

CLAWS Newsletter



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الله أكبر

افغانستان

Afghanistan Khabar Pana | Volume I | No. 11

by Akashika Mate

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. Muttaqi Rejects Foreign Military Presence, Urges Balanced Ties and Recognition ([Tolo News, July 20](#))

Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has reiterated that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will not tolerate any foreign military presence on Afghan soil, while calling for international recognition of the interim government and emphasising a balanced foreign policy approach. Speaking at the graduation ceremony of the Foreign Ministry's Institute of Diplomacy, Muttaqi strongly rejected recent claims by former US President Donald Trump suggesting that China had taken control of the former US airbase at Bagram. "The Islamic Emirate and the people of Afghanistan do not accept even an inch of Afghan land for foreign military presence," he said. "President Trump must hear this message, and other countries should also understand that while we engage, it is political and economic engagement only. We do not even discuss foreign military presence in Afghanistan." Muttaqi emphasised that the interim government seeks good relations with all nations, including the United States and Western countries that have yet to formally engage. Referring to Russia's recent recognition of the Islamic Emirate, Muttaqi called on other countries, particularly regional powers, to follow suit. Muttaqi also condemned the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrant issued for the Taliban's top leadership, including the Chief Justice. He stressed that the interim government does not recognise the authority of the ICC, declaring that its rulings hold no legal weight in Afghanistan.

2. Afghan Pensioners Again Gather in Protest for Entitlements ([Tolo News, July 20](#))

For the past four years, retired civil servants in Kabul have been gathering outside government offices to demand their unpaid pensions, as economic hardship and official silence continue to fuel frustration among thousands of elderly citizens. Many of these pensioners, who served in government institutions for decades, say the long delay in disbursing their pension payments has pushed them into poverty. Despite repeated appeals, protests, and reassurances from officials, no clear timeline has been offered for when the payments will resume. At a recent

protest outside the Pension Fund Office, pensioners held signs and voiced their grievances. Many say they have heard repeated promises, but none have materialised. The caretaker government has not released a public statement or set a date for the payment of pensions. In the meantime, the financial suffering of retirees continues to deepen, with no resolution in sight.

3. Afghanistan's Passport Ranked Least Powerful Globally in 2025 ([Henley Global 2025](#); [Khaama Press, July 23](#))

Afghanistan's passport has once again been ranked the least powerful in the world, offering visa-free access to only 26 countries, according to the 2025 Henley Passport Index. The country now sits at 106th place, falling two spots from last year and cementing its status as the world's most restricted travel document.

The Henley Index, which draws data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), ranks passports based on how many destinations their holders can enter without obtaining a visa in advance. In stark contrast to Afghanistan, Singapore tops the 2025 list, with access to 195 countries visa-free, followed by Japan (193) and a cluster of European and East Asian nations with access to 192 destinations. Afghan passport holders can currently travel visa-free to a limited set of countries, including Sri Lanka, Somalia, Kenya, Cambodia, and Bangladesh. Despite the minimal mobility it affords, demand for passports remains high amid ongoing instability and rising migration pressures.

Compounding the issue, Afghanistan continues to issue passports bearing the insignia of the former government, reflecting the lack of international recognition for the Taliban-led administration. This has made it increasingly difficult for citizens to secure visas or even acquire a passport at all. The deepening isolation and continued global non-recognition of Afghanistan's current government are key factors behind the country's plummeting passport strength. Without political stability, engagement with the international community, and improvements in governance, Afghanistan is likely to remain at the bottom of global mobility rankings for the foreseeable future.

4. Afghanistan Sees Surge in State Investments, Private Sector Partnerships ([Tolo News, July 29](#))

Afghanistan has seen a notable rise in state and private sector investment activity, driven by the Islamic Emirate's efforts to revitalise the economy. With over 40 state-owned companies under review and billions of Afghanis in investment committed, authorities are focusing on boosting energy, oil, and gas production while attracting domestic and international investors.

| Sector / Area | Details / Figures |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Total State-Owned Companies | 44 companies under supervision |
| Investment Attracted (State) | Over 20 billion Afghanis |
| Private Sector Investment | ~22 billion Afghanis |
| Identified Investment Opportunities | 50 opportunities prepared for private sector engagement |
| State-Owned Companies Valuation | 14 companies valued at 121 billion Afghanis |
| Expected Revenue (Upcoming) | 32 billion Afghanis from state companies |
| Electricity Production Contracts | 600+ megawatts in domestic power, ~\$600 million investment |
| Oil Production (Current) | 600-700 tons per day |
| Oil Production (Forecast) | Expected to rise as new wells become operational |
| Electricity Access Outlook | 80% improvement expected in 1-2 years, with expanding grid coverage |

5. Mes Aynak Copper Project Nears Launch After Years of Delays ([Tolo News, July 31](#))

The long-stalled Mes Aynak copper project in Afghanistan's Logar province is finally moving closer to launch, with Chinese contractor Metallurgical Corporation of China (MCC) announcing plans to begin practical operations later this year. The project, originally awarded in 2008 under a 30-year contract, has faced multiple setbacks, primarily due to insecurity, landmines, and the site's rich archaeological significance. Now, with the road leading to the site nearly complete and a planned power supply from the Bagh Dara hydropower project, MCC says it is ready to proceed if remaining government approvals go smoothly. Speaking at a recent event, MCC representative Deng Guoping confirmed that more than \$430 million has

already been invested, despite zero returns. Currently, around 400 Afghan workers are employed at the site. Once full operations begin, the project is expected to generate 4,000 jobs, a potentially major boost to the local economy.

