
EU'S SECRET ULTIMATUM TO AFGHANISTAN: ACCEPT 80,000 DEPORTEES OR LOSE AID

-

29.09.2016

The Guardian, 28 September 2016

When international donors and the Afghan government convene in Brussels next week, the EU secretly plans to threaten Afghanistan with a reduction in aid if the war-torn country does not accept at least 80,000 deported asylum seekers.

According to a leaked restricted memo (pdf), the EU will make some of its aid migration sensitive, even while acknowledging that security in Afghanistan is worsening.

Meanwhile, the Afghan government is also struggling with internal turmoil, and has failed to revive the economy or produce jobs for the young who leave the country in droves.

It would be challenging for Afghanistan to absorb 80,000 deportations. So far, in 2016, about 5,000 Afghans have returned voluntarily from Europe.

This is putting unreasonable pressure on the Afghan government, which is not able to respond to such numbers, said Timor Sharan, senior analyst for the International Crisis Group in Afghanistan.

Afghans make up the second largest group of migrants arriving in Europe, with 196,170 applying for asylum (pdf) last year.

At the two-day summit in Brussels, which begins on 4 October, international donors are expected to roughly match the \$4bn (£3bn) annually pledged at the 2012 Tokyo conference over the next four years.

The pressure on Afghanistan is part of a broader EU strategy of making aid to poor countries conditional on them accepting deported migrants.

The best known example is the [Türksat](#) deal (£5.2bn) offered to Turkey in exchange for taking back asylum seekers and improving border controls. Other targeted countries include Niger, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Lebanon and Libya. The EU has also considered similar deals with Eritrea and Sudan, the governments of which are accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

In Afghanistan, analysts warn that the EU is sending people back to danger and destitution.

Yousuf* fled Afghanistan in 2011. His father was a policeman under the communist regime of the 1980s. Yousuf, 28, himself a communist, received threats and was nearly killed by a Taliban bomb.

He fled to Russia, where he picked up a Bible. Always averse to Islam, Yousuf said he found the Christian stories of Jesus honest and captivating. In early 2016, he left Russia and settled in Norway, where he said he officially converted, move sure to inflame the ire of Islamic fundamentalists if he ever returned to Afghanistan.

Recently, though, he was deported. Either Norwegian authorities did not believe his conversion was sincere, or they felt that it would put his life in danger, he said. On 19 September he arrived in Kabul. It was a week before he summoned the courage to leave his rented room and tentatively walk the streets.

Life here is very difficult. I have personal problems with Taliban, but I also worry about other people who live in this society. Christians don't have any value here, he said.

Afghanistan is absolutely not safe, according to Sharan. The EU's rationale is that these people can just resettle in other parts of Afghanistan, [beyond where they're from], he said. But the security situation is fluid. Places, cities and highways that were safe a month ago are not any more.

As Taliban attacks rise, so do civilian casualties. According to the UN, 11,000 people were killed or maimed in Afghanistan last year, an unprecedented number.

Broken glass and debris are seen inside a restaurant a day after a July 2016 suicide attack in the

Afghan capital Kabul

Even in Kabul, violence is increasing. In July, a suicide bomber killed at least 80 protesters. More than a dozen students and staff were killed in an attack on a university in August.

While cities are relatively safe, it is difficult to make a life in them. Jobs often come through social connections, and many asylum seekers have lived for years, if not decades, in Iran or Pakistan before migrating to Europe, Sharan said.

So many of those deported do not stay in Afghanistan, instead either trying their luck again in Europe or settling in neighbouring Iran or Pakistan. Abdul Ghafoor, director of the Afghanistan Migrant Advice and Support Organisation, who himself once sought asylum in Norway, said the majority of returnees he meets leave Afghanistan.

He said some returnees were faced renewed danger immediately. A recent attack on a foreign guesthouse in central Kabul occurred close to a hotel housing returnees.

All the windows were broken in the hotel. Families were thrown out of their beds, Ghafoor said.

The EU said in the leaked memo that it is aware of the worsening security situation and threats to which people are exposed and that Afghanistan is suffering record levels of terrorist attacks and civilian casualties.

The memo added: Despite this, more than 80,000 persons could potentially need to be returned in the near future.

An EU official said in an email: We dont comment on leaked documents. He added that the EU and Afghanistan have a constructive dialogue on migration.

Kaynak/Source: