

Monthly Migration Movements Afghan Displacement Summary December 2016

Introduction

The Mixed Migration Monitoring Initiative (4Mi)¹ in Central Asia and South West Asia (CASWA) region aims at gathering data on displaced Afghans on the move.

This paper is a pilot and the first of a monthly series of trend analyses. This month, the paper focuses on internal movement within Afghanistan. It is based on interviews with 354 people conducted in November 2016 and supplemented with secondary data. Future papers will analyse 4Mi data collected on Afghans migrating toward the East and the West. 4Mi data collection and analysis is being conducted with the purpose to increase knowledge about drivers of movement and protection risks faced by Afghans.

4Mi field monitors conducted the data and the sample size only represents a small section of those on the move in Afghanistan. Any generalizations about the total population of Afghan migrants on the move must be made with an understanding of the sampling methodology of 4Mi. For more information about the 4Mi methodology please visit:

<http://4mi.regionalmms.org/4mi.html>.

Movement in and from Afghanistan

Conflict and insecurity have intensified and spread geographically in recent years. Talibs and militia groups associated with ISIS are broadening activities to north of Afghanistan; Kunduz fell twice to the Taliban. Further, there are serious conflicts between government forces and Talib militia, mainly in Helmand and Farah.

As a result of this conflict, thousands of Afghans have been internally displaced and have fled or migrated abroad. Based on Humanitarian Response data from 1st January to 12th December 2016, more than 580,000 Afghans are displaced due to conflicts². Conflict is one major driver of migration; a second is loss of confidence (57.4% of Afghans think the country is moving in the wrong direction) and hope of finding better opportunities elsewhere³.

According to November 4Mi data, as well as discussions with the monitors, the majority of those migrating from Afghanistan are Pashtun and Hazara adult single men

¹ The 4Mi seeks to address the need for better data about mixed migration flows to understand motivations for movement, the routes and methods used and the protection risks faced on route. Data is collected based on a low cost innovative approach where local individuals placed in strategic hubs collect real-time data about mixed migration issues at their location. The 4Mi was initially created by the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat in the Horn of Africa region in mid-2014.

² <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps>

³ Data from Survey of the Afghan People

between 19 and 60 years old. Approximately 50% are migrating from urban areas. Migrants rarely have higher than secondary level education.

Push factors: 19.8% of interviewees reported that there is no single dominant reason for why they wish to migrate from Afghanistan. Among the contributing factors are personal, family or community circumstances, including safety and peer pressure (27.4%) and economic reasons (21.3%) and the hope to find better job opportunities. Other interviewees reported that environmental (9.6%) and political reasons (9.1%) were central to why they wish to leave.

Risks on route: 4Mi data indicates that migrants face greatest risks in Nangarhar and Nimruz, the border provinces near Pakistan and Iran, which is often the starting point for irregular migration routes. Other cities where significant numbers of incidents were reported are Kunduz, Kabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Herat.

Physical protection risks were unexpectedly high among the November 4Mi sample. Some of the most significant issues reported were deaths (226 cases, primarily in Nangarhar, Nimruz, and Kandahar), assault (221 cases, mainly in Kabul and Kandahar) and physical abuse (445 cases reported, primarily in Helmand, Kabul and Herat).

Unexpectedly, detention was a significant issue, with 107 cases reported. People were detained by both smugglers and authorities, and detention lasted on average 3.5 days. This high rate of detention may be linked to high rates of bribery; 278 cases were reported.

Within the context of 4Mi data collection, it was challenging to gain more context on these issues, but DRC may conduct more in depth analysis on the issues in 2017.

