

Open Letter: Stop the Deportation of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Pakistan

Date: 28 – February - 25

Pakistan's Prime Minister has announced a March 31 deadline to deport individuals awaiting relocation to third countries unless their cases are swiftly processed by the governments that have committed to resettling them. Many Afghan men and women, particularly human rights defenders and activists, have fled due to violence, persecution, political repression, honor-related killings, and other severe human rights violations. **While the international community has made promises** for their relocation—including immigration interviews and visa appointments for countries such as the USA, Germany, Australia, France, and the United Kingdom—Pakistan has increased pressure on Afghan asylum seekers. This includes forced migration, detentions, exorbitant visa fees, and now, the imminent risk of mass deportations.

Ongoing Human Rights Violations in Pakistan:

The Pakistan police have detained human rights defenders, activists, children (both unaccompanied and with families), pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities—including many who hold active visas and legal rights to remain in the country. Women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in Pakistani jails and upon return to Afghanistan. Many lack access to justice, legal representation, and fair refugee status determination procedures. Deporting them under these conditions violates their basic human rights and contradicts international human rights law, which explicitly states that asylum seekers cannot be penalized and forced deported.

Pakistan's obligations under international human rights law regarding Afghan asylum seekers and Refugees:

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): Pakistan ratified the CRC in 1990.** The CRC protects child refugees and prohibits their detention and deportation, as such actions harm their well-being. However, as mentioned in the letter, Pakistan has detained children, both unaccompanied and with their families, which is a violation of its obligations under the CRC.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):** Pakistan ratified the ICCPR in 2010. Article 6 of ICCPR protects the right to life, and Article 13 provides protection against arbitrary expulsion. Therefore, Pakistan cannot deport refugees without due legal process, especially if their lives are at risk.
- **Customary International Law & Non-Refoulement Principle.** Although Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it is still bound by the customary international law principle of non-refoulement. This principle prohibits returning people to countries where they face persecution, making mass deportations problematic under international law.
- **Convention Against Torture (CAT)** Pakistan ratified the CAT in 2010. Article 3 of the CAT prohibits returning a person to a country where they may face torture or inhumane treatment. Pakistan is planning to deport human rights defenders (HRDs) and individuals who may face torture or ill-treatment in Afghanistan. This violates Article 3 of the CAT,

meaning Pakistan cannot legally deport Afghan refugees when they are at risk of persecution or violence.

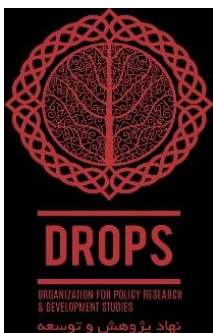
Call to Action: Protect Afghan Asylum Seekers

As a network of Afghan women's rights defenders from Afghanistan and the diaspora, we urgently call upon the Government of Pakistan and the International Community to take immediate action:

1. **Ensure Legal Protection for Women and Girls**
 - Long-term visa opportunities must be made available to Afghan women and girls to guarantee their legal right to stay in Pakistan.
2. **Prevent Forced Deportations & Uphold International Law**
 - The Government of Pakistan must protect the safety and dignity of women, girls, activists, and other vulnerable populations.
 - Immediate steps must be taken to halt deportations, uphold international human rights law, and address the protection needs of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.
3. **Expedite International Resettlement & Protection**
 - We call on governments and international agencies to urgently accelerate resettlement programs and offer protection for Afghans at risk of harm upon return.
4. **Strengthen Solidarity & Advocacy Efforts**
 - Pakistan's decision to deport Afghan asylum seekers will have grave humanitarian consequences, particularly for women, children, and human rights defenders. We urge all stakeholders to act swiftly and ensure that these vulnerable individuals are granted the protection they desperately need.
 - We urge human rights defenders and women's rights activists in Pakistan to stand in solidarity with their Afghan counterparts in exile.
 - We call upon civil society, legal advocates, and global stakeholders to use their influence to stop these deportations and ensure the safety of Afghan refugees.

We must act now to prevent further human rights violations.

Signed in solidarity by the following Afghan civil society organizations, networks, Protesting Women's Network, International Human Rights Organization and forums:





Afghan Women Coordination Umbrella

