

# The Situation of Afghan Refugees and Immigrants after 2021

## Introduction

In light of the government collapse in Afghanistan, the Afghan refugee crisis has reached a new height, presenting an intensified humanitarian challenge entangled in the political dynamics of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The abrupt withdrawal of international troops and the Taliban's return to power in 2021 have sparked a massive outpour of Afghans seeking refuge, particularly in Pakistan, a country known for its historical stance as an asylum for Afghan refugees (Delawar, 2022). The escalating difficulty of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Afghanistan following the collapse of the Afghan Republic's government, together with recent trends in forced displacement, has resulted in an intensifying humanitarian crisis. This research will investigate the dynamics of these evolving conditions and challenges, and their compounded implications caused by forced deportation, ultimately calling for a more nuanced and comprehensive response to the Afghanistan refugee crisis.

Pakistan, being involved in hosting Afghan refugees for decades due to continual unrest in Afghanistan, has recently experienced security challenges attributed, in part, to the refugee population. These circumstances resulted in a policy shift, adding another dimension to the Afghan refugee crisis. The Pakistani government now urges the return of Afghan refugees, emphasizing voluntary departures or using persuasive tactics such as document control, limited service access, and clampdowns on undocumented Afghans (Barakat, 2010). In conjunction with security concerns, Pakistan's policy change also presents a way to support Afghanistan in reintegrating its displaced citizens. By deporting refugees, Pakistan hopes to foster sustainable crisis solutions and smooth reintegration of displaced individuals into their home communities. However, this measure amplifies humanitarian concerns, as many returning Afghan refugees

confront grave challenges including insufficient infrastructure, economic opportunities, and safety measures in their homeland.

Therefore, the research objective is to dissect the outcomes of this policy shift and understand its impact on the humanitarian crisis. This study engages with the essence of the evolving Afghan refugee crisis, particularly within Pakistan, and the implications of newly emerged forced displacement. In response to the multinational complexity of the crisis, this research calls for a comprehensive and considerate approach, focusing on detailing the influences of the political instability on refugees, their legal problems, human rights issues, socio-economic obstacles, and harsh living conditions (Wood, 1989). As the global refugee problem intensifies, research of this nature becomes critical. In addition to throwing light on refugees' current state, it will also explore the socio-economic consequences on host countries like Pakistan. These insights are crucial for policy-making and planning within humanitarian bodies, governmental institutions, and social work practitioners. This research essentially bridges knowledge gaps about the Afghan refugee crisis and invites global involvement in fostering efficient and compassionate solutions for these escalating challenges.

### **Thesis Statement**

This study posits that the collapse of the Afghan Republic's government in 2021 has drastically intensified the hardships, challenges, and complexities faced by recently displaced Afghan refugees in Pakistan, marking a distinct departure from the experiences of those displaced prior to this political shift

### **Research Question**

This study aims to answer crucial questions regarding the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan following the fall of the Afghan Republic's Government. By examining this issue in detail, we hope to attain a comprehensive understanding of the refugee situation that may inform better policymaking and humanitarian efforts.

The key research questions that this study seeks to address are:

A. How do the experiences, challenges, and conditions of Afghan refugees displaced after the collapse of the Afghan Republic's government in 2021 compare to those who were displaced prior to these political changes?

### **Gap Analysis**

The principal objective of this section is to identify the areas within existing scholarly works related to Afghan refugees that have not been adequately covered, explored, or studied in-depth. This research seeks to offer a significant extension to current knowledge, explaining the fine differences that have been overlooked or not given due emphasis in past literature. One of the most evident gaps in the existing literature is the aftermath of the fall of the Afghan Republic government in 2021 for Afghan refugees, particularly those taking refuge in Pakistan (Borthakur, 2017). Most research done presently has focused on historical and chronic issues faced by Afghan refugees, covering topics such as forced displacement, human rights, sociopolitical complexities, and livelihood challenges. However, the sudden and recent political shift - the collapse of the Afghan government and the consequential geopolitical dynamics created - and its impact on the refugee population remains a largely untouched area in the research spectrum.

Secondly, although some literature discusses the general concerns of Afghan refugees, papers exploring the changing nature of these concerns in the evolving political landscape are

limited. For instance, there is minimal data about the transformations in the socio-economic status of these refugees post-2021 or the shifting nuances in the challenges that the host country - Pakistan in this case - must deal with (Kaleem et al., 2023). This research aims to delve into this understudied domain, thereby filling an important gap. Thirdly, while there is a respectable amount of data reflecting trends related to Afghan refugees and forced displacement, a through-line that connects past trends to current instabilities induced by political change is missing (Borthakur, 2017). This research intends to offer a comprehensive view of the continuity and change in trends, expanding beyond familiar territories of study to offer a more holistic understanding.

Lastly, the cross-border dynamics resulting from refugee displacement is an area often bypassed by many researchers, leading to a knowledge gap. This present study intends to take a step forward in this aspect, exploring the dynamics of refugee concerns at a regional level, especially covering their effects on Pakistan's socio-political climate. In a nutshell, the principal focus of our research is to cover these identified gaps in the existing literature – the alteration in the refugees' state post-2021, the varying nature of their concerns and challenges for the host country, altered trends in forced displacement, and the evolving cross-border dynamics. It is designed to contribute meaningful insights into the more recent and relatively unfamiliar territories of the Afghan refugee situation, providing a robust, comprehensive study that extends beyond existing knowledge boundaries.