



The Global Strategic Litigation Council for Refugee Rights  
The Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility  
79 Fifth Avenue, 16th Floor  
New York, New York 10003  
United States of America

27 March 2025

FAO: The Attorney General of Pakistan, Mr. Mansoor Usman Awan  
Office of The Attorney General of Pakistan  
Supreme Court, 3rd Floor  
Constitution Avenue  
Islamabad 44000  
PAKISTAN

Also sent via email

**Re: Deportation of Afghan nationals from Pakistan**

Dear Mr. Mansoor Usman Awan,

This correspondence is addressed to you and is also being shared with the esteemed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

We extend our sincere regards and appreciation for the Government of Pakistan's continued commitment to human rights. We, as human rights organizations and advocates dedicated to the protection of human rights from across the world, write to express our deep concern regarding the detention and deportation of Afghan nationals seeking asylum in Pakistan.

We respectfully urge the Government of Pakistan to immediately cease the forcible return of individuals in need of international protection and to ensure their access to legal counsel and refugee protection in accordance with established international human rights law and standards.

Since October 2023, Afghan nationals have faced repeated waves of arrests, detentions, and deportations, including those holding UNHCR documentation and Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). Reports from Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have highlighted unlawful practices by Pakistani authorities, including arbitrary detention, family separations, and abuse. Notably, the government is reported to operate at least 49 detention centers, seven of which deny detainees—many of them children—access to legal counsel, communication with family members, or judicial oversight. These actions often occur without detainees being presented before a court or a First Information Report (FIR) being filed.

Between October 2023 and mid-January 2025, over 842,000 Afghan nationals were reportedly deported or compelled to leave due to the hostile environment. This year, the situation has escalated further, with the Ministry of Interior issuing an order requiring all documented Afghan migrants to leave Pakistan by March 31, 2025, under threat of deportation.

This forced return of Afghan refugees is especially alarming given the dire human rights situation in Afghanistan. The situation is particularly grave for Afghan individuals belonging to ethnic, religious, and social minorities, as well as women and girls, journalists, human rights defenders, and members of artistic professions such as musicians. The UN has reported that Afghans, and these groups in particular, face significant risks of persecution, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, crimes against children, and the denial of fundamental human rights upon return.

In light of these circumstances, we are gravely concerned that Pakistan's actions are violating the principle of non-refoulement.

The principle of non-refoulement is a cornerstone of international law, widely recognized as a principle of customary international law, binding on all states regardless of specific treaty ratifications. It prohibits the return of individuals to countries where they face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other serious harm.

Core human rights treaties ratified by Pakistan—such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)—have been interpreted to include non-refoulement protections, particularly where individuals face severe human rights violations in their country of origin.

Pakistan has also signed a 1993 Cooperation Agreement with UNHCR, under which it has expressly committed to uphold the non-derogable principle of non-refoulement, prohibiting the forced return of refugees to situations where they face persecution.

Courts and international human rights mechanisms have consistently applied the principle to safeguard individuals from return to torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, flagrant denial of the right to a fair trial, risks of violations to the rights to life, integrity and/or freedom of the person, serious forms of sexual and gender-based violence, or death penalty as well as violations of economic, social and cultural rights under certain circumstances.

We are also extremely concerned that Pakistan's treatment of Afghan nationals in detention is in violation of prohibitions against arbitrary, unlawful, and prolonged detention, the right to be free

from torture, to legal representation and the rights of children. These rights duties are likewise enshrined in several international conventions Pakistan has ratified, including the ICCPR (Articles 7, 9, 10, 14) CAT (Articles 3, 10), CRC (Articles 3, 9, 37). Many of them also constitute principles of customary international law.

