

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

UNHCR's Advice and Legal Aid Programme

1. What kind of services are provided by the Advice and Legal Aid Centers (ALACs) and Information and Legal Assistance Centre (ILAC)?

The ALACs/ILAC offer legal assistance and legal representation to refugees and asylum-seekers across the main refugee-hosting areas in Pakistan. ALAC/ILAC activities are focused on cases of unlawful arrest/detention on immigration grounds, civil/family matters and legal response to victims of sexual or gender-based violence. Furthermore, legal advice is provided to refugees through legal camps, *shura* meetings, community sessions, door-to-door visits and indoor counselling services on issues related to their stay in Pakistan, their documentary status including Proof of Registration (PoR) card validity, renewal or modification, birth registration, police harassment, access/referral to available public services and facilitated voluntary repatriation. ALACs/ILAC work in close coordination with law enforcement authorities and provide regular training sessions to them as well as members of the judiciary on refugee law and refugees' rights in Pakistan.

Refugees and asylum-seekers are also supported by providing legal representation in cases where charges are brought against them for reasons related to the legality of their stay in the country as well as where their freedom of movement is restricted under various provisions of Pakistani legislations such as sections 107/151, 144, 55/109 of the Criminal Procedure Code and section 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code. In addition, assistance is provided in pursuing legal action where refugees/asylum-seekers have been subjected to sexual/gender-based or domestic violence as well as where they need a court intervention for seeking child custody or divorce.

The legal assistance in criminal cases is limited to refugees and asylum-seekers who are falsely charged linked to their vulnerable status as non-nationals or where a serious crime has been committed against them such as child sodomy, man slaughter or forced marriage and they are discriminated in having access to legal assistance. In such cases prior consultation is mandatory between UNHCR and the concerned ALAC partner and a decision is taken based on the particular circumstances prevailing in the concerned case.

2. Who is implementing this programme?

Different non-governmental organizations listed at the end of this document are providing these services with funding and support from UNHCR.

3. Who is eligible to obtain legal assistance through this programme?

Asylum-seekers carrying a Certificate for Asylum-Seekers issued by UNHCR, Afghan refugees holding a valid PoR card and refugees who have been recognized under UNHCR's mandate and are holding a UNHCR Refugee Identity Card, are eligible to benefit from legal assistance through the ALAC/ILAC programs.

4. How can help be requested from ALAC/ILAC?

Eligible individuals can call the ALAC/ILAC protection helpline numbers provided here below or approach directly the nearest ALAC/ILAC centers to request for legal advice or assistance.

5. Does ALAC/ILAC provide advice, information and legal assistance to persons who are unable to visit the ALACs/ILAC?

Yes, UNHCR and the ALAC/ILAC teams conduct regular community outreach visits and arrange community gatherings referred to as legal camps and *shura* meetings as well as door-to-door visits in the field in order to create awareness about the services provided by ALACs/ILAC and address advice and legal assistance needs of the communities.

6. Are any fees or charges for these services required?

All ALAC/ILAC services are free of charge, including documentation and other court charges. However, arranging personal sureties or bail bonds on the courts' instructions, particularly in cases where bail is granted in favour of a refugee or asylum-seekers, is the sole responsibility of the applicant.

In case any fee for the assistance is requested/charged by ALAC/ILAC staff, this should be immediately reported either by using the complaints boxes available in all ALAC/ILAC and UNHCR offices, which are securely locked and emptied exclusively by designated UNHCR staff, or by e-mail at pakisbop@unhcr.org. Such reports will be dealt with in strict confidentiality and without exposing the author of the report to any possible risks.

7. What basic information is required from the applicant for urgent legal intervention, particularly in case of arrest/detention?

A person requesting legal assistance must provide his/her name, father's name, identity document number (PoR card/ refugee ID card/ asylum-seeker certificate), contact number and – in case of arrest or detention - the location/name of the concerned police station/court. If the identity document number is not available, the applicant's age, name and place of origin (as stated on the PoR card, refugee ID card or asylum-seeker certificate) or any other information known to the applicant must be provided for verification purposes. The number of a PoR/refugee ID card held by any other individual registered with the same family can also help, if available.

Whenever possible, refugees and asylum-seekers are encouraged to provide as much information and documentation available to them with regard to their case to the ALAC/ILAC lawyers. However, if documents are not available, ALAC/ILAC is still able to intervene on the basis of the afore-mentioned key information.

8. Does ALAC/ILAC provide legal assistance to individuals who lost their identity document?

Yes, ALAC/ILAC provides legal assistance in case the original identity document is not available. However, in order to verify the legal status of an individual in Pakistan, it is helpful to provide the reference/card number. The lack of a reference/card number may cause delays as a profile check about the applicant will be required before any legal assistance can be extended.

