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Treatment of returnees

A paper issued in December 2019 by the *UNHCR* states that:

“...deported Afghans and their relatives and friends in the country are threatened by several actors due to of their flight and their life in Europe. The fact of having been in Europe is enough to be targeted by the Taliban...” (UNHCR (December 2019) *Afghanistan: Compilation of Country of Origin Information (COI), Relevant for Assessing the Availability of an Internal Flight, Relocation or Protection Alternative (IFA/IRA/IPA) to Kabul*, p.20).

In November 2019 *Deutsche Welle* states that:

“People deported to Afghanistan face dire security and economic challenges upon their return that make them vulnerable to radicalization...” (Deutsche Welle (26 November 2019) *Deported Afghans at risk of radicalization: study*, p.1).

A publication issued in November 2019 by *Medico International/Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization* notes that:

“The financial cost of being smuggled across multiple international boundaries is very high. Recovery from such a scale of financial debt is extremely challenging. Such debt has the potential to negatively impact a deportee’s life over the long-term. The majority of the Afghans who have attempted to reach Europe or other countries in the Global North have either sold their land and properties or have borrowed money from their families and friends” (Medico International/Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (November 2019) *Deportation to Afghanistan, A Challenge to State Legitimacy and Stability?*, pp.16-17).

Reuters in October 2019 states that:

“Hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees are being forced back, or returning of their own accord and struggling to find housing in the cities where they often settle for jobs...” (Reuters (21 October 2019) *Afghanistan struggles to find housing for returning refugees*).

Amnesty International in October 2019

“Forced returns to Afghanistan, an unsafe country, are a violation of international law as they put people at risk of serious human rights violations” (Amnesty International (15 October 2019) *Netherlands: Do not force Afghan interpreter back to danger*).

In October 2019 the *Finnish Immigration Service* states that:

“Those who return, like other residents of Kabul, mostly have to rely on their family and other networks, which can be difficult especially for those who have not lived in Kabul before. Returnees from Europe may not be welcomed by their families due to

their loss of assets and the stigma that follows failure in supporting the family by migration” (Finnish Immigration Service (15 October 2019) *Afghanistan: Fact-Finding Mission to Kabul in April 2019 - Situation of Returnees in Kabul*, p.2).

This document also states that:

“UNHCR noted that many people who have returned from Europe have faced discrimination because they are accused of doing things that are seen immoral in Afghanistan and because they were in a non-Muslim country...These can be simple things, such as a different haircut or the way they dress. This makes them easy to be recognized...Another issue with returns from Europe is that the returnees are perceived as wealthy and people think that they are just trying to take advantage of the support provided by the international community” (ibid, p.15).

In September 2019 the *New Humanitarian* states that:

“Each year, hundreds of thousands of Afghans return – or are pushed – home, increasing the burden on an already fragile state. Roughly one in six Afghans need some form of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN’s aid coordination arm, OCHA” (New Humanitarian (13 September 2019) *Roundup: Migration, displacement, and Afghanistan’s interlocking crises*).

The *New Humanitarian* in August 2019 states that:

“...there are few services for returning refugees and migrants” (New Humanitarian (1 August 2019) *Coming home to conflict: Why Afghan returnees say they were better off as refugees*, p.2).

In June 2019 the *World Bank* states that:

“...most returnees work as daily wage laborers or are self-employed in non-agricultural jobs...” (World Bank (June 2019) *Living Conditions and Settlement Conditions, Finding from a 2018 Phone Survey of Afghan Returnees and UNHCR data*, p.19).

This document also states that:

“...recent returnees are living under difficult circumstances” (ibid, p.24).

In June 2019 the *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia* states in a report that

“Afghanistan generally accepts both voluntary and involuntary returns from western countries, but there have been some occasions in recent years in which the government has refused to grant landing permission for incoming flights carrying returnees. Returnees from western countries almost exclusively return to Kabul. Most returnees have been single men rather than family groups. In-country sources report that many returnees choose to remain in Kabul for economic reasons rather than return to their home provinces. There are no tracking mechanisms for those returned to Afghanistan, and it is difficult to assess the conditions they face on return. Amnesty International has reported that there have been cases in which returnees from Europe have been killed after returning to Afghanistan. DFAT has no information to suggest that returnees from western countries attract negative

attention from state authorities for having sought and failed to gain asylum, and assesses that these cases are more likely to have related to the highly dangerous general security situation, which affects all Afghans” (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (27 June 2019) *DFAT Country Information Report: Afghanistan*, p.51).

In June 2019 the *European Asylum Support Office* states in a report that:

“...that Afghans identifying with western values may be targeted by insurgent groups, since they can be perceived as un-Islamic, or pro-government, or can be considered spies...” (European Asylum Support Office (June 2019) *EASO Country Guidance: Afghanistan*, p.65).

This document also states that:

“Returnees could be perceived as wealthy by Afghan society. Some cases are reported in which returnees received threats or were extorted by criminals due to their perceived wealth...” (ibid, p.74).

In May 2019 the *Asia Foundation* states that:

“...over 80% of returnees are employed in position of ‘vulnerable employment’ (Asia Foundation (14 May 2019) *A Survey of the Afghan Returnees 2018*, p.52).

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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.

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