

THE IMPACT OF AFGHAN REFUGEES INTO EUROPE; INTEGRATION, ASYLUM SYSTEM AND SOCIAL ENVIROMENT

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Abstract: Afghan refugees have left their homes, jobs, social environment, and relatives due to many problems such as political, tribal and religious issues. Their immigrations arise from the necessity to protect their lives and avoid direct danger of conflict and war. The term “Afghan refugee” may include a variety of diversity where people in same nation ware multi cultures and traditions and make the difference religious in the society. For the internal Afghani problems being, many of these refugees proceed to migrate to Europe to seek better life in terms of safety and security. This migration creates of cultural overlapping and clash; the migrated people find it difficult to integrate within new social and cultural confinements. According to the European Law, there have been many refugees who are restricted by the situation of their countries concerning residential European policy; if the conditions in their country is good, their chance of getting permission to stay in Europe gets less and vice versa. Relationally, this paper is dedicated to pin down the basic characteristics of the Afghani integration; manifesting the positivity and the negativity as well as the obstacles of their integration and economic circumstances.

Keywords: Afghani integration, asylum seekers, European Union, Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

Refugee is not a limited in the particular place rather it became a controversial debate among host countries over many implications about fully integration, social environment and legal rights. Therefore, Dr. Otovescu stated, “Refuge is a basic human right that has generally become a commonplace phenomenon as international states must abide to”¹. In early times, refugee had a very strong root and a respected status in ancient Greece. During the Romulus period, the founder of the Roman Empire, all those who were refugees had all the rights that the citizens of Rome had. Those who violated this law was severely punished. This paper endeavors to investigate various issues concentrated on the very fundamental matter of Afghani integration within

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¹ Dumitru Otovescu, *Tratat de sociologie generala*, Craiova, Beladi Publishing, 2010, p. 609.

tin European societies and cultures. Evidently, the historical statistics of Afghani refugees and asylum seekers manifests a tremendous wave starting with the USSR's military interventions in Afghanistan where it continues to affect Afghans for many different respects. War, violence and fear obligatory oppressive decisions of Russian forces have contribution to millions of Afghans to flee their country and seek refuge initially in neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran as well many countries of the European Union.

The Afghani government is trying to bring Afghani refugees back into their country, regardless of Government's efforts in this matter the issue of security remained actual obstacle to outcome it. In this respect, Afghani refugees fluctuated between unsecure daily lives to enforce them in Europe because of missing peace in Afghanistan. This article will concern in the universal discussions on migrants in particular from Afghanistan to the European Union countries, the essential obsession for the refugees from Afghanistan was the integration into European society and the other difficulties they might face. This work began with an explanation of the reasons that motivated the Afghans to leave the country and ends with explanations of their importance and role in the societies of the countries of the European Union.

Historically, Russian forces captured Afghanistan in 1979 and fought for 9 years, causing; death of thousand innocent people, political chasm, economic and social breakdowns. Aftermath the Russians left the country, but Afghanistan was entirely destroyed and no obvious plan to reconstruct a national state. The brutal civil war torn the national harmony and to cause heterogeneity atmosphere due to a numerous death, do not have infrastructure nothing remain and paralysis of the strategic development "results in total destruction of the capital Kabul and the emergence of the Taliban terrorist group"². With the advent of the Taliban in 1993 and the rise of countless crimes committed by this terrorist group, the number of Afghan refugees has increased. By the 1990s, Afghanistan had more than a third of the world's refugees, with over 5 million displaced; since the emergence of the Taliban this number doubled, reaching 10 million people who had regularly escaped the country³. They have settled for the first time in neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan; these two countries are actually providing refuge to the largest number until this day. According to the latest statistics, Pakistan hosts about 2.5 million refugees, while Iran is the host country for about 3 million Afghan refugees. Besides the fact that they have a border with Afghanistan, we must also consider religious and linguistic relations, one of the most important reasons for such a large number of Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

At the beginning of 1990, the number of Afghan asylum seekers increased dramatically, until they became the largest refugee group to arrive in Europe in 2001. We can say that in total, Afghan citizens applied for asylum in at least 56

² For details, see www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37560704, accessed at December 29, 2019.

