

PART 8: REFUGEES AND IDPS

NAP POINT 12: Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.

NAP POINT 19: Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.

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PART 8: REFUGEES AND IDPs

8.1 Introduction

The 12th and 18th point in the NAP and eighth theme deals with the displaced person both internally and externally, most specifically from Afghanistan.

8.2 Refugees

National Security Advisor (NSA) Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Naseer Khan Janjua in a private interview with CRSS stated that while certain aspects of the Afghan refugee crisis are politicized and mishandled, the overall consensus is that they should return to their homeland.¹ He also said that the incidents of forced repatriation like the way Nat-Geo girl Sharbat Gula were blown out of proportion and unnecessarily hyped.

The issue of refugees has been handed over to Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Abdul Qadir Baloch, to analyze the intensity of the matter and how Afghan refugees are treated in Pakistan versus globally. In this regard, an All Parties Conference (APC) is to be held to determine the date for the repatriation of refugees. Currently it is March 31, 2017. As has been the case for the last several occasions, it is believed that this may be extended to June, or to the end of the year.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) gauges 1,320,394 refugees in Pakistan as of November 15, 2016.² 34% out of these refugees live in refugee camps and 66% live outside these villages.³ According to a report by Al - Jazeera TV, Pakistan still holds the third biggest outcast populace of 1.6 million, while Jordan (2.7 million) and Turkey (2.5 million) individually hold the initial two positions with highest number of refugee populace.⁴

While comparing to the last year's data of 1,554,910 refugees around 333,817 individuals consisting of 52,439 families have repatriated in 2016 which is highest number of repatriation since 2006.⁵ It is also nearly six times the number since 2015.⁶

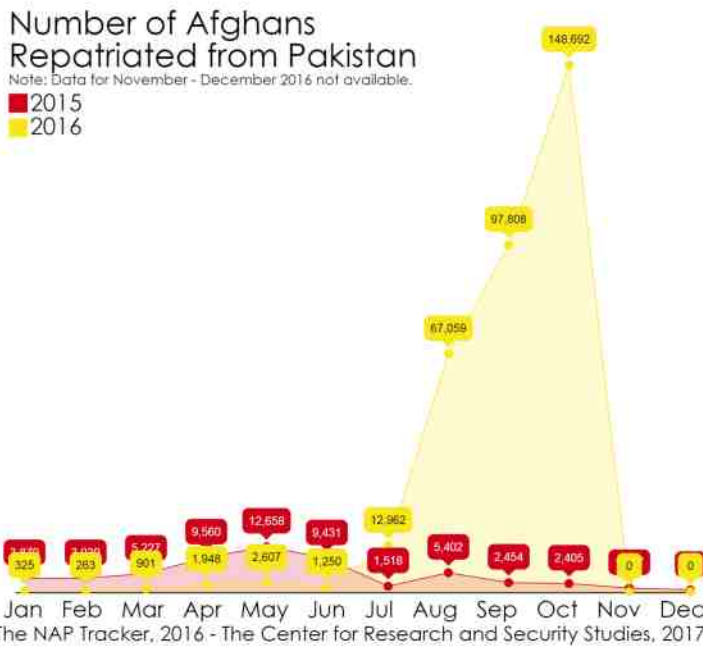
UNHCR, as part of its mandate of providing durable solutions is operating three Voluntary Repatriation Centers: two in Peshawar and one in Quetta. The families who want to repatriate return their Proof of Registration Cards (PoRs) to these centers. Each member of the repatriating families is provided with

400 USD at the time of repatriation.

Comparative data of repatriation of 2015 & 2016 is as under:

Table 8.1 - Comparative Data of Repatriation		
Month	2015	2016
January	3,879	325
February	3,939	263
March	5,227	901
April	9,560	1,948
May	12,658	2,607
June	9,431	1,250
July	1,518	12,962
August	5,402	67,059
September	2,454	97,808
October	2,405	148,692
November	1,147	n/a
December	611	n/a
Total	60,246	333,815

Graph 8.1 Comparative Data of Repatriation – 2015 vs. 2016



As much as 1

International Organization of Migrants.⁷ Pakistan has 582 refugees from other countries as well.

The process of repatriation has accelerated due to multiple factors:

- Doubling of UNHCR's repatriation grant to returnees,
- Stricter controls on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border,
- Uncertainty among Afghan refugees regarding GoP issued Proof of Registration (POR) card extensions and future legal status,
- Anti-refugee sentiment among Pakistanis,
- loss of economic opportunities due to harassment and intimidation by host populations, and
- extortion by/corruption of local authorities.

