

HRD+ Statement

On the Forced Deportation of Afghan Refugees from Pakistan and the Threats towards Persons in Vulnerable Situations

27 October 2025

Human Rights Defenders Plus (HRD+) expresses its profound concern and strongly condemns the widespread and organized campaign of arrests, harassment, systematic pressure, and the forced expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. These actions constitute a clear violation of fundamental principles of international law, humanitarian obligations, customary norms on refugee protection, and basic human dignity.

According to credible international reports and civil society findings, from 2023 to early 2025 Pakistan has deported around 600,000 Afghan refugees and forced between 800,000 to one million others into deportation without distinguishing their residency status. Women, human rights defenders, journalists, and other vulnerable individuals in Karachi, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta have been detained without individual assessment and face the imminent risk of deportation. There are reports of journalists and activists wanted by the Taliban who, after being detained in Pakistan, were returned to Afghanistan without any legal process.

Former military personnel and security employees—who face risks of torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killing in Afghanistan—have been taken out of camps and compelled to return. Ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable groups have also been listed for expulsion. Civil society activists, artists, and musicians have reported that Pakistani police detained and deported them solely by labeling them as “illegal.”

These accounts demonstrate that the deportation process in Pakistan is collective, lacking individual examination, and carried out with violence, humiliation, and complete denial of access to legal counsel and judicial procedures. Many arrests occur at night, suddenly, and without prior notice—clear examples of forced return and widespread human rights violations.

Although Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the principle of non-refoulement is a binding rule of customary international law, obligating all states. Forcibly returning individuals to Afghanistan—where they face risks of torture, political persecution, gender-based violence, enforced disappearance, or death—directly violates the Convention against Torture (CAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and customary refugee protection norms.

Human Rights Defenders Plus urgently calls on:

- **UNHCR and IOM** to accelerate the assessment processes for at-risk groups and prevent any form of forced return;
- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan** and the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** to increase legal pressure, documentation, and regular reporting;
- **The European Union, Canada, the United States, and other state parties to the Refugee Convention** to activate and facilitate safe humanitarian evacuation routes;
- **Civil society networks, legal organizations, and migrant support groups** to document vulnerable cases and refer them to international protection mechanisms.

Establishing an Emergency Protection Network

HRD+ stresses the urgent need to establish a coordinated and immediate protection network—comprising legal, protective, psychological, media, and relief units—to safeguard women, civil activists, journalists, former military personnel, and minority groups facing imminent danger.

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