Therefore, we respectfully call upon the Government of Pakistan to fulfill its obligations under customary international law and international human rights law by ensuring the safety and well-being of Afghan nationals within its borders. We urge Pakistan to **immediately**:

1. **Halt Mass Deportations**

Immediately suspend the mass deportation of Afghan nationals, and rescind the 31 March 2025 deadline for departure;

2. **Respect Non-Refoulement Prohibition**

Fully comply with Pakistan's obligation under customary international law and human rights treaties to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* by ensuring no individual is returned to Afghanistan where they would face persecution, torture, or other serious human rights violations;

3. **Ensure Access to International Protection**

Guarantee Afghan nationals access to international protection in Pakistan, including by establishing a formal legal framework that upholds their rights and provides fair, transparent procedures for seeking asylum, in line with international human rights and refugee law standards;

4. **End Arbitrary and Unlawful Detention**

Immediately cease the arbitrary and unlawful detention of Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers, in line with Pakistan's obligations under human rights law. Implement additional protection measures for women, children, persons with disabilities, and other people facing heightened vulnerability;

5. **Ensure Due Process**

Ensure that Afghan nationals are afforded all due process guarantees, including access to legal representation, the right to challenge detention and deportation orders, and the right to a fair trial, in accordance with Pakistan's obligations under international and domestic law.

We respectfully request that the Government of Pakistan take immediate steps to address these grave injustices, prevent their recurrence, and grant international protection to all those who need it.

**We also kindly request the Government to provide an urgent response to [secretariat@global-council.org](mailto:secretariat@global-council.org) on this matter, including confirmation that the 31 March 2025 deadline will be rescinded, and will not be enforced under any circumstances.**

We trust that Pakistan, in accordance with its human rights obligations, will take swift and decisive action to resolve this issue in a manner consistent with international standards. We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

### **Organisational Signatories**



**Afghan  
Pro Bono  
Initiative**

1. Afghan Pro Bono Initiative (APBI)



2. Al Otro Lado



**Aman Lara**

3. Aman Lara (Canada)

**Asia Pacific  
Refugee Rights  
Network**

4. Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network



5. Association for Legal Intervention, Poland



6. Asylum Access



7. Coalizione Italiana per le Libertà e i Diritti civili (CILD)



**Forcibly Displaced  
People Network**

8. Forcibly Displaced People Network



9. Front-LEX



10. Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)



11. Global Legal Action Network (GLAN)



12. Global Strategic Litigation Council for Refugee Rights



13. HIAS



14. Human Rights Research League



15. Institute for Women in Migration (IMUMI, A.C.)



16. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)



17. Instituto Para El Desarrollo Sostenible De La Mujer Lenca De Honduras



18. Justice Makers Bangladesh in France (JMBF)

**LAWYERS FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

19. Lawyers for Human Rights



20. MAP Foundation  
(Migrant Assistance  
Program  
Foundation),  
Thailand



21. Perkumpulan Suaka  
Untuk Perlindungan  
Hak Pengungsi



22. The Pickwell  
Foundation, People  
& Planet Charity UK



23. Red de mujeres  
hondureñas contra la  
violencia REDMUHCV



24. Refugee Legal



25. Refugee Legal  
Support (RLS)



26. Refugee Solidarity  
Network



**RefuSHE**

27. RefuSHE-Kenya



**THE RULE OF LAW INSTITUTE**

28. The Rule of Law  
Institute  
Foundation



29. Study and Research  
Centre on  
Environmentally  
Displaced Persons  
(NEPDA), State  
University of Paraiba,  
Brazil



30. Sulha Alliance (UK)



**Voices in Exile**

31. Voices in Exile



32. Zambian Civil  
Liberties Union  
(ZCLU)

33. AsyLex

34. British Afghan Society

35. Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN-NY)

36. Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (South Africa)

37. Clínica Jurídica para Migrantes, Universidad de los Andes

38. Fundación Refugiados Unidos

39. Global Link (UK)

40. Human Rights Law Centre (Australia)

41. International Detention Coalition (IDC)
42. Joint Action Committee for Refugees, Pakistan (JAC-R)
43. Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)
44. NANSEN The Belgian Refugee Council
45. New Women Connectors
46. Panjshir Aid
47. Refugees United
48. Safe Harbor Clinic, Brooklyn Law School
49. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
50. Patenschaftsnetzwerk Ortskräfte e.V. Germany
51. Local Staff International e.V.
52. Sin Fronteras I.A.P.

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62. Jennifer Moore, Regents' Professor, University of New Mexico School of Law



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108. Katie Lowe, Policy and Advocacy Volunteer, Border Violence  
Monitoring Network
109. Christian Carl Christensen, Lawyer