the majority of cases, UNHCR and its partners managed to obtain the release of the arrested PoCs by law enforcement agencies before the official lodging of charges against them which resulted in their release from detention within 24 hours. Additionally, ALAC partners provided court representations to **40** persons of concern charged under the Foreigners Act and other preventive laws subsequently resulting in their release by the orders of the courts.

ALAC teams and the Ministry of SAFRON continue to take proactive steps to mitigate the risk of detention, including enhanced advocacy, pre-emptively intervening at police stations to prevent arrests and enhancing the response capacity of partners. UNHCR has developed and disseminated additional awareness raising materials on legal assistance programs available for PoCs (ALAC posters, brochures & use of social media).

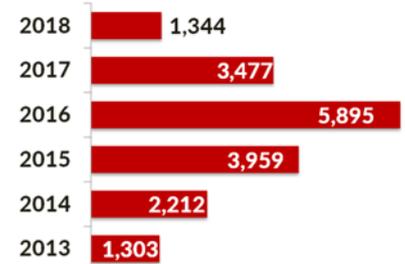
When compared with December 2017 (83 Ind), a slight increase (**20%**) in arrest and detention has been observed in the reporting month (100 Ind). UNHCR will continue to advocate for extension of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards beyond 30 June 2019, as well as timely issuance of the official notification for further dissemination among refugee communities, UNHCR's partners and law enforcement agencies.

* Actual numbers of arrests / detentions / ** Interventions made by ALAC at police stations to secure the release of PoCs.

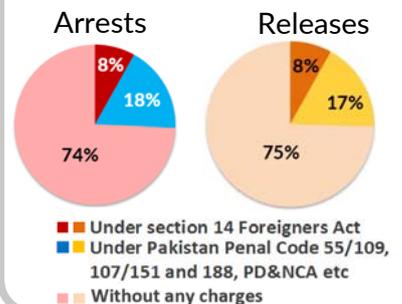
Note: In January 2018, the Frontier Corps (FC) in Quetta undertook security operations that resulted in the apprehension of Afghans including registered Afghan refugees. Among those arrested, 40 PoR cardholders were deported to Afghanistan without due process.