³ Zachary Laub, *The Taliban in Afghanistan*, available at <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>, accessed at December 27, 2019.

from countries around the world, including Iceland, Chile and Singapore. Europe, in particular, witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of Afghan refugees between 1999–2001⁴. Rutting showed that “The number of Afghan asylum seekers in Europe decreased simultaneously by more than 80% in the period 2001–2004, from 54,000 in 2001 to below 9,000 in 2004”⁵. In the period 2004–2009 many Afghans returned home, hoping that things in their country would change and that the country’s situation would improve that “something that did not happen but against the Taliban troops began to control much of Afghanistan and many Afghans have decided to seek refuge again in neighboring countries and in Europe”⁶.

1. METHODOLOGY

The current research was conducted in autumn/winter 2019, and the research subjects were Afghan refugees in EU countries. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were considered adequate for this specific study. Data on Afghan refugees from the EU and their ability to integrate into European society, as well as the difficulties they face, were obtained through scientific investigations and statistical analyzes. Through this paper, a broad and detailed description of the phenomenon of Afghan refugees in the EU was obtained. Methods of interviews, questionnaires and documentary techniques were used for data collection.

2. INTEGRATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES INTO EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Integration is a complex process consisting of a series of elements such as economic, social, cultural, legal and educational element⁷. Only by going through all these elements can one become an active member of the host country’s society. In order to accommodate and successively integrate refugees and asylum seekers, European societies must adopt a number of approaches.

Importantly, there must be a way of assisting refugees in the integration program. In fact, the refugee integration program must be official based on beneficiary’s need to overcome all differences between them in terms of education, occupation and age. The host state should encourage refugees and asylum seekers to actively participate in all aspects of social life and contributing into real community development process. The host state should inform the refugees about

⁴ For details, see <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org>, accessed october 27, 2019.

⁵ For details, see www.unhcr.org/421316072.pdf, accessed at December 15, 2019.

⁶ Jelena Bjelica, *The mass return of Afghan refugees*, available at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org>, accessed at December 29, 2019.

⁷ Adrian Otovescu, *Romanians in Italy*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 2016, p. 89.

their right that they legally grant through the law boundaries of the nation. Integrating refugees, they will be active members and thoroughly absorb into host society. Coordination of various organizations and institutions can create a great support and assistance of refugees and asylum seekers plays a key role in their integration. The process of integration of refugees from a sociological point of view regarded as a two-way process:

- Socio-cultural accommodation;
- Socio-economic integration.

2.1. SOCIO-CULTURAL ACCOMMODATION

According to the universal declaration of human rights art. 27, “*Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to participate in scientific progress and in its benefits*”⁸. For people who come to EU as refugees and asylum seekers, socio-cultural integration plays a role of utmost importance because through this kind of integration they learn to accept and recognize the values of the socio-legal system of the host country.

Refugees who are legally resident (with a residence permit) in the EU must learn the official language of the host country, recognize and appreciate the local and national culture and show tolerance towards the locals. Consequently, for Afghan refugees coming to Europe, knowing the language of the host country is very important for their socio-cultural accommodation.

In fact, we can say that knowledge of the language is of crucial importance to find a job, to satisfy basic needs either at any academic or private job opportunity necessarily required a language skill. In the same vein, August Comte as being the founder of sociology remarks, “*The language invokes people in a long chain, linking the current community to distant support. Without a common language and solidarity, consensus and social order are impossible*”⁹. Therefore, the host government should plan and provide better opportunities for refugees so that they can attend local and national festivals, ceremonies and events. In this regard, a suggestive example is Germany where the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has prepared a special German language course for the integration of refugees, which usually takes 900 hours.

During this course, they also address general life problems, such as work, health, child caring or familial life. *In addition*, there is another course that lasts 100 hours and runs over two months, teaching refugees about the German legal system, history and culture, rights and obligations, forms of coexistence and important values such as freedom of religion, tolerance and equality of rights. All

⁸ The universal declaration of human rights, *UN*, December 10, 1948.

⁹ Programme of the United Nations Development, *Human Development for Everyone*, New York, Edition UNDP, 2016.

other EU Member States should follow the example of Germany and provide such conditions to refugees.

