

URGENT ACTION

STOP DEPORTING AFGHAN REFUGEES

On October 3, 2023, the Pakistani government announced its decision to deport unregistered Afghan refugees back to Afghanistan by November 1. Since November, authorities have deported Afghans and increased the crackdown on unregistered Afghan refugees, which has resulted in arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions of refugees, and separation of families. Authorities have not allowed access to detention centers recently set up for deportation purposes. Houses of Afghan refugees have also been demolished, and properties seized. It is imperative to demand that the Government of Pakistan halt the continued detentions, deportations, and widespread harassment of Afghan refugees.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 109.23**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

H.E. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar
Caretaker Prime Minister
Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Constitution Avenue
G-5/2 Islamabad Pakistan

Pakistani Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Masood Khan
3517 International Court, NW, Washington DC 20008
Phone: (202) 243-6500
Email: info@embassyofpakistanusa.org

Dear H.E. Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar,

I am deeply concerned about the decision made by the Pakistani government on October 3, 2023, to deport more than 1.4 million unregistered Afghan refugees from Pakistan. This decision poses a significant threat to the human rights of Afghan women and girls, including their rights to education, work, and freedom of movement. Additionally, a significant number of refugees, including journalists, human rights defenders, female protestors, artists, and former government officials, would be at imminent risk of persecution if forced to return to Afghanistan.

Since November 1, 2023, the crackdown on unregistered Afghan refugees have resulted in arbitrary arrests and separation of families including minors, women, and older people. Detention centers for deportation purposes have been established. Media, lawyers, civil society, and even family members of those detained are not allowed to access them. Afghan refugees' houses have been demolished, and properties confiscated. The government has also announced expulsion of documented refugees in the "next phase" of deportations, a process which has already begun. These actions violate Pakistani government's international legal obligations, notably the principle of non-refoulement.

I urge you to stop the crackdown on Afghan refugees, halt the forced returns of Afghans, and reverse your decision. I also urge you to immediately release refugees arbitrarily detained in detention centers and further refrain from detaining Afghan refugees. Finally, I call on you to create pathways for obtaining timely documentation and renewing all expired visas especially for vulnerable populations.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On October 3, Pakistan announced that unregistered Afghans would be deported to Afghanistan on November 1, 2023. Since then, over 300,000 number of Afghans have been reportedly returned.

For 40 years, Pakistan has been a host country to the largest population of Afghan refugees in the world. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are now more than 3.7 million Afghans living in Pakistan. This includes 600,000 who fled Afghanistan due to fear of Taliban's reprisal after the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021. Amongst these are hundreds of Afghan human rights defenders, women activists and protestors, journalists, and other dissidents who were waiting for relocation to a third country and are now experiencing various forms of harassment in Pakistan.

Under the Taliban's rule, Amnesty International has documented extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, forcible disappearances of dissenting voices, journalists, activists, and former government employees. The Taliban have violated the rights of women and girls in the country, including access to education beyond primary school and work. The severity of the violations of women and girls' rights constitute a system of repression that discriminates them in almost all aspects of their lives. The Pakistani government is carrying out mass forced deportations just before winter, at a time when Afghanistan is already grappling with a humanitarian crisis. Those being forced to return risk homelessness, loss of livelihood and lack of access to essential services. In Afghanistan, more than 97% of the population is living in poverty, with an estimated 29 million people – nearly three-quarters of its approximately 40 million inhabitants – in need of urgent assistance for daily survival. Moreover, the UN humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan remains largely unfunded. The human rights and humanitarian crisis are further exacerbated by natural disasters, such as years of persistent drought, climate change impacts, and earthquakes.

Although Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, nor the 1967 Protocol, it is bound by the non-refoulement principle. The prohibition of refoulement is an obligation included in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Pakistan is State party and it prohibits States to transfer anyone to a place where they would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights violations.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Urdu (preferred language), Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi, Dari/Farsi/Pashto, or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: February 8, 2024 (We propose to keep the UA deadline until this date which is the Election Day in Pakistan).

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: More than 1.4 million unregistered Afghan refugees