***Three persons were arrested in 2017 but were released in 2018.

Arrests and detentions by year



Types of arrests and releases

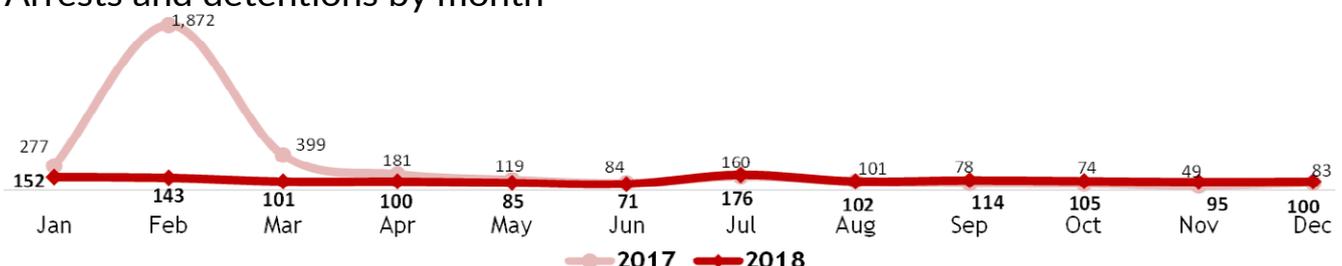


Avg length of detention (days)*

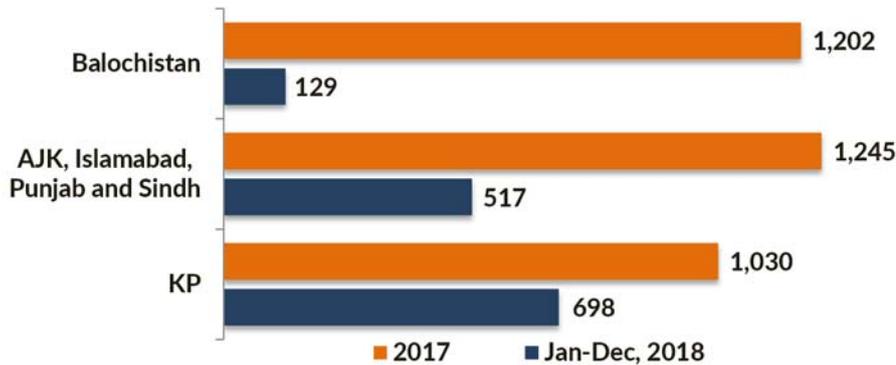


*Weighted proportionally by # of arrests in each province

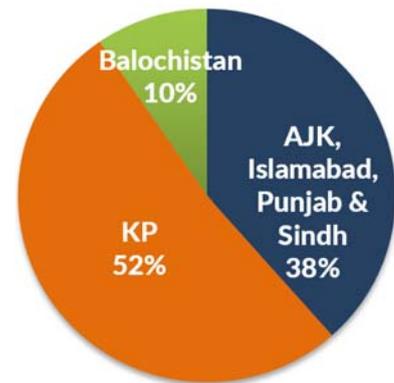
Arrests and detentions by month



Arrests and detentions by location and year



Arrest/detention locations



Access to legal assistance and legal remedies

Advice and Legal Aid Centre (ALAC) activities in 2018 include the following:

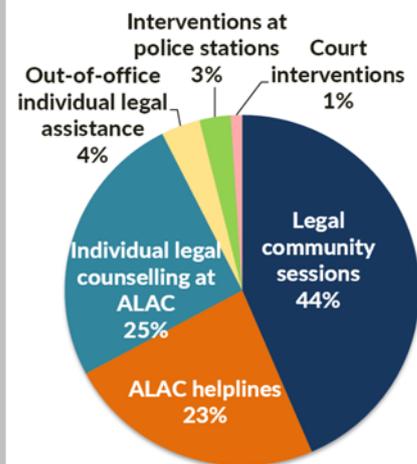
a) provision of legal intervention at police stations upon arrest/detention; b) court representation in the cases of arrest/detention and other issues regarding civil/family/tenancy matters etc.; c) individually facilitated counseling (legal advice) at ALACs and through helplines; d) out-of-court legal assistance; e) legal sessions in the form of legal camps, *shura* meetings and facilitated group discussions; and f) coordination with and training of law enforcement authorities including border officials and the judiciary.

In December, partner's staff provided **individual legal counselling** to 541 persons of concern who visited the Advice and Legal Aid Centres as well as legal advice to a total of 522 persons of concern through **ALAC helplines**. Birth registration, police harassment, information on repatriation, PoR card modification and the registration exercise of undocumented Afghans were the issues of greatest concern observed during the reporting period. **Out-of-court legal assistance** was provided to 69 persons of concern, mostly related to police harassment, PoR card verifications, rental agreements and affidavits.

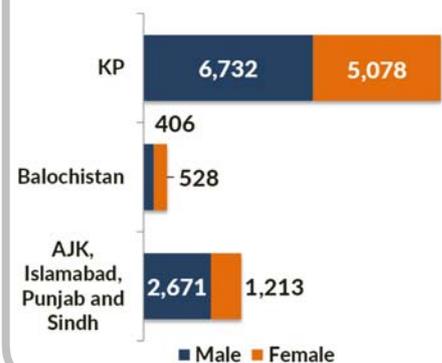
UNHCR and ALAC staff also organized a total of 72 legal camps and *shura* meetings, reaching 1260 participants (41% of whom were women) in the reporting month. 50% of the legal sessions were held in refugee villages and the remaining sessions in urban areas of Pakistan. Through these legal sessions, refugees shared various issues affecting their communities. UNHCR partner staff informed refugees of available free legal aid and UNHCR helpline services.

UNHCR and its legal partner organized five training sessions on refugee rights, UNHCR's mandate and international protection countrywide in which 165 Government officials were trained across operation in which 51 Jail authorities 92 Police personnel and 22 Public prosecutors participated.

ALAC legal assistance activities



Legal group participation



UNHCR continues to deploy border monitors at the two official Pak Afghan border crossings – Torkham (KP) and Chaman (Balochistan) – in order to identify potential protection issues during border movements.

Refugee-police liaison committees have been established in the districts of Mardan, Sawabi, Buner and Malakand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after successful implementation in the districts of Charsadda, Peshawar and Nowshera to enable refugees directly approaching police.

There are 31 ALAC lawyers countrywide who provide the legal aid/assistance described above (18 in KP, 2 in Balochistan, 5 in Punjab/AJK, 3 in Sindh and 3 in Islamabad).

UNHCR is expanding its legal assistance network through the identification of *pro bono* lawyers in addition to the existing ALAC legal aid program. **During 2017, a *pro bono* lawyers' network was formally established during an introductory two-day Workshop on Refugee Law and International Protection** attended by 24 *pro bono* lawyers from across the country.