2.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 25 is that *“Everyone has the right to a standard of living that ensures the health and well-being of his and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and the necessary social services; he has the right to insurance in the event of unemployment, illness, invalidity, widowhood, old age or in other cases of loss of livelihood, following circumstances independent of his will”*¹⁰. These main pillars (food, clothing, housing, medical care) should also apply to refugees, both when they are employed and unemployed. Hence, the host individuals must interact with humanity, at the same time the region must develop institutions to provide better social services for the integration of Afghan refugees.

The best measures to integrate Afghan refugees and asylum seekers are:

1. Each refugee must have access to information and counseling with respect to his rights
2. Providing social assistance and employment opportunities to improve understanding of refugee skills, as well as full support in the workplace. Civilian organization must participate in catering their demands of knowing about their duties towards the new environment; how to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, and have knowledge about refugee laws and regulations.
3. The social and health services that fulfill to the needs and requirements.
4. The host state should inform all refugees and asylum seekers about housing options available in nearby areas. Local authorities must work with non-governmental organizations to provide housing for refugees.
5. Facilitate the integration process and support the development of the environment through various integration programs that favor the integration.

From all of the above, employment is the most important factor in integrating refugees into and the new-being community, as it enhances their opportunities and ensures language learning.

The founder of the French School of Sociology, *Emile Durkheim* believes that *“the division of labor can really provide a solid basis for the unity and integration of individuals in society”*¹¹. To the basic response of the needs for Afghan refugees still struggle at the host countries where they have to receive initial support from the national official agencies. The staff of these agencies has to use appropriate means of communication while the cultural differences should be

¹⁰ The universal declaration of human rights, *UN*, December 10, 1948.

¹¹ Tim Delaney, *Classical Theories of Sociology*, Tehran, Ney Publishing, 2019, p. 145.

considered through job opportunities¹². Nonetheless, refugees may their Asylum request reject and must to leave the host country to their home country. In the below comparison between Germany and Romania, we are going to give a brief explanation about the matter being.

In Germany, there are particular legal agencies and ordinances for refugees regarding employment, while in Romania the conditions and requirements are absolutely the same for both refugees and Romanian citizens. In addition, in Germany it is possible to hire refugees only with an identity document (residence permit) that they receive from the German authorities while in Romania they asked for the documents that they cannot present as a birth certificate, the act of birth, studies or recommendation from the previous workplace if appropriate.

3. DIFFICULTIES FACING AFGHAN REFUGEES IN EUROPE

Before going deep in each one of the difficulties facing Afghan refugees in the EU, it is very important to differentiate between an asylum seeker and a refugee. According to Geneva Convention in 1951 defined the term of “refugee is used for people who are afraid of being persecuted for their religious, identity, ethnic, political or membership of a specific social group”¹³. The term “asylum seeker” is used for people who have already entered the host country and waiting for the case’s results. Once they have received asylum in their host country they become refugees. In another way, we can say that refugees and asylum seekers have specific characteristics. Asylum seekers do not leave on their countries for only desire to leave original place. Further implication for adapting asylum seekers at the host countries of how to assimilate them to learn a new language for communication and cultural heritage and related to another logistic support regarding residency. The asylum seeker is financially dependent on the aid of the host state and does not have economic independence until obtaining a temporary/temporary permit. Many problems are facing Afghan refugees after they receive official refugee status. For example, Afghan refugees living in the Greek Refugee Center of Chios Island complain about the conditions, health, and social problems of this camp. They face a fateful problem¹⁴. For instance, in TOLO Report was exposed the boy case that a boy named Rahmatullah from Laghman province, which was a sixth-grader when the Taliban set fire to his school. The boy left his native country because there are no jobs and came to Europe to work. He has an older brother who has lived in London for a few years with legal documents and who sent him money to get to Europe.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 147.

¹³ UN. *convention and protocol*, Geneva, Edition UNHCR, 1967.

¹⁴ For details, see <https://www.dw.com/fa-af>; accessed at October 30, 2019.

Rahmatullah wants to live and healthy in London with his brother and after his arrival, he wants to continue his education¹⁵.

