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Preface

Last year, the Afghan migrants issue was an international issue that had attracted attentions of the nations and governments inside and outside the country. The World Refugee Day was celebrated on June 20 and in the meanwhile the issue of worsened situation of the Afghan migrants in the neighboring and European countries and also the high number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) had formed the headlines of the internal and international media.

In his statement on the occasion of the World Refugee Day, the Afghan President stated that Afghanistan is incomplete because millions of Afghans have migrated outside the country. He also declared that returning of these migrants is relevant to the stability and development in the country. The Afghan Chief Executive Office also released a statement on its official website and expressed its commitment to return the Afghan refugees and to resolve their problems in foreign countries.

Here you would read about the International Migrants Day, general situation of the migrants in the world, the number and situation of the Afghan migrants in the neighboring countries, the state of Afghan migrants in all over the world and the situation of the IDPs in Afghanistan.

The World Refugee Day and the Afghan refugees in the world



The World Refugee Day was celebrated as usual on June 20 (2016). But in 2016 not only migrants live in worst situation but the number of them has also augmented more than ever.

On the other hand, the Afghan migrants' issue is being politically dealt with in Pakistan and Islamabad is once again using Afghan migrants as a political tool against the Afghan government.

The current number of the migrants in the world; their situation; and the impacts of the recent changes in Pakistani policies on the Afghan migrants are the issues that are analyzed here.

The situation of refugees in the world

The number of the displacements has unprecedentedly increased in all over the world and has crossed 65 million marks. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2016, the number of refugees has increased 10% compared to 2014. In 2014, there were 59.5 million people who were forcefully displaced from their homes in all over the world but this number is now increased to 65.3 million which means 33972 people are forced to leave their homes in a daily average.

On the other hand, based on the statistics of the UNHCR, the number of migrants settled in the countries other than their home countries is 21.3 million. 39% of these migrants are hosted in Central East and Northern Africa, 29% in Africa, 14% in Asia and Pacific, 12% in Northern and Southern America and 6% in Europe. 54% of these migrants came from Syria (4.9 million) followed by 2.7 million Afghans and 1.1 million Somali.

Islamic countries are on the top of the countries list who hosts refugees; Turkey (with 2.5 million migrants in it), Pakistan (1.6 million), Lebanon (1.1 million), Iran (979400), Ethiopia (736100) and Jordan (664100) are the top hosting nations.

Refugees live in worst condition in all over the world and the asylum applications of 10 million of them are rejected and their some fundamental rights (such as, education, healthcare, employment, and the freedom of movement) are violated.

The Afghan migrants in the world

Dealing with Afghan Migration is the most significant issue faced by the National Unity Government (NUG). On the one hand, due to increasing insecurity situation in Afghanistan, many Afghans are forced to go to Europe and live there in worst situation and on the other hand, more than three million Afghan refugees in the neighboring countries are faced with many challenges which have put the Afghan government under tremendous pressure. Repatriation and reintegration of these migrants are also the other challenges that the NUG would need to address. In the meanwhile, the Number of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the country has also reached to its high levels.

The situation of the Afghan refugees in the neighboring countries: In a press conference on the occasion of the International Migrants Day, the Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Sayed Hussain Alimi Balkhi said that there are 7,23 million Afghan refugees in all over the world, most of which are settled in Pakistan and Iran.

The Proof of Registration (PoR) cards of the Afghan migrants in Pakistan would expire in this month and measures to extend the expiration date of these cards are yet to be taken. Although; Pakistan had promised to extend the expiration date of the PoR cards for two years and to register unregistered Afghan migrants by the end of the January 2016; but in this regard Pakistan is yet to take practical measures.

On the other hand, in Iran, although, the refugee cards “Amayesh” of 849 thousand and residence of 560 thousand Afghan migrants were extended and in 2015, the number of the forcefully repatriated Afghan registered migrants were also decreased compared to the two previous years; but still sending Afghan migrants in Syrian war and forcefully expelling of the Afghan unregistered migrants were the challenges that the Afghan government faced in the areas of migrants in Iran.

Asylum seekers in Europe: in 2015, almost 250 thousand Afghans had applied for European asylum but in the first six months of 2016, this number decreased to 39439 people. Although, the Afghan Minister of Refugees and Repatriations declares the initiation of infrastructural projects and continuation of the NATO and US forces' presence in the country; and the improvement in the security situation as the main factors behind the decrease in the number of the Afghan migration in Europe; but discriminatory behavior of the European countries against the Afghan migrants and the increasingly tough stances of the EU countries against the migrants are the main reasons behind the reduction of the migrants' number in European countries and that is also the reason why 3557 Afghan migrants have voluntarily returned to their countries since the beginning of 2016.

The high number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Afghanistan: in its recent report the Amnesty International has stated that the number of IDPs in Afghanistan is tripled compared to 2013. The report shows that there were 500 thousand IDPs in 2013 but due to the deteriorated security situation this number has risen to 1.2 million in 2016.

The Afghan migrants; the victim of the Kabul-Islamabad policies!

In the past several decades, Pakistan's behavior regarding the Afghan migrants was under the influence of the Kabul-Islamabad policies; but recently two incidents have highly affected the Afghan migrants in Pakistan.

In December 2014, a military school in Peshawar was attacked, and in response to the attack due to Pakistani policies 58460 registered Afghan refugees repatriated to Afghanistan. On the other hand, in 2015, approximately 119279 unregistered Afghan migrants were forced to return home as a result of the change in the policies of the Pakistani government; most of them (97124 people) returned through Turkham route and the remaining (22155 people) through Spinboldak.

100042 of these unregistered Afghan migrants had returned voluntarily but more than 19 thousand (19237) others were forcefully repatriated to their countries.

Besides that, recently the Afghan and Pakistani border forces opened fire on each other while Pakistanis were constructing security gate at Turkham. In response to the incident, Pakistani police conducted operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and as a result, 254 Afghan migrants were forcefully repatriated to Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistani Police has also arrested 1200 Afghan migrants in the past two weeks (June 2016).

In addition, due to the deteriorated and unstable bilateral relations between the two countries, neither the expiration date of the PoR cards of the registered Afghan migrants are extended nor the Pakistani government has registered the unregistered Afghan migrants which was promised by Pakistani officials.

On the other hand, after the recent incident in Turkham the heated expressions of the Pakistani officials regarding the Afghan migrants comes at a time that the Afghan government has demanded from Pakistan to allow the Afghan migrants in Pakistan until 2020. The special assistant on Foreign Affairs to Pakistani Prime Minister Tariq Fatami said to the Media that Pakistan will no more host the Afghan migrants. Moreover, Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain has said that the Afghan migrants must return to their home as soon as possible.

The Afghan government's policies on refugees

Issuing some decrees regarding the Afghan migrants, building cities, distributing lands, making policies on migrants, and occasional visits of the Afghan senior official to the neighboring and European countries to resolve the Afghan migrant issue were the Afghan government's policies on migrants in the past 15 years.

The Afghan government still lacks a comprehensive and clear policy regarding Afghan migrants and all that the Afghan government has done so far is to solve the Afghan migrants issue with the neighboring countries through extending the Afghan migrants' residence in these countries.

Although the Afghan government constructed 62 cities for the Afghan migrants but yet the Afghan migrants are settled in neither of these cities, and the city building project was in a large extent a failure. Another reason for the failure of

this project was that according to the government's statistics, around 50000 units/fragments of lands are distributed among the Afghan migrants, which given the high number of the Afghan migrants, is not sufficient.

In addition, even this limited policies build by the Afghan government are not implemented.

The end

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