

21 September 2001

AI Index EUR 60/006/2001 - News Service Nr. 168

Backgrounder on Tajikistan: Refugees from Afghanistan

The current fear of military attacks on Afghanistan has caused Afghans to flee to neighbouring countries (mainly Pakistan and Iran, but also Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Tajikistan has had its border with Afghanistan closed since mid-September 2000, in violation of international law, consequently refugees are being stranded in the border.

Prior to the current fears of attack, some 10,000 Afghans fleeing fighting in Northern Afghanistan, are reportedly stranded on promontories in the Panj River which marks the border with Tajikistan. They are reported to lack adequate shelter, food and drinking water. Aid workers have had limited access to them.

Amnesty International is urging the Government of Tajikistan:

- to open its border with Afghanistan since they are obliged to admit Afghan refugees under international law;*
- not to turn back or forcibly return refugees to Afghanistan, where they would be at risk of serious human rights abuses.*

The organization has in the past also called on the director of the Federal Border Guard Service of the Russian Federation to ensure that the Russian border guards stationed in Tajikistan do not stop or forcibly return refugees attempting to seek protection in Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries have stated that they will allow refugees into their territory. However, considering the economic situation faced by these countries, the responsibility of receiving and providing for refugees in these countries must be shared by the international community.

For more information please see:

UA 350/00: PAKISTAN/TAJIKISTAN/IRAN Refugees from Afghanistan

<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/ASA33162000?OpenDocument>

*Further information on UA 350/00: PAKISTAN/TAJIKISTAN/IRAN
Refugees from Afghanistan*

*<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/ASA33162000?OpenDocument>
\\ENDS*

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>

Last updated : September 21