For instance, Afghan refugees in Greece settled in the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos are facing a very serious problem, namely sexual abuse. This camp is one of the largest in Greece and has a capacity of 3,000 people, but currently offers shelter for almost 9800 people. This camp is one of the largest in Greece. Speaking of sexual abuse that happened there, according to reporters at the *Info-migrant site* who did an investigation into the issue of sexual abuse, they found out that this is happening in section C, which is a special section for unmarried women¹⁶. Unfortunately, this does not end all the problems for Afghan refugees in this camp, even some of them lose their lives there, as happened to a woman in Afghanistan and her child, two months ago in a campfire in Moria.

4. AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKER, REASONS OF REJECTION AND DEPORTATION

To reject application it may desperately mean ending to have a peaceful life, stroke many asylum seekers' expectations while they receive the unfavorable answer of NO, where they applied to obtain refugee status. In short, the reasons of rejection can be summarized as the following:

1. Inability to fully integrate into European society and subject to the legislation of the host country;
2. Threats to national security of the host country;
3. Those who do not respect the law of Dublin;
4. Those that come to study and after the expiry of the residence permit have no acceptable reasons for not returning to their native country.

Seemingly, the inability to integrate into the European society and to obey the legislation of the host country, we can talk about people who due to age, lack of interest, personal problems or poor financial situation have failed to succeed into integrate and complying with the demands of European society. In practice, it has been shown that younger people with high education, without medical or personal problems and with greater financial support from the host state integrate more fast and easier into European society.

Regarding to the threats for national security there were many asylum seekers rejected because the host government always deemed most them dangerous people for unusual cases regarding to illegal trafficking and smuggling of people, sexual violence, drugs, etc. By the Treaty of Dublin, any asylum seeker, once he has entered the territory of one of the countries that have signed this treaty, must apply

¹⁵ For details, see www.tolonews.com, accessed at October 30, 2019.

¹⁶ For details, see <https://www.dw.com>, accessed at October 30, 2019.

for asylum in that country and stay there if he is accepted. “The main purpose of the Dublin procedure is to determine a single Member State that is responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or stateless person”¹⁷.

Therefore, police in any European nation can find easily through fingerprints and photographs of asylum seekers and can access and identify routes and residences of asylum seekers. These asylum seekers, according to the Dublin treaty will be rejected, sent back where they were first registered and should remain there¹⁸.

Many of the foreign citizens who come to study, after the expiration of the residence permits, decide that they will not return to their native country to notify police from immigration department where the area they live and the accommodation centers for asylum seekers where they apply to obtain a form of protection in the host country. In case they do not have the acceptable reasons, their requests will be rejected. The Eurostat Bureau estimated that one-third of all asylum applications were rejected. Deportation means the detention of refugees and their removal from the host country¹⁹.

Deportation has two dimensions: it can be legal and it can be illegal.

The deportation’s letter is considered according to the law of the host country and the international regulations that is called legal deportation. Perhaps, deportation may happen contrary to the provisions of international law and standards is called illegal deportation or one by force²⁰. The countries of the European Union can legally deport refugees, meaning that the host countries have the right when the refugees that cannot prove their eligibility in order to remain legally in the host country submit the file. In additional, legal deportation can be done when the asylum seeker has a criminal case. For example, at the beginning of the refugee crisis, Austria was very welcoming to Afghan refugees and received a large number of them, including families, but in recent years, many young people came from Iran and Pakistan who falsely declared that they are Afghans. Many of them even had criminal records in their countries of origin. As a result, Austria has begun to face certain disorders, rapes, and the drug problem. These groups were not very large but made it difficult for all Afghan refugees in this country. That is why in the last two years Austria has decided to deport up to 400 Afghan refugees and even a number of families who came to live there quietly and obeyed all the rules of this country²¹.

Forced deportation means that refugees have the right and are admitted to the host countries in accordance with some international agreements, but the host country opposite to the provisions of international law and standards is forcibly

¹⁷ For details, see <http://igi.mai.gov.ro/ro/content/procedura-dublin>, accessed at December 28, 2019.

¹⁸ See <https://arcarefugee.wordpress.com>, accessed at December 28, 2019.

¹⁹ For details, see <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>, accessed at December 28, 2019.