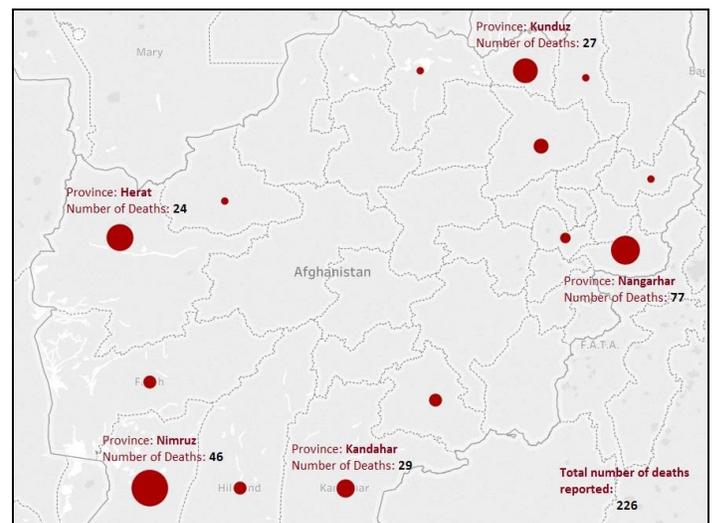


Figure 1: Major provinces in which deaths are witnessed

Networks: According to the November data, irregular migration is facilitated either by friends or family members (38.7%) or by smugglers/brokers (36.2%).

The majority of smugglers were perceived as professional, that is, a part of an organized network (74.6%). 46.6% of the respondents reported that they themselves got in contact with the smugglers/brokers. The main value added by smugglers is that they ‘guarantee’ safe transit across a border (76%). Smugglers are also one of the main sources of information before departure and on routes and destination countries. However this information is not always reliable.

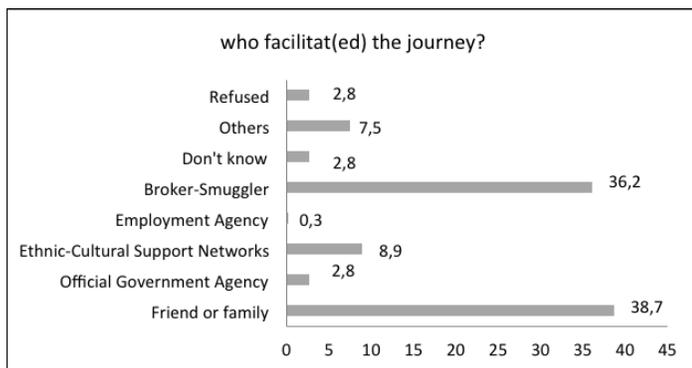


Figure 2: Who facilitate(ed) the journey?

Movements to neighboring countries

Iran: There are approximately 950,000 registered Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders) in Iran and 450,000 Afghans residing in Iran with an Afghan passport. In addition, there are approximately 1-1,5 million people who live as undocumented migrants⁴. However, according to IOM statistics, there are also a large number of people that have returned to Afghanistan. Since the beginning of 2016, a total of 427,510 undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran⁵. UNHCR provided voluntary return assistance to 830 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in the first 6 months of 2016⁶.

During the next three months, it is anticipated, based on discussions with monitors in Afghanistan, that the number of Afghans migrating to Iran will rise similar to previous years. During winter season schools close and students, and in some cases families, travel to Iran to visit relatives. Due to the decrease of job opportunities in Afghanistan during this season youth travel to Iran for seasonal work. The number of spontaneous returns or returnees supported by voluntary

⁴ Figures provided by Minister of Interior, Rahmani Fazli, in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, 2015.

<http://www.hamshahronline.ir/details/294916/Iran/estate>.

⁵ IOM, Return of Undocumented Afghans, Weekly Situation Report, 11-17 Dec. 2016.

⁶ <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/11650>

repatriation programs is likely to decrease.

Pakistan: There are around 1.45 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan who reside primarily in urban areas. In addition, approximately 1 million undocumented Afghans live in Pakistan. During the last 6 months of 2016, there was an influx of returnees from Pakistan to Afghanistan mainly at the Torkham border; more than 380,000 people returned. The majority are Afghans who have lived in Pakistan since the 1970s but have never have been issued any identity cards. The large movements are said to be closely linked to geopolitical relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. Another factor influencing return is the uncertainty about renewal of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards that many Afghans hold in Pakistan and which are currently only valid until March 2017. However, for the next two or three months, it is expected, again due to the winter season, that the pace of returns from Pakistan will decrease and that voluntary repatriation programs by UNHCR will be halted till the beginning of spring 2017.