The Mes Aynak site, however, is not just a mine. It sits atop an ancient Buddhist city, with priceless archaeological remains that have slowed excavation. Balancing heritage preservation with mining ambitions has proven to be one of the project's greatest challenges. Critics argue the 17-year delay reflects broader mismanagement. Despite the delays, the potential remains enormous. Geological surveys estimate over 12 million tons of high-grade copper lie beneath the surface, positioning Mes Aynak as one of the largest untapped copper deposits in the world.

6. Afghanistan Launches Major Solar Power Projects, Seeks Investment in Clean Energy ([Pajhwok Afghan News, July 31](#); [Tolo News, July 31](#))

Afghanistan has launched the construction of two 40-megawatt solar power plants and a 126-megavolt ampere substation in Logar province, in a bid to expand domestic electricity production and attract investment in clean energy. The projects, located in Mohammad Agha district, are being developed by two private companies in partnership with Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), with a total investment of \$36.74 million. Completion is expected within two years. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Abdul Bari Omar, head of DABS, urged both local and international investors to explore opportunities in Afghanistan's energy sector. "We welcome all investors to participate in building a self-reliant electricity network for the Afghan people," he said. Din Mohammad Hanif, Acting Minister of Economy, cited the Kajaki Dam as a successful example of recent energy sector investment under the Islamic Emirate, with its 100-megawatt capacity supporting regional power needs.

Despite the optimism, residents in Logar say many areas still suffer from energy shortages. "Entire districts like Baraki, Charkh, Kharwar, and Khoshi have no electricity," said Abdul Rahman, a resident. "Even in the provincial centre, most villages are still without power." Officials acknowledge that over 70% of Afghanistan's electricity is still imported, costing the country hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The new solar and substation projects are seen as a step toward energy independence and long-term economic sustainability.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Russia Urges Ethnic and Political Inclusivity in Afghanistan's Power Structure ([Afghan Online Press, July 16](#); [Khaama Press, July 16](#))

At the conclusion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Foreign Ministers' meeting in China, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reaffirmed Moscow's stance on the need for an inclusive political system in Afghanistan, one that ensures the representation of all ethnic and political groups. Lavrov underscored that nearly all SCO members have strengthened bilateral ties with the Taliban, but continue to press for a government that reflects Afghanistan's ethnic diversity and fosters national unity. He stressed that ensuring inclusivity remains a shared objective for regional stability. Lavrov also highlighted the SCO's unified position: a commitment to support Afghanistan's reconstruction, sustainable development, and transformation into an independent, neutral country, free from terrorism and narcotics.

Since the Taliban's return to power, concerns over political exclusion have grown. The group has largely filled governmental roles with its own members, sidelining representatives from other communities. Although the Taliban claims to pursue inclusivity, international observers and regional players like Russia remain unconvinced. Lavrov's remarks come amid broader SCO efforts to promote peace and security across Central Asia. He reiterated Russia's call for a more representative political structure in Afghanistan as essential for its future stability and for constructive engagement with the international community.

2. Developments with Pakistan

a. Ghulam Khan Border Reopens, Restoring Key Trade Route ([Pajhwok Afghan News, July 16](#))

The Ghulam Khan border crossing has officially reopened for commercial traffic after a 15-day closure, easing pressure on Afghan businesses and restoring a crucial trade link with Pakistan. The crossing, located in Afghanistan's Khost province, resumed operations on July 16, following weeks of disruption that had affected cargo movement and strained local economies. Pakistani authorities had shut the border without issuing an official explanation,

halting one of the country's most vital and cost-effective trade corridors. Abidullah Farooqi, spokesperson for the Taliban's border police, confirmed the reopening, noting that cross-border trade had resumed and cargo trucks were once again moving through the area. Local traders and transporters welcomed the development, expressing relief after weeks of losses and logistical challenges. Many called for both governments to ensure consistent coordination to prevent unexpected disruptions in the future.

b. Pakistan Urges Revival of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group for Regional Peace (Amu TV, July 16; Khaama Press, July 16)

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has called for the urgent revival of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Contact Group on Afghanistan, highlighting its potential to promote regional peace, security, and practical cooperation. Speaking at the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers in China on July 15, Dar emphasised Afghanistan's pivotal role in regional stability. He noted that reactivating the Contact Group would provide a realistic and results-oriented platform for addressing Afghanistan's challenges through multilateral coordination. "Peace in Afghanistan is the cornerstone of regional security," Dar stated, warning that ongoing instability in the country poses direct threats to neighbouring states and the broader region.