²⁰ See <https://www.aihrc.org.af>, accessed at December 28, 2019.

²¹ For details, see <https://www.infomigrants.net>, accessed at December 28, 2019.

deported. For example, Iran from the beginning of 2019 until September 15, 2019, deported 180,408 Afghan refugees forced because of US sanctions on Iran. Also, in 2019 Pakistan deported 4459 Afghan refugees forced, Turkey 29 thousand refugees forced deported, European Union countries deported 1086 forced refugees and other countries deported 769 forced refugees²².

5. AGREEMENTS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION ON AFGHAN REFUGEES

The Afghan government has signed numerous agreements with European Union countries on Afghan refugees such as the Istanbul agreement or the Kabul agreement. But one of the most important of these agreements is an agreement signed at the Berlin conference on October 5, 2016. By this agreement, the Afghan government and the European Union signed an act regarding the return of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan. The European Union has strongly supported President Ashraf Ghani's comments on the return of Afghan refugees. Meanwhile, the Amnesty International observer for Afghanistan Fatemeh Sadeh says the European Union has committed an illegal act and signed the agreement behind closed doors, without even sharing it with the EU Parliament²³. The signing of this agreement increased the number of forced deportations by Afghan refugees, also prolonged the waiting time for many of them and the difficult life conditions in the refugee camps might cause psychological pressure that could potentially increase a chance to commit a suicide especially among young Afghan asylum seekers. As a result, in 2017, three Afghan refugees committed suicide in Sweden²⁴. The reason behind this suicide, even it is prohibited in their religion and culture, of these three young people who received a deportation order by the Swedish authority. While the second asylum seeker waiting for long time after interview with the migration agency the result was failed. Moreover, the third applicant Asylum has tried many times to prove that he is a minor, but failed because he did not have the identity card and unfortunately, neither the Afghan nor the Swedish state helped him. Because of this reason, the Swedish state kicked him out of the camp for minors and after that, he went into depression and ended his life by hanging himself in the room.

President Ashraf Ghani ignores the fact that more than 50% of Afghan territory is owned by the Taliban and that the Afghan government's ability to return large numbers of refugees and provide decent living in the face of ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan does not exist. It must always be kept in mind and never

²² See <https://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/Report%20on%20Returnees.pdf>, accessed at December 30, 2019.

²³ For details, see <https://da.azadiradio.com>, accessed at December 15, 2019.

²⁴ See <https://ir.sputniknews.com>, accessed at December 15, 2019.

forget that 38,489 civilians and 58,596 military personnel in Afghanistan were killed in the last 2 decades due to the critical situation. Currently, the Afghan state without assistance to foreign countries is not able to finance even six months of the Afghan army. Thus, the Afghan government must provide support for Afghan refugees in European countries following international refugee laws and standards.

I believe that this agreement in Brussels only increases instability, because it does not provide working conditions but only uninsured life, and the return of refugees can be manipulated by recruiting them to the lines of local and Taliban militia groups. The Repatriation and Refugee Minister told the media that the Afghan government is unable to provide forced deportation refugees from the European Union with working or relocation conditions and that a large number of expatriates are taking part in dangerous war in Syria.

CONCLUSION

Refugee as a human phenomenon has many effects on the social, cultural and economic aspects of life. Multiple factors in Afghanistan, such as political, social, economic, cultural and environmental insecurity, have led to the emergence of Afghan refugees in the EU. We can conclude that there are many other areas in which the countries of the European Union must make progress in terms of integration of Afghan refugees. Also, we can say that the big wave of Afghan refugees can be stopped only by improving the situation in Afghanistan. Only if given the normal and dignified life that every human being deserves, the option of returning Afghan refugees back home may be considered. Otherwise, it is unacceptable to expect any Afghan refugee to wish to return to a homeland that cannot even afford the basic conditions. There is a double rejection and assimilation game between locals and refugees from the countries of the European Union, which we hope will end soon and will lead to mutual respect and friendship. This new situation between Afghan refugees and European residents is just as difficult at first for both parties, but with much willingness, little effort and assistance and support from the state, neither party may be disturbed by the presence of “the others”. But to live in harmony and cooperation.