



Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees

*“Addressing the violence against
Afghan refugees in Pakistan”*

Forum: Human Rights
Issue: Addressing the violence against Afghan refugees in Pakistan
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Context & Historical Background

Pakistan is accused by many groups, including the UNHCR and Human Rights Watch for its violence against Afghan refugees in recent years. Pakistan is the largest host of Afghan refugees in the world (approx. 2.6 million: registered and undocumented), and as a result, the second largest refugee-hosting country in the world. The number of Afghan refugees has probably significantly decreased because of the forced repatriation, but it is very difficult to get accurate results.

These Afghans came to Pakistan in huge numbers in the late 1970s and have been living there since. They were forced to leave their country because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and have remained to this day as a result of the never-ending conflict in Afghanistan. When they arrived, the Pakistani people accepted them with their arms fully open, and have generally been very tolerant and hospitable to them since. However, following the Peshawar Army Public School massacre in December 2014, the deadliest attack in Pakistan's history that killed 145 people including 132 schoolchildren, the whole nation became infuriated. Many military operations were conducted in FATA (the Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and other regions.

The police, however, resorted to violence against the Afghan refugees, and started regularly beating them, raiding their homes, calling them terrorists, threatening to put them behind bars, to the extent that by the mid 2016, more than 600,000 Afghan refugees were forcefully returned to Afghanistan, where violence, poverty, unemployment is still shockingly high. Many Pakistani people have even started viewing Afghans as "bad" because of Afghanistan's recent cozy relations with India, Pakistan's arch rival. Perhaps Gerry Simpson, a senior refugee researcher at the Human Rights Watch, summarized the situation best, "After decades of hosting Afghan refugees, Pakistan in mid-2016 unleashed the world's largest recent anti-refugee crackdowns to coerce their mass return,"

Current status of the problem

Currently, while the approx. 600,000 Afghans have already been forced to leave Pakistan, and are in temporary camps in Afghanistan. The remaining 1.6 million, however,

especially the ones in refugee camps in suburbs of Peshawar, and other areas near the Afghan border, are still continuously beaten, and their homes are raided by the police telling them to leave the country, calling them and accusing them of being terrorists, threatening them of imprisonment etc.

Importance in international community

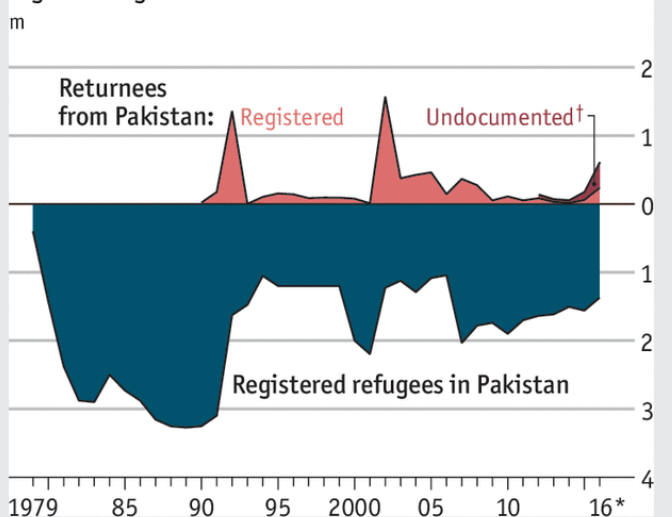
This mistreatment of the Afghan refugees is a huge issue to the international community as it highlights the violence that many refugees have to face, and challenges other nations to ensure that this mistreatment of refugees will not occur in their own countries; given the backlash Pakistan has faced in the past few years. Because the fact of the matter remains that what Pakistan is doing is inhumane and something that the international community is generally completely against.

Aim of the committee's resolution

Our committee's main focus will be on how to prevent the Pakistani police, in particular, from mistreating the Afghan refugees. We will also look at how the international community can either make the repatriation process less harsher for the Afghans by ensuring them a positive future in Afghanistan, or to pressurize Pakistan to completely stop the abuse and provide a citizenship status to all the Afghans, as majority of the refugees right now are actually born in Pakistan.

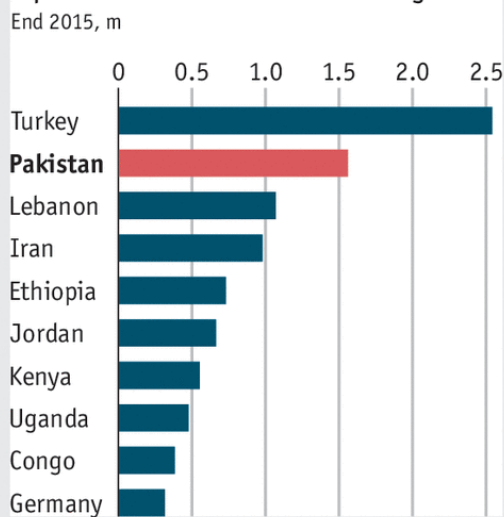
Displaced again

Afghan refugees in Pakistan



Sources: International Organisation for Migration; UNHCR; *The Economist*

Top ten destination countries for refugees



*Forecast †Undocumented numbers begin in 2012

Economist.com

United Nations Involvement

The UNHCR was put under significant pressure from the Pakistani government to help with the repatriation process. So the UNHCR decided to step up its game and really started help the Afghan people, especially the 600,000 that were forced to leave during mid-2016. The most effective thing that UNHCR did, was that it set up tents beside the refugee camps, and gave a good amount of money to every family that had been forced to leave. This really put a smile on the Afghans faces and most of the money was intended to be used in buying/living in houses in Afghanistan. Even though this could be a positive thing for the future of Afghans leaving, the international community, particularly, the Human Rights' Watch has stated that the UNHCR has become involved in Pakistan's mass refugee abuse, as it is just helping to remove more a more refugees more and more effectively. A 76-page report by the HRW, "Pakistan Coercion, UN Complicity: The Mass Forced Return of Afghan Refugees," documents the abuses and the forced exodus of Afghans refugees by the Pakistani authorities and how the UN has been supporting it.

The UNHCR should press Pakistan to stop the abuses and protect the remaining 1.6 million Afghan refugees.

Different Perspectives

Pakistan

The Pakistani government believes that it has the right to send the Afghan refugees back, as the situation is much better in Afghanistan than it was before (many would argue otherwise, 40% of Afghanistan is still under Taliban control). It fully understands that citizenship is a good option as well, and has also provided citizenships to a few Afghans. The Pakistani government strictly believes that the *illegal* refugees are actually a security threat, as a number of suicide bomb attacks on Pakistani soil have been found to be committed by these illegal refugees.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's position is basically that it knows that the country is still in a pretty tumultuous time period in its history, and that refugees coming back would actually be a burden, and would add to the "chaos" that is in the country. It is thankful to the Pakistani government for hosting the refugees, but again, it is very concerned about the mistreatment, and accuses Pakistan of many atrocities against the refugees.

Russia

Even though the main reason why there are Afghan refugees in the first place, is because of the Soviets, the Russians have not done much to help the refugees themselves. But it has helped with providing aid to the Afghan government to help get back security in the country; primarily military aid. Russia is against the mistreatment of any sort of refugees, but does not have a fully clear policy towards the Afghani refugees in Pakistan.

USA

The United States has been leading the war on terror in Afghanistan, and provides billions and billions of dollars to both Afghanistan and Pakistan to combat terrorism. The United States,

therefore believes that eradicating terrorism and extremism is the top priority in the region. It is for the repatriation of Afghans, but wants it not to be forced.

Questions to Consider

- What can countries in the UN do to ensure that Afghan refugees are not mistreated at all in Pakistan?
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- Why is it necessary for refugees to be treated the same as citizens of the host country?
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- How does your country treat refugees, as well as immigrants?
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- According to your country's position, is the UNHCR doing the right thing by helping with the forced repatriation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan?
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- What is the best way to pressurize Pakistan to stop the mistreatment of Afghan refugees?

Key Terms & Phrases

Refugee: A human being that has been forced to leave their country because of an ongoing conflict, natural disaster, war, or persecution of any sort etc.

Undocumented refugees: Refugees that have not officially been registered into the host country's population, mainly because they are illegally (smuggling etc.) in the country.

Afghan: A native person from Afghanistan.

Repatriation: The process of sending refugees back to their original countries.

War on terror: An international military campaign, led by the US to combat terrorism after 9/11.

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