

Plight of North and South Waziristan Refugees in Afghanistan

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Paktika, Afghanistan: Thousands of families from North and South Waziristan Agency who are taking refuge in Paktika and Khost province of Afghanistan to avoid the consequences of intensive military operation “Zarb-e-Azb” against militants in the tribal areas of FATA are living a deplorable life in Khost and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan, FRC learnt.

Ishtiaq Mahsud who visited Afghanistan in October 2016 conducted in-depth interviews with the North and South Waziristan refugees dwelling in Khost and Paktika provinces of Afghanistan. Below is the transcription of Ishtiaq Mahsud’s interviews with the refugees of North and South Waziristan which manifests the difficulties and hardship they are facing inside Afghanistan.

Respondent Asad Ullah: We are residents of North Waziristan Agency. My name is Asad Ullah and I belong to Maizar area. We were displaced due to the anti-terrorist operation “Zarb-e-Azb” launched by the Pakistan Army. We are being subjected to unlawful treatment and our roads are being closed. The authorities charge 10 to 15 thousand rupees of toll on a single vehicle. We appeal the government of Pakistan to stop them from taking such a big amount as toll tax from us and open the public transport routes for us to go back to our homes.

Respondent Amir Khan: I belong to tehsil Sararogha of South Waziristan Agency. We came here due to the war in our area. We appeal the government of Pakistan to open routes for us. We saw that the affectees that are taking refuge in Khost province are getting relief, while nobody is paying any heed to the people in Lahman.

Respondent Muhammad Khan: I am from Maizar, North Waziristan Agency. The government must open the routes for us as soon as possible. They should open the routes that are close to our hometowns. If they are not going to open the routes, then they should clearly tell us that we are no longer a part of Pakistan. Then, we will appeal some other country to adopt us. They should stop giving us false hopes.

Respondent Farooq: I am a resident of Maizar, North Waziristan Agency. We migrated to Birmal in Lahman, Afghanistan due to the operation “Zarb-e-Azb”. Pakistani government has forgotten us. We appeal the Pakistan government that it should allow us back to our homes as soon as possible. We are very poor and we don’t even get rations. Neither does the government of Pakistan, nor Afghanistan pay us any attention. We request the Pakistani government, our elders and influential people of our agency to let us go our homes because we can’t afford to live anywhere else.

Respondent Umar: First I would like to thank you for giving us the chance to voice our issues. I request the Pakistani government that since the winter season is here, therefore, the government should open the closest routes to our agency so that these tribals can go back to their homes as soon as possible.

Respondent Mian Din: You can see these dwellings which are empty; the inhabitants have left these houses because of shelling by jets and helicopters. The jets, helicopters and drones conducted a string of airstrikes last night and the night before, for about eight hours in total. The people living in these houses were all refugees and displaced persons from FATA, Pakistan. You can see that people have left their tents and houses to save their lives. We were subjected to artillery and airstrikes in Pakistan and we moved here, hoping that we might be safe here; however, the Afghanistan government welcomed us with far worst. All these destroyed houses were belonged to Pakistani refugees; there were no militants or terrorists taking refuge in these houses.

All the rubble you can see was used to be our houses. When Pakistan army started the anti-terror operation, we had to leave our homes with our luggage laden on donkeys and mules, as we couldn’t afford the vehicles. We constructed these temporary houses here; nonetheless, they were destroyed by the jets and drones. When the bombardment started, we ran for our lives, in middle of the night, whereas most of our women and children died while trying to flee from the homes. We appeal the whole world, especially the Afghan government, to stop Afghan security personnel from bombarding us; otherwise, we will have to flee to another country. We gave refuge to the people of Afghanistan for 30 to 40 years and they were treated very kindly; nobody fired a shot at Afghan refugees. On the other hand, Afghanistan is using all the latest technologies, provided by the US, on these poor refugees.

Respondent Aqib Khan: I am from North Waziristan Agency, Pakistan. We live in Lahman and we don’t get any funds or rations. Let alone the provision of basic needs, the

government is bombarding us with jets and helicopters. They don't care about our women and children. I appeal the Pakistani government and Prime Minister to find a short route for these unfortunate people and put an end to their misery. The government must let these refugees go to their homes through the shortest route possible.