

THE DANISH EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

ALERT NOTE

Guide to submission of alerts

NB: Only Danish organisations with local presence either through partner organisations or own organisation in the affected areas can raise an alert.

Please read the Danish Emergency Relief Fund's Funding Guidelines before submitting an alert (the Funding Guidelines are available here: www.cisu.dk/derf)

Instructions:

An alert is raised and submitted through the online platform Vores CISU. When submitting an alert

- a) basic information must be submitted online.
- b) an Alert Note (this document) must be attached.

In the Alert Note, you must fill either of the three sections:

- section B for rapid onset humanitarian crisis, or
- section C for slow onset humanitarian crisis, or
- section D for spike in a protracted humanitarian crisis.

Please note that the alert note must be completed with as much information as possible. CISU will need comprehensive information in order to assess the alert. The information provided has to be verifiable.

Formalities regarding the alert text (section b, c or d):

- **NUMBER OF PAGES:** The text must not take up more than 1,5 pages (Arial, font size 11, line spacing 1.0, margins: top 3 cm, bottom 3 cm, right 2 cm and left 2 cm). Alerts exceeding this length will be rejected.
- **LANGUAGE:** The text can only be submitted to CISU in English.

Section A: Basic information

Organisation:	Rebuild Aid Forening
Title of alert:	Critical Spike in Afghan Returnees: Mass Deportations and Iran Conflict Fuel Border Crisis
Type of crisis:	☐ rapid onset humanitarian crisis (please fill out section B) ☐ slow onset humanitarian crisis (please fill out section C) ☒ spike in protracted humanitarian crisis (please fill out section D)

Do only fill one of the following three sections, B, C, or D. You may delete the two which do not apply.

Section D: Spike in a protracted humanitarian crisis

d.1 Where is the crisis? Describe the areas affected

The crisis affects Afghanistan as a whole, as returnees deported from Iran and Pakistan originally came from all regions of the country. However, the pressure is most acute in the western provinces, where the majority of returnees are arriving. This alert focuses on Herat, Nimroz, Farah, Badghis, and Ghor — all of which are experiencing a rapid influx of vulnerable returnees.

Herat is the epicenter of the crisis due to its role as the primary entry point from Iran, further intensified by Iran–Israel tensions causing additional displacement. Border and transit infrastructure is overstretched, and local actors lack resources to address the escalating humanitarian needs.

d.2 What is the nature of the crisis?

This crisis represents a critical spike in an ongoing displacement and protection emergency in Afghanistan. Since 2023, Iran and Pakistan have forcibly deported hundreds of thousands of Afghans, including long-term residents and refugees. In 2025, the situation escalated dramatically: Iran intensified mass expulsions, while Pakistan enforced its Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan. Simultaneously, the regional conflict between Iran and Israel created new instability, prompting thousands of Afghans to flee Iran voluntarily out of fear of persecution, detention, or war.

As a result, border provinces such as Herat and Nimroz have seen an overwhelming influx of returnees, many of whom are undocumented and highly vulnerable. These include women-headed households, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Most arrive without legal identification, housing, or access to health care, education, or basic protection. Many are sleeping in open spaces or makeshift shelters, exposed to harassment, extortion, arrest, and gender-based violence.

Local authorities and humanitarian actors lack the capacity to respond. The de facto government is not providing coordinated support, and most UN and NGO assistance is limited to short-term border reception. There is no functioning referral system, case management, or legal aid framework to support safe reintegration or access to rights.

This is no longer a manageable displacement challenge — it is a fast-developing humanitarian protection crisis. If left unaddressed, it risks triggering widespread destitution, undermining regional stability, and forcing further cycles of displacement. Immediate, targeted intervention is essential to prevent irreversible harm.

d.3 What information do you have about the situation? What is the source of that information?

Afghanistan has witnessed a sharp increase in returns from Iran and Pakistan. According to IOM, over 650,000 Afghans were returned in the first half of 2025 alone. Many are undocumented and include women-headed households, children, elderly persons, and individuals with disabilities. These groups arrive without legal documentation, shelter, or access to basic services, particularly in Herat and Nimroz where reception capacity is overwhelmed.

IOM Afghanistan Returns Reports: <https://afghanistan.iom.int/reports>

UNHCR Afghanistan Situation Update: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4569>

Returnees face urgent protection and humanitarian needs, including emergency shelter, legal aid, food, WASH services, and documentation support. Without legal identity or shelter, many sleep outdoors in unsafe conditions, at risk of arrest, exploitation, or exclusion from aid. These needs are expected to worsen as winter approaches.

ACAPS Afghanistan Crisis Overview: <https://www.acaps.org/country/afghanistan/crisis/complex-crisis>

OCHA 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-2024-humanitarian-needs-overview>

Actors responding and coordination: UNHCR, IOM, NRC, and DACAAR are providing some services at key border points, mainly limited to short-term transit assistance. However, there is no coordinated reintegration or protection response beyond entry points. The de facto authorities provide no structured assistance, and access for independent actors remains restricted in many districts.

UNOCHA Afghanistan Coordination and Access: <https://www.unocha.org/afghanistan>

General response updates: <https://reliefweb.int/country/afg>

d.3.1 Do you consider there to be a spike/change in a slow onset/chronic crisis or in a protracted humanitarian crisis? If yes, provide as strong as possible evidence for this current spike.

Yes. April 2025 marked a sudden and significant escalation, with over 200,000 returns in a single month — a threefold increase compared to April 2024. This surge, driven by forced deportations and geopolitical tensions, constitutes a clear spike within a chronic displacement crisis.

d.3.2. Describe as specific as possible when the spike has started.

The deportation crisis began in 2023, but peaked in 2025, especially from April onward.

Sources: <https://afghanistan.iom.int/reports>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-iom-unhcr-update-return-afghans-pakistan-7-march-2024>

d.3.3. How could DERF grants make a difference for the crisis affected population?

DERF grants would enable rapid and targeted support for highly vulnerable returnees in Herat, Nimroz, and neighboring western provinces — areas currently underserved by other donors. The short-term (0–9 month) intervention would provide legal aid, emergency shelter, WASH, and food assistance to hard-to-reach groups, including undocumented families, women-headed households, and children. DERF's fast and flexible disbursement is essential to filling this urgent humanitarian gap before conditions worsen. Without immediate intervention, tens of thousands may remain undocumented and exposed as winter approaches. DERF's rapid funding mechanism is uniquely suited to respond to this escalating crisis.

d.4 Are you already responding to this emergency? In which locations/sectors? For which target group? Through which forms of local presence? What is the outcome of your latest assessment and what have you done since then?

Yes. Through our local partner, Saifrood Unity and Aid Organization (SUAO), which operates field offices in Herat and Badghis, we have conducted recent assessments confirming that returnees are arriving without shelter, ID, or access to basic services. SUAO has established relationships with local authorities, coordinates with IOM at entry points, and maintains experienced field teams. We are ready to deliver protection, legal aid, and emergency assistance as soon as funding becomes available. SUAO has the local presence, staff, and partnerships to mobilize within days of disbursement, ensuring fast, targeted, and accountable delivery in underserved areas where no other actors are currently responding. SUAO is a registered Afghan NGO with 10+ years of experience in humanitarian response, including previous projects supported by UNDP, CISU, DERF, and Danish NGOs.