8.2.2 Refugees – Regional Distribution

As of 2012, 85% of the refugees are Pashtuns, while the remaining 15% comprise Uzbeks, Tajiks and other ethnic groups. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa hosts the largest Afghan Refugees population (62.1%), followed by Balochistan (30.3%), Punjab (4.2%), Sindh (4.2%), Islamabad (2%) and Azad Kashmir (0.4%).⁸

The registration process was initiated in 2006 and the PRCs have been extended six times over the last several years. Since 2002, 4,253,713 Afghan refugees have repatriated from Pakistan with UNHCR's assistance. The key findings for such high number of repatriation are:

1. Feeling unwelcome
2. Strict border control
3. Happy/content to return

148,692 people repatriated between 1 October and 31 October, 2016, alone which is likewise the most elevated number of returns in October since 2002. The daily average number of returnees in October was around 5,700, an upsurge to the average approximately 4,600 daily returns in September.⁵

8.2.3 Refugees – Current Status

In November, 2016, Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Iqbal Zafar Jhagra said that Pakistani authorities are continuously in contact with their Afghan counterparts for peaceful and complete resettlement in their native country and all the Afghan refugees would be repatriated by the end of year 2017.⁹

On October 7, 2016, in a quadrilateral meeting in Geneva, Minister SAFRON had a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and discussed the return of Afghan refugees in a dignified manner. Mr. Abdullah appreciated that Pakistan has generously hosted Afghan

⁷ Tribune. (2016, October 5). Pakistan an exemplary host to Afghan refugees, says UNHCR rep. Retrieved December 23, 2016, from, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1193680/repatriation-pakistan-exemplary-host-afghan-refugees-says-unhcr-rep/>>.

⁸ UNHCR. (2011, November 30). Registered Afghan Population in Pakistan - 2010-2011. Retrieved December 28, 2016, from <<http://unhcrpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Registered-Afghan-Population-in-Pakistan.pdf>>.

⁹ Staff Reporter. (2016, November 24). Afghan refugees to be sent back next year: Jhagra. Retrieved December 29, 2016, from, <<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/167311-Afghan-refugees-to-be-sent-back-next-year-Jhagra>>.

refugees for the past four decades and the announcement of 500 US Dollars by Pakistani Government at Brussels Conference. He added that Afghan Government is also making efforts for the sustainable resettlement of refugees back in Afghanistan. Mr. Abdullah Abdullah and Mr. Abdul Qadir Baloch stressed the importance of close coordination between the governments of both the countries regarding the return of Afghan refugees.¹⁰ Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the UNHCR attended the Quadripartite Steering Committee.

8.2.4 Refugees – Controversies

When there are humanitarian conflicts and crises, the bordering states are also impacted in the long run. Generally states voluntarily help one another to minimize this impact; however, Pakistan has been unfortunate in this regard.

Sharbat Gula, once appeared on famous National Geographic Cover, is a green eyed Afghan girl who was arrested in Pakistan for falsifying documents and staying illegally. She was deported to Afghanistan by Pakistani authorities. Amnesty International reacted on the deportation and termed it as “grave injustice”.¹¹

Pakistan Frontier Corps had a skirmish with Afghan Border Police when they tried to disrupt the construction of a gate. The gate is designed to curb illegal cross-border movement and check the movement of terrorists since Pakistani authorities implemented stringent visa requirements.

According to Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) that one Pakistani Army Major got injured and died later on. Two Pakistani guards and nine civilians were also injured during the skirmishes.¹²

Torkham is one of the main border crossings between Afghanistan and Pakistan and is the busiest border between the two states. It connects Khyber Agency of Pakistan with Afghan province of Nangarhar. Afghan traders on daily basis have always used it. Pakistani authorities applied some strict visa conditions that are deemed as unilateral move to trouble Afghan travelers.

The government of Pakistan called the US drone strike in May, in Balochistan, a result of Afghan espionage on its territory. As per the Pakistan Government claims the increased border controls are to crack down on smuggling and militant activity across the border.^{13,14}

8.2.5 Refugees - Worldwide

As much as 65.3 million individuals were displaced by the end of year 2015 that indicates that global forced displacement has increased due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations.

¹⁰ Staff Reporter. (2016, October 08). Dignified return of Afghan refugees agreed. Retrieved December 29, 2016, from, <<http://nation.com.pk/national/08-Oct-2016/dignified-return-of-afghan-refugees-agreed>>.

¹¹ Ahmadzai, A. A. (2016, November 14). Don't Forget the Afghan Refugees of Pakistan. Retrieved December 29, 2106, from, <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/dont-forget-the-afghan-refugees-pakistan-18399?page=2>>.

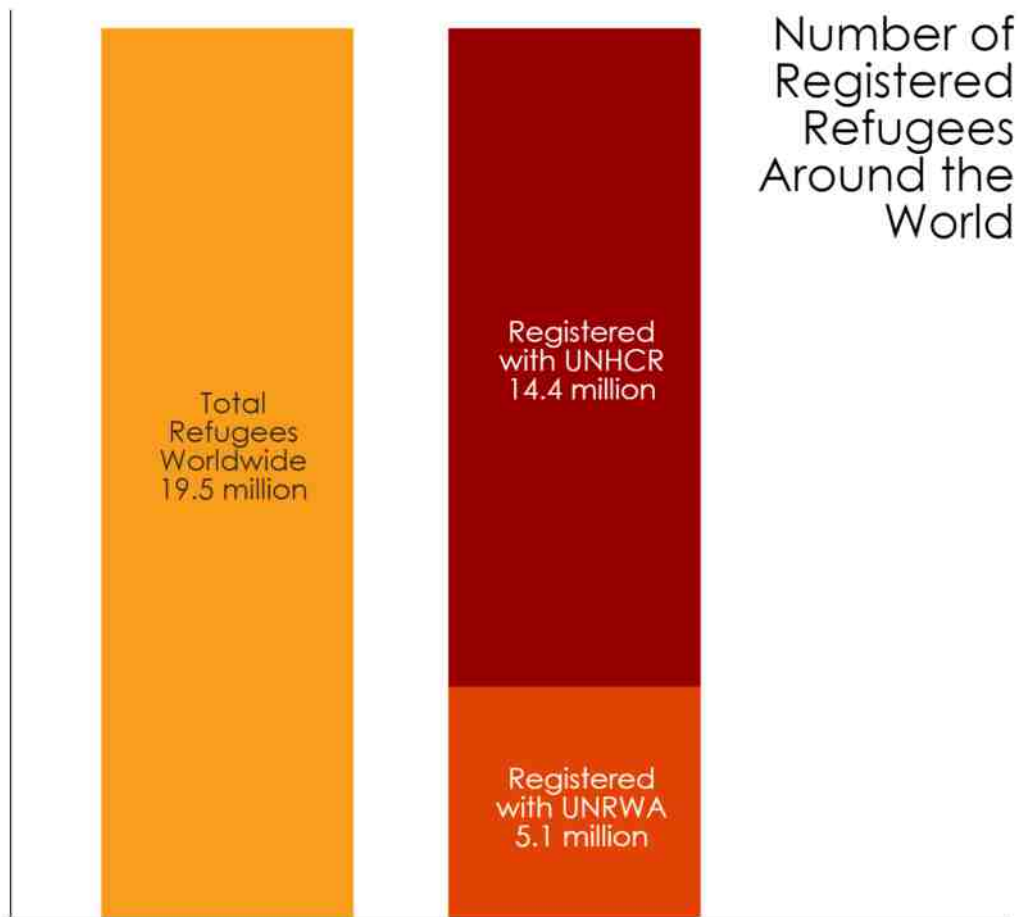
¹² Staff Reporter. (2016, June 14). Pakistan Army major injured in Torkham firing succumbs to wounds. Retrieved December 30, 2016, from, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1122285/pakistan-army-major-injured-torkham-firing-succumbs-wounds/>>.

¹³ Panda, A. (2016, June 13). Pakistan, Afghanistan Exchange Fire at Torkham Border Crossing. Retrieved December 30, 2016, from <<http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/pakistan-afghanistan-exchange-fire-at-torkham-border-crossing/>>.

¹⁴ Staff Reporter. (2016, June 14). Pakistan Army major injured in Torkham firing succumbs to wounds. Retrieved December 30, 2016, from, <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1122285/pakistan-army-major-injured-torkham-firing-succumbs-wounds/>>.

This is 5.8 million more than the previous year (59.5 million). A number of 12.4 million newly displaced persons is estimated that includes 8.6 million individuals displaced within their own territory and 1.8 new refugees. Rests were new applicants for asylum.

Graph 8.2 Number of Registered Refugees Worldwide



The NAP Tracker, 2016 - The Center for Research and Security Studies, 2017

Republic (4.9 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), and Somalia (1.1 million).

In 2015, UNHCR submitted 134,000 refugees to States for resettlement. According to government statistics, States admitted 107,100 refugees for resettlement during the year, with or without UNHCR's assistance. The United States of America accepted the highest number (66,500).