9. How can a duplicate of the lost identity document be obtained?

In case of loss of an identity document such as the PoR card, identity document of the country of origin and passport, if any, ALAC can prepare an affidavit and lodge a report in the police station, which is essential for reapplying to secure these documents. In case of loss of a PoR card, ALAC can also obtain a verification letter from the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) of the Government of Afghanistan in Pakistan, which needs to be submitted to the closest NADRA Proof of Registration Card Modification (PCM) center for issuance of a duplicate PoR card. By contrast, requests for duplicate identity documents that have been issued by UNHCR should be directly submitted to UNHCR.

10. How is legal assistance delivered in case of arrest/detention?

When a refugee/asylum-seeker is arrested or detained based on immigration law, the information should be immediately shared with ALAC/ILAC or UNHCR through the helpline numbers. The ALAC/ILAC lawyers will promptly approach the concerned police check point or police station to arrange for the individual's release. If a First Information Report (FIR) under the Foreigners Act or other preventive provisions is lodged by the police in these circumstances, the ALAC/ILAC lawyers will pursue the case in the court of law, at all levels.

11. How can a refugee/asylum-seeker avoid to be arrested or detained under immigration law?

The original PoR card or UNHCR-issued identity document for refugees and asylum-seekers should be carried at all times when travelling within the area of residence or over longer distances. It is advised to keep a photocopy of the identity document at home in case of loss of the original.

Please note that neither the PoR card nor the UNHCR-issued documents can be used to cross international borders, including into Afghanistan.

12. Does ALAC/ILAC provide other services in addition to legal assistance?

Yes, ALAC/ILAC provides information on voluntary repatriation procedures and UNHCR's return package to individuals and groups, as well as on birth registration and the related procedure to be followed. ALAC/ILAC also assists through legal intervention in case of any obstacle to voluntary repatriation.

13. How can a PoR card verification from NADRA be obtained (to open a bank account, rent a house, obtain a SIM card etc.)?

ALACs can facilitate the verification of PoR cards in coordination with NADRA. For such a request, the applicant needs to provide a valid PoR card number to ALAC. It will take approximately one week for the request to be processed.

ALAC/ILAC Contacts/Addresses:

Islamabad Office

House # 279-A, Main Nazim-ud-din Road, F-10/1, Islamabad

Office: (051) 2211740, 2211621

Fax: (051) 2212773

Helpline: 0334-1112004

Mianwali Office

House # 5-A, Rehman Street, Muslim Colony, Mianwali

Office: (0459) 232237

Fax: (0459) 232237

Helpline: 0334-1112006

Lahore Office

House # 365, Pak Block, Allama Iqbal Town, Lahore

Office: (042) 37800710, 34800711

Fax: (042) 37803160

Helpline: 0334-1112005

Karachi Office

House # B-108, Block 10 K.D.A, Scheme # 24, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi

Office: (021) 34811571

Fax: (021) 34812184

Helpline: 0334-1112008

Peshawar Office

House # 18, C-2, Chinar Road, University Town, Peshawar

Office: (091) 5843440

Fax: (091) 5843440

Helpline: 0300-8580417

Haripur Office

Hadayatullah House, Street-2, Noor Colony, Khanpur Road, Haripur

Office: (0995) 61 20 23

Fax: (fax service not available)

Helpline: 0315-5009501

Mardan Office

House # 162, Sector-K, Sheikh Maltoon Town, Mardan

Office: (0937) 84 03 79

Fax: (fax service not available)

Helpline: 0315-5009502

Kohat Office

House # 102, Sector-9, KDA, Kohat

Office: (0922) 513 792

Fax: (fax service not available)

Helpline: 0315-5009503

Quetta Office (ILAC)

Khaizai Chowk Samungli Road, Quetta
Office: (081) 288 5175
Fax: (0810 287 0066
Helpline: 0300-8389995 or 0345-8322403

Loralai Office (ILAC)

House # 3144, Ward #, Hazara Mohallah, Afghan Chowk, Loralai
Office: (0824) 410 136
Helpline: 0300-8389995 or 0334-2324935

ALACs/ILAC Official Working Days/Hours

Monday to Thursday from 08:00 am to 05:00 pm / 9:00 am to 05:00 pm (ILAC).
Friday from 08:00 am to 12:30 pm / 9:00 am to 01:00 pm (ILAC).

A protection helpline is active on weekends and official holidays from 08:00 am to 10:00 pm.

UNHCR Helpline Numbers

UNHCR Peshawar:	0300-8585600
UNHCR Quetta:	0333-7819601
UNHCR Islamabad:	0300-5018568
UNHCR Karachi:	0342-2704888