Pakistani officials have consistently urged the Taliban to prevent militant groups from using Afghan territory to launch attacks, a concern widely shared by the international community. The push to revive the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group comes amid growing regional insecurity and mounting pressure on the Taliban to meet global expectations. Dar argued that a reactivated Contact Group could help facilitate coordinated efforts on peace-building, economic development, and counterterrorism across the SCO member states.

c. Counterterrorism Commitment Amid High-Level Diplomatic Push (Arab News, July 20)

Pakistan and Afghanistan have reaffirmed their joint commitment to combat militancy and improve border management following a high-level meeting in Kabul between Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his Afghan counterpart, Sirajuddin Haqqani. Naqvi's one-day visit to Kabul came on the heels of multiple recent developments, including a trilateral meeting between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, and the signing of a framework agreement for a feasibility study on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Project. The

interior ministers' talks focused on counterterrorism, narcotics control, and the repatriation of undocumented Afghan citizens residing in Pakistan. The Pakistani interior ministry said both sides stressed peaceful coexistence, mutual stability, and enhanced cooperation, particularly in the fight against terrorism and the management of the shared border.

d. Kabul and Islamabad Sign Trade Pact to Cut Tariffs and Boost Bilateral Exports ([Khaama Press, July 23](#); [The Express Tribune Pakistan, July 24](#))

In a bid to strengthen economic ties and support local producers, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed a preferential trade agreement aimed at reducing customs tariffs and promoting bilateral trade. The agreement, finalised in Islamabad between Taliban Deputy Minister for Industry and Commerce Ahmadullah Zahid and Pakistan's Deputy Minister of Commerce Javed Paal, is scheduled to take effect on August 01, 2025, and will remain valid for one year, with the option for extension pending mutual consent. Under the terms of the deal, customs duties on eight major export items will be significantly reduced: from over 60% to 27%. The agreement covers four Afghan goods (grapes, pomegranates, apples, and tomatoes) and four Pakistani goods (mangoes, kinnows, bananas, and plums). Officials on both sides say the tariff cuts are designed to boost exports, support farmers, stabilise local markets, and lay the groundwork for more robust trade cooperation. The agreement also allows for the potential inclusion of additional products in the future, based on evolving needs. The move marks a notable shift in economic engagement between Kabul and Islamabad at a time when political ties remain delicate. By focusing on shared economic interests, the deal could serve as a foundation for broader regional stability and collaboration.

3. Taliban, Pakistan, Uzbekistan Sign Railway Pact in Kabul to Boost Regional Connectivity ([Arab News, July 17](#); [Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan/X, July 17](#); [Kabul Now, July 18](#))

The Taliban, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan signed a landmark framework agreement in Kabul on July 17, 2025, to initiate a joint feasibility study for the proposed Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Corridor, a key step toward linking Central and South Asia through enhanced trade and transit infrastructure. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced the signing via X, hailing it as a "major milestone in advancing regional connectivity and economic

integration.” The corridor is envisioned as a transformative project that will reduce freight transit times by up to five days and slash transport costs by as much as 40% between Uzbekistan and Pakistani ports. At the ceremony, Pakistan was represented by Foreign Minister Dar, Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi, and senior officials. Uzbekistan’s Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov led his country's delegation, while the Taliban’s Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi attended on behalf of the Afghan interim government.

The proposed railway route will connect Uzbekistan’s Termez border to Mazar-i-Sharif and Logar in Afghanistan, before entering Pakistan through the Kharlachi crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The corridor will span approximately 573 kilometres and is designed to carry both freight and passenger traffic. According to the agreement, the railway is projected to be completed by the end of 2027, with a target capacity of 15 million tons of cargo annually by 2030. Supporters of the project say it has the potential to become a regional trade lifeline, integrating landlocked Central Asian economies with seaports in Pakistan while boosting Afghanistan’s transit potential.

During the trip, Dar also held talks with Taliban Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund, discussing bilateral ties and regional developments in the context of the evolving connectivity agenda. The signing marks one of the most significant multilateral economic initiatives involving the Taliban since their return to power in 2021, and a potential shift toward infrastructure-led diplomacy in a volatile but strategically crucial region.

4. Taliban Launches Labour Export Program to Qatar Amid Economic Crisis ([ABC News, July 19](#))

In a bid to combat soaring unemployment and boost the faltering Afghan economy, the Taliban has formally launched a labour export initiative targeting the Gulf region. The programme begins with the registration of 2,000 skilled Afghan workers for employment opportunities in Qatar, with plans underway to expand labour exports to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Turkey, and Russia. The recruitment drive, announced by Acting Labour Minister Abdul Manan Omari, is open to applicants from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Targeted sectors include hospitality, food and beverage, and engineering. Eligible candidates will be screened based on qualifications and prior experience. Taliban leaders framed the

labour export programme as a structured alternative to irregular migration, pledging to protect Afghