

## Pakistan's Anti-Immigration Policy

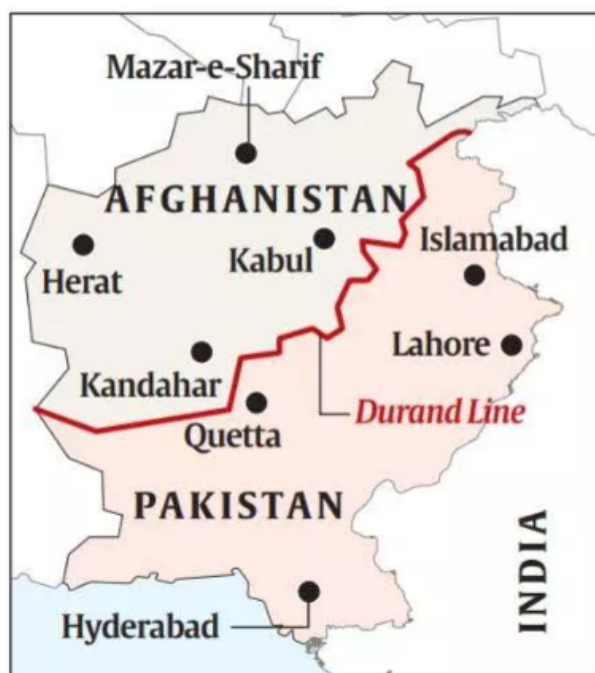
### Why in news?

Recently, Pakistan government launched a nationwide deportation operation against 17 lakh undocumented Afghan refugees.

### Why there is huge influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan?

*Afghanistan and Pakistan share a 2,640km long border which passes through rugged mountains, densely forested valleys and narrow rock passages. Its topography makes it porous and difficult to control.*

- According to estimates, more than 95% of refugees in Pakistan, both documented and undocumented, are Afghan nationals.
- **Soviet invasion**- In 1979, Soviet invaded Afghanistan, resulting in steady migration of people to neighbouring Pakistan.
- **US invasion**- United States invaded Afghanistan after the September 11 attack.
- **Rise of Taliban**- Refugees International, an independent humanitarian group said that since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in 2021, more than 600,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan.



### What is the deportation about?

- **Deportation**- The surge in violence this year triggered Pakistan to launch a

nationwide deportation operation.

- Afghan refugees require a *Proof of Registration (PoR) card* to legally remain in Pakistan.
- **Afghanistan's response-** Afghan government led by the Taliban called the deportation as unacceptable and asked Pakistan to reconsider the decision.
- **Deportations in the past**
  - **2016** - More than 600,000 Afghan immigrants, returned to their country, according to data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
  - **2018-** Almost 50,000 Afghan citizens, both registered and undocumented, were expelled, according to the UNHCR.

### What are the implications of this move?

- The alarm bells ring louder for *minorities, women and journalists* who are being forced to return to a country languishing under the Taliban regime.
- This move would particularly put *women and girls* in grave danger as they would be exposed to persecution and other human rights violations simply because of their sex and their gender.
- It would affect people who are living and studying in Pakistan as the Taliban has imposed *bans on young and unmarried women* from accessing health centres, schools and universities, public spaces, or pursuing means of employment.
- Those who *worked for the U.S., the U.K. and other Western countries* before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan are highly vulnerable.

### Is deportation legal?

- **Forceful detention-** Mass deportation and harassment are illegal, unconstitutional and violative of people's fundamental rights.
- **Principle of refoulement-** It forms an essential protection under international human rights, refugee, humanitarian and customary law.
- United Nations specifies that countries are forbidden from directly or indirectly forcing people from returning to a place of persecution.
- It states that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm.
- **Applicability-** It is applicable to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status.

### What is the reaction of human rights agencies?

*Human rights agencies estimate that about 60% of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are undocumented.*

- **Amnesty International-** Afghan refugees' lives and rights are at stake due to the collective failure of Pakistan and the international community to share the responsibility for their protection.
- **United Nations-** It called the decision a 'human rights catastrophe' which will put the

refugees who fled persecution in neighbouring Afghanistan at grave risk.

- **Rights group-** They have urged Pakistan to stop the crackdown against, and harassment of, Afghan refugees across the country in keeping with international legal obligations.

## References

1. [The Hindu- Why Pakistan deporting Afghan migrants and refugees](#)
2. [United Nations- Principle of non-refoulement](#)

