



# Massive Displacement of People From Afghanistan



## What are the issues that have led to the massive displacement of people from Afghanistan (refugees, migrants, internally displaced people)?

This displacement of people within and from Afghanistan has been occurring for decades amidst continuous war, conflict, and natural disasters across the country. People have faced massive political, economic, and social pressures and disruption, causing a protracted conflict and a humanitarian crisis. This crisis has manifested through food insecurity, corruption, poverty, and civilian casualties and harms – all of which have contributed to massive and continuous displacement of people within and outside the country.

The 20-year US occupation (which ended in mid-2021) only exacerbated this issue. Since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in mid-2021, the situation has worsened and hundreds of thousands of people have either been internally displaced or forced to flee the country for fear of violence, persecution, and the loss of basic human rights.



## What have been the impacts of displacements on women, specifically?

Women in Afghanistan are facing the denial of their basic rights, including the right to education, to work, and to access healthcare. Women experiencing displacement are at heightened risk of gender-based violence, food insecurity, exposure to trafficking, and other harms.

However, instead of a recognition of women's rights by the international community, they are being excluded. The gendered impacts of the current crisis are not being considered, and women are being denied the right to participate in key forums and processes pertaining to refugees, humanitarian aid, and peace.



## What is the size and scope of the displacement of people within and from Afghanistan?

Afghanistan displacement represents the third-largest displacement of people in the world. According to [UNHCR's website](#):

- There are now roughly 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees around the world, with at least 2.2 million living in Iran and Pakistan.
- There are 3.5 million internally displaced people living within Afghanistan, having been forced to leave their homes to seek safety elsewhere in the country.
- By December 2020, there were 2.9 million people internally displaced by conflict in Afghanistan.
- 677,832 people have been internally displaced between January and September 2021 alone, with roughly 80 per cent being women and children.

Currently, there are some countries that have made commitments to take in Afghan refugees while others' borders are closed to those in need.

The **US and its coalition partners** brought 100,000 people out of Afghanistan after Kabul fell to the Taliban in August 2021; this group was comprised largely of foreign nationals or those who worked closely with NATO forces. Of this group of 100,000 people, 3,500 were accepted into **Canada** which has committed to take in 40,000 Afghan refugees, particularly those who are vulnerable (women, girls, and LGBTQ+ persons). The **US** has committed to take in 34,500 refugees via "special immigrant visas" while the United Kingdom committed to take in 20,000 Afghan refugees over the long-term, including 5,000 in the first year since the US evacuation. **Turkey** and **China** have outright refused to take in Afghan refugees while other countries like **France** and **Germany** have made no certain commitments. Other countries like **Hungary**, **Albania**, and **Mexico** have taken in low numbers of Afghan refugees (ranging from under 100 to a few hundred) and some will only accept refugees temporarily (**Colombia** and **Uganda**).

Irregular migration routes have over the years taken people from Afghanistan to Australia and towards the countries of the European Union, with thousands of refugees finding themselves in inhumane and degrading conditions, including being subjected to border violence.



## What is WILPF calling for in relation to displacement and the ongoing Afghan refugee crisis in Afghanistan?

Working in close collaboration with WILPF Afghanistan and international human rights organisations, WILPF is focused on ensuring the rights of Afghan women and girls, advocating for refugees and those seeking to evacuate, and securing peace and humanitarian aid for a country in turmoil.

## Actions and Recommendations

- All people leaving Afghanistan must be offered a safe and dignified life through international protection and through the provision of refugee status under the 1951 Convention or regional refugee instruments. There can be no deadline to people's right to leave, seek safe passage, and their right to seek protection and asylum.
- It is paramount that countries must open and keep open their borders to Afghans seeking safety: All UN Member states must ensure equitable sharing of responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees from Afghanistan. This must take into account the imbalance in capacities and resources between countries that currently host refugees and the comparatively affluent Global North.
- Countries must expedite and act on their commitments to accept refugees. Although there are commitments to accept refugees in place, there have been massive delays by many countries to act on these commitments and even refugees with all the correct documentation have been unable to move to these countries.
- The voices of the Afghan refugee community – and particularly women's voices within this community – are vital and key to all forums and processes regarding the peace and future of Afghanistan.

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