Movements towards East

India: The country is not a signatory to the 1951 UN convention relating to the status of refugee and national asylum policies are weak to non-existent. However, India is generally respectful of UNHCR's management of determination of refugee status among asylum seekers in the country⁷.

According to UNHCR, there are approximately 10,000 Afghan refugees in India and 1,300 Afghan asylum seekers. Refugees are to a large extent concentrated in and around Delhi. They appear to be Hindus who fled from Afghanistan during the civil war and the Taliban periods. A large proportion of asylum seekers are still waiting for their status to be determined despite the many years in the country. There is no reliable data on the number and situation of undocumented Afghan migrants in India. Finally, there are many Afghan students in different cities in India such as Delhi, Pune, Haidar Abad, and Bangalore. These people mostly return to Afghanistan after graduation.

Those who choose India as a transit country for onwards movement, usually travel to India on a tourist visa or for medical treatment. From India, people continue to destinations such as Indonesia mostly by air transport and in some cases by sea.

Indonesia: Like India, Indonesia is not a signatory to the 1951 UN convention relating to the status of refugees. The country has largely functioned as a transit migration country for Afghans to reach Australia by boat. However, Australia's restrictive refugee and asylum policies have made this

⁷ JIPS, Urban Profiling of Refugee Situations in Delhi, 2013

journey virtually impossible since 2013. Resettlement is today the main reason for Afghans to migrate to Indonesia; the US and Canada are primary destinations. During the last few years, approximately 1,000 Afghan refugees from Indonesia were resettled every year.

Afghans arrive to Indonesia either with a tourist visa via air transport or from Malaysia by boat. The number of Afghans arriving has steadily increased from approximately 2,000 in 2012 to a total number of 7,063 Afghans registered with UNHCR as of September 2016. This number includes 3,484 asylum seekers and 3,579 refugees⁸. Asylum seekers and refugees are to a large extent concentrated in Jakarta and Bogor, the city south of Jakarta.

Movements towards the West

In 2015, 1,015,078 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe, and Afghans constituted the second biggest proportion among new arrivals. In 2016 the number of arrivals to Greece decreased with a total of 67,415 arrivals in January, 3,650 in April and only 1,991 arriving in November. Afghans remain the second largest group⁹.

By the end of November 2016, the total number of sea arrivals to Italy reached 173,008, which is a 20% increase compared with the first eleven months of 2015 (144,205). Afghans are not within the top 10 nationalities of sea arrivals to Italy¹⁰. The number of people applying for asylum in 2016 in Europe decreased to around 309,000 out of which 37,000 where Afghan¹¹.

The JIPS profiling exercise, initiated by UNHCR, and conducted in January 2016 on 191 Afghans in Greece reports that the largest proportion of those migrating to Greece are young single men leaving Afghanistan due to violence or conflict (73%). Only 3% leave for economic reasons. These numbers are somewhat contradictory to the current 4Mi findings. As previously described, these findings show a much larger diversity of reasons to migrate and a larger group of people leaving based on economic reasons. According to the JIPS profiling exercise 36% travelled directly from Afghanistan to Greece via Iran and Turkey whereas 15% travelled directly from Afghanistan to Greece passing Pakistan before entering Iran and Turkey. The exercise also highlights the large number of secondary movement as 36% started their journey directly from Iran to Turkey onwards to Greece and 8% previously lived in Pakistan and travelled directly from Pakistan to Iran, Turkey and Greece. The exercise likewise illustrates protection risks

on route with 37% reporting that they have directly witnessed incidents such as emotional abuses (30%), robbery and theft (29%), economic exploitation (19%) and physical abuse (11%). The main incidents were witnessed during transportation (33%), at border control (28%) or at shelter (26%)¹².

The decrease in numbers of Afghan arrivals in Greece this year is assumable related to multiple factors. There are a high number of rejected asylum seekers in Europe of Afghan as well as Pakistani origin, which could make Afghans hesitant to migrant. For example, a total of 50% out of 273,000 first instance decisions in Q3 in 2016 among Afghan asylum seekers where rejected¹³. In October, EU and the Afghan government agreed to a policy that enables EU member states to deport unlimited numbers of Afghan asylum seekers back to Afghanistan if asylum is not granted in Europe. It has been indicated that aid to Afghanistan may become conditional on cooperating under the agreement.

⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/en/unhcr/inindonesia>

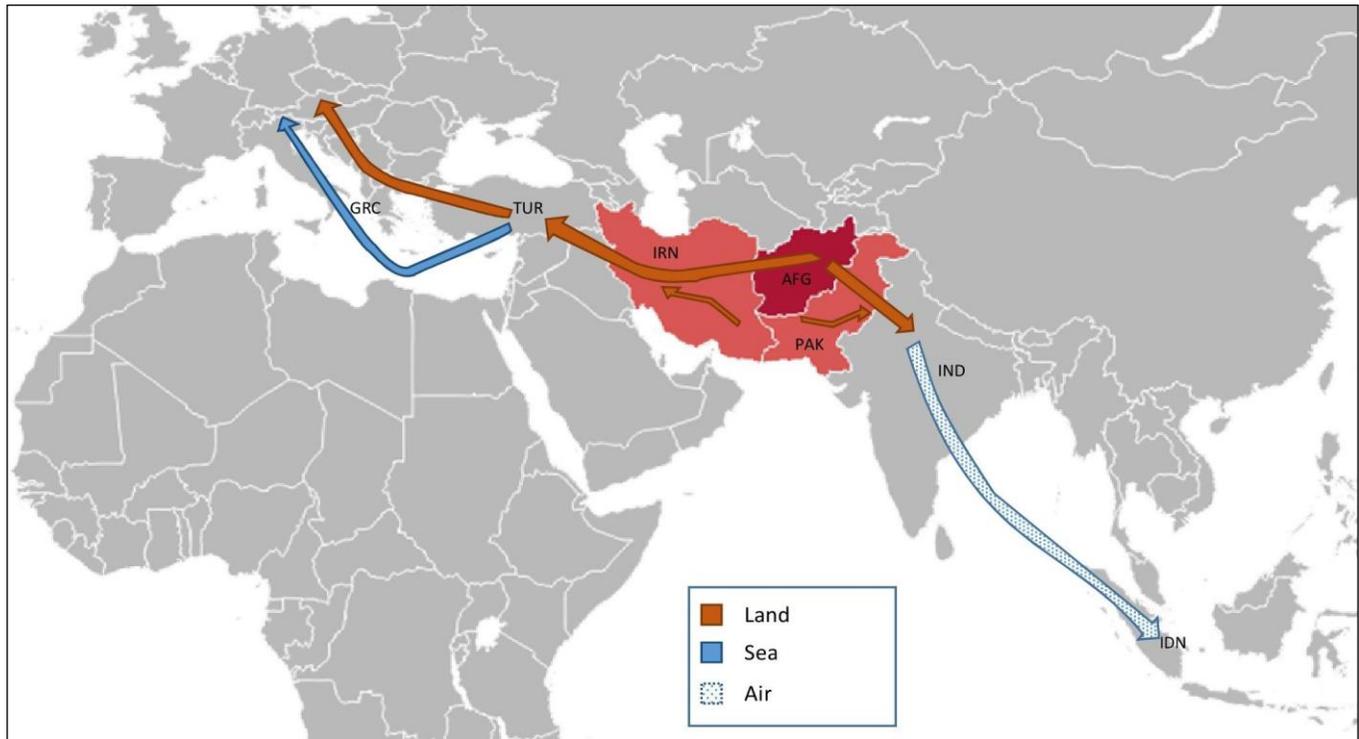
⁹ UNHCR, Weekly Report, 14th December 2016.

¹⁰ UNHCR, Italy Sea Arrivals Dashboard – November 2016

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

¹² UNHCR, Profiling of Afghan Arrivals on Greek Islands in January 2016, 2016

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:First_instance_decisions_in_the_EU-28_by_outcome,_selected_citizenships,_3rd_quarter_2016.png



Map: Illustration of movement from Afghanistan