During 2015, only 201,400 refugees returned to their countries of origin. Most returned to Afghanistan (61,400), Sudan (39,500), Somalia (32,300), or the Central African Republic (21,600).¹⁵

8.3 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

8.3.1 IDPs – Numbers

According to the statistics of UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Pakistan, around 5.3 million people remained displaced since 2008, 4.8 million of these have returned including 700,000 people who repatriated in 2016 only.¹⁶ UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that around 76,200 IDP families have returned to their homes till September, 2016, that brings the total number of returned households to 190,000. The process of repatriation started in March, 2015, by the Government of Pakistan. During the preceding 18 months, 62 percent registered displaced persons have returned to FATA. A total of 162,000 families repatriated to Khyber, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan Agencies and around 26, 185 families returned to Kurram and Orakzai Agencies.

Approximately 114,500 families remained displaced in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to UNHCR and 85, 817 families according to OCHA. Government of Pakistan had disbursed approximately 51 million Dollars to the repatriating families as return grants.¹⁷

8.3.2 IDPs – Causes

The primary causes of displacement include insurgency, counter-insurgency and other related violence. In June, 2014, Pakistan launched Operation Zarb-e-Azb, designed to root out militancy permanently from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and adjoining regions. This has contributed greatly to the displaced persons crisis. History effectively repeated itself, as a similar operation in 2009 had also displaced some 3.4 million people. Other causes include natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

8.3.3 IDPs – Rehabilitation Plan

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, informed the National Assembly on March 16, 2016, that a comprehensive rehabilitation plan has been devised for the dignified return of

¹⁵ UNHCR. (2016) Global - Trends Forced Displacements 2015. Retrieved December 31, 2016, from <<http://www.unhcr.org/576408cd7.pdf>>.

¹⁶ OCHA. (2016, December 29). Pakistan: IDP/Returnee Survey of Humanitarian Needs in KP/FATA (29 Dec. 2016). Retrieved January 15, 2016, from, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/pakistan_idp_returnee_survey_fata_2016.pdf>.

¹⁷ Reliefweb. (2016, September 30). USAID – Pakistan – Complex Emergency FY 2016. Retrieved December 31, 2016, from, <<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/09.30.16%20-%20USAID%20DCHA%20Pakistan%20Complex%20Emergency%20Fact%20Sheet%20%234.pdf>>.

IDPs by the Government of Pakistan.¹⁸ He said that a cell has also been set up in Economic Affairs Division for their welfare. A proposal is also under consideration for the payment of a lump sum amount to IDPs for construction of houses.

An amount of 80 billion PKR has been specified in rehabilitation plan and World Food Program has also disbursed 20 billion PKR among IDPs.¹⁸ The return of IDPs is planned to be completed by November, 2016,¹⁹ which was later updated to December.²⁰ Reports in December, 2016, confirmed that cold was preventing the return of some IDPs, and that several still awaited the plans for rehabilitation.²¹ The FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA), stated that 336,042 families awaited return, of which 274,044, or rough 81%) had been sent back to their homes so far.

8.3.4 IDPs – Worldwide

Trend of displacements due to multifarious disasters, conflict, and violence have been on rise since 2003. Statistics from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center's report of May, 2016, reveals that 27.8 million displacements happened in 127 countries during 2015. At the end of the year, there were 40.8 million IDPs worldwide. The year 2014 had the highest figures of displacements ever recorded. If we analyze these figures, on an average 24,000 displacements occurred in a day. 8.6 million of the cases were new for the year 2015. Middle-East witnessed the highest number of displacements in comparison to rest of the world combined. In similar comparison, displacement figures for Yemen, Syria and Iraq accounted for half of the total.

Displacement figures are higher for developing countries. It is significant to note that Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan are among countries listed with largest numbers of displacements (30 million in total). Figures for displacement in the last years are estimated around 25.4 million annually on an average.²²

¹⁸ Samaa News. (2016, March 18). Govt has comprehensive plan to rehabilitate IDPs: Dar. Retrieved December 31, 2016, from <<https://www.samaa.tv/pakistan/2016/03/govt-has-comprehensive-plan-to-rehabilitate-idps-dar/>>.

¹⁹ Bureau Report. (2016, November 01). Largest Fata wheat seed distribution begins. Retrieved December 31, 2016, from <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293566>>.

²⁰ Ali, Z. (2016, May 21). Waziristan IDPs repatriation to complete by December: army. Dawn. Retrieved March 15, 2017, from <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1259739>>.

²¹ Bureau Report. (December 26, 2016). Severe cold hampering IDPs' return to tribal areas. Dawn. Retrieved March 15, 2017, from <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304534>>.

²² NRC, IDMC. (2016, May). Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016. Retrieved December 31, 2016, from <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/globalreport2016/pdf/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf>>.