

**PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN Refugees from Afghanistan**

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The Pakistani authorities are reportedly planning to forcibly return tens of thousands of refugees to Afghanistan, where they would be at risk of grave human rights abuses.

The Governor of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah, has publicly announced plans to deport thousands of recently-arrived Afghan refugees from the makeshift Jalozai camp, near Peshawar. According to the Pakistani press and international media, he has said that new arrivals who have not been officially registered will be returned to Afghanistan within a few months. Apparently the Governor has issued an order to this effect and the Pakistani police are planning to carry it out.

There are up to 80,000 refugees in Jalozai camp who have fled increased fighting and a severe drought. Amnesty International has documented serious human rights abuses in Afghanistan, including widespread and persistent use of torture, summary executions, unfair trials, indiscriminate killings and the use of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Forcible return of refugees is a violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*, which is binding on all states. Under this principle, Pakistan and all other countries are obliged to keep their borders open and afford protection to refugees, even when refugees are entering in large numbers.

The government of Pakistan has provided assistance to a large Afghan refugee population for many years, often at great cost. For the past few years other members of the international community have not given the UN and other humanitarian organizations enough financial assistance to support Afghan refugee populations, and those at risk of displacement within Afghanistan. This, however, does not absolve Pakistan of its international responsibility to provide protection to Afghan refugees.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Taleban, who now reportedly control at least 90% of Afghanistan, are fighting for control of the rest of the country with the anti-Taleban alliance, which is composed of former Mujahideen, the Islamic guerillas who fought the occupying Soviet army from 1979 to 1989.

There are an estimated 1.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan the majority of whom have fled the continuing armed conflict and deteriorating human rights situation. Since September 2000 alone, 170,000 have fled to Pakistan to escape increased fighting and a severe drought. These recently-arrived refugees have been living in squalid conditions, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is urging the government to provide more camp space.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

-urging the government of Pakistan to fulfil their responsibility under international law not to forcibly return refugees to Afghanistan, where they would be at risk of serious human rights abuses;

**APPEALS TO:**

A. SATTAR  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Constitution Avenue  
Islamabad  
PAKISTAN  
**Telegram: Foreign Minister, Islamabad, Pakistan**  
**Fax: + 92 51 9207217**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Lt. General (Retd.) Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah  
Governor of North West Frontier Province  
Governor's House  
Peshawar  
PAKISTAN  
**Fax: + 92 91 9210751**  
**Salutation: Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 May 2001.