



Q11116 - Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 October 2009

UN reports about returning failed asylum seekers to Afghanistan.

In a section titled “Return to Afghanistan” the most recent version of the eligibility guidelines published by the *UN High Commissioner for Refugees* states:

“During 2008 alone, UNHCR has facilitated the return of some 278,000 Afghans, predominantly from Pakistan (274,000) and Iran (some 3,600). During the 2009 repatriation season, up to 3 June, a further 29,400 have returned from Pakistan and 1,240 from Iran. Half of such recent returns are to the eastern province of Nangarhar or Kabul, while 25 percent indicate the northern region as their destination and only 4 percent provide the south, south east and central highlands as their place of intended return. According to the latest statistical information, nearly 2.6 million Afghans continue to reside in neighboring countries; 1.7 million in Pakistan and 935,000 in Iran. In 2008, there was little voluntary repatriation from non-neighbouring countries, including European States, although an increasing number of Afghans were deported, sometimes under the guise of repatriation programmes deemed ‘voluntary’ under national legal and administrative frameworks. Furthermore, deportees known or suspected of returning with substantial amounts of cash, particularly from European countries, have been targeted by non-State actors. At least two such cases were reported in 2008. In one of them, an Afghan deported from Sweden escaped from a failed kidnapping attempt and took to living on the streets out of fear, until the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation on a humanitarian and exceptional basis found temporary accommodation for him. In another case, a deportee from Britain was kidnapped and a ransom of several thousand dollars was demanded.” (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (July 2009) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*, p.61)

This section of the guidelines also states:

“The traditional family and community structures of the Afghan social and tribal system constitute the main protection and coping mechanism for returning Afghan refugees. The support provided by families, extended families and tribes is limited to areas where family or community links exist, in particular in the place of origin or habitual residence. Those who may face particular difficulties upon return include, but are not limited to, unaccompanied women and single heads of household; unaccompanied children; unaccompanied elderly persons; victims of serious trauma, including sexual and gender based violence; physically or mentally disabled persons; and persons requiring medical assistance (whether long or short-term), particularly women. Return to places other than places of origin or previous residence, may therefore expose Afghans to insurmountable difficulties, not only in sustaining and re-establishing livelihoods but also to

security risks. Security risks may include, inter alia, arbitrary detention and arrest, targeted killings based on ethnic rivalries and family-based conflicts, besides the increasing risks being posed by the ongoing armed conflict, as detailed above.” (ibid, p.61)

This section of the guidelines concludes as follows:

“Finally, reintegration needs continue to be immense and urban centres continue to be faced with numbers of returnees, which are difficult to absorb. Afghanistan, despite being impoverished and war-torn, has, since 2002, seen a return of approximately 20 percent of its population. In this regard, given the differences particular to the situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR advises against the return of persons to areas other than their places of origin or previous areas of residence where they do not have effective family or tribal links and support, unless these returns are voluntary in nature.” (ibid, pp.61-62)

References:

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (July 2009) *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Asylum-Seekers from Afghanistan*

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4a6477ef2.pdf>

(Accessed 21 October 2009)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UNHCR Refworld