

Refugee vs Refugee - A New Flashpoint in J&K

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What's the news?

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- Ever since the 2014 Assembly elections forced the PDP and BJP into a coalition in Jammu and Kashmir, tensions have erupted repeatedly over a lot of issues.

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- The latest issues that are deepening the faultlines between Jammu and the Valley are the [issuance of identity cards to Hindu refugees from West Pakistan](#), and the [settlement of Muslim refugees from Myanmar in the state](#).

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What are the identity certificates that the J&K govt has been issuing?

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- They have a picture of the holder along with his name and parentage, and certify that he became a refugee from an area now in Pakistan after Partition.

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- The certificate issued, says that the holder was a resident of an area in undivided India (that is now a part of Pakistan), and that he is now living at a particular place in J&K as a refugee from (erstwhile) West Pakistan.

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How many West Pakistan refugees currently live in India?

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- No recent figures are available. The 1951 Census counted 72,95,870 people who had moved to India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West

Pakistan during Partition.

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- Those who settled elsewhere became Indian citizens domiciled in the respective states, the 5,764 families who had arrived in Jammu from the adjoining areas of Pakistan **were treated only as Indian citizens, and not as permanent residents of J&K.**

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- The refugees coming to J&K were treated differently from those who settled down elsewhere in accordance with Section 6 of the Constitution of the state.

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How does the issue of govt identity certificates to refugees impact the situation?

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- Demands for permanent resident status to West Pakistan refugees probably started during and after the 1965 and 1971 wars.

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- Many permanent residents were displaced from areas now controlled by Pakistan. And the state govt, in order to settle them elsewhere, took back agricultural land from West Pakistan refugees.

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- The literate among those who lost their lands eyed jobs in the central government, especially in the Army and paramilitary forces.

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- There was no major problem until around 2000, but thereafter, in the context of militancy, all **central government recruiting agencies started asking for domicile certificates** in order to ascertain their place of residence.

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- Because the refugees were not permanent residents of the state, they faced difficulty in establishing that they lived in areas of the Jammu region.

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- Though the **identity certificates** being issued to them do not confer upon them the status of permanent residents of J&K, they do **give them an official address for the first time since they migrated** to the state nearly 7 decades ago.

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So why does this make many politicians in the Valley insecure?

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- Politicians in the Muslim-majority Valley seeing the issuance of identity certificates to West Pakistan refugees, who are overwhelmingly Hindu, as the first step to granting them domicile status as **part of a bigger plot to change the state's demographic contours.**

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And who are the Rohingyas? How do they fit into these tensions?

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- **Rohingyas are a roughly 1-million strong ethnic Muslim community in Myanmar**, most of whom are denied citizenship rights as their government considers them to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

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- A sizeable number have fled to India to escape persecution and violence, including nearly 7,000-8,000 in the Jammu region. Many of them carry certificates issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Delhi.

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- The belief that Kashmiri Muslims are taking away a major chunk of the state's resources, leads many in predominantly Hindu Jammu to look at the settlement of new Muslim families with resentment and suspicion.

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- As with the West Pakistan refugees and the Muslim population in Kashmir, settlements of Rohingya Muslims in Jammu city — appear to many Hindus as a conspiracy to change the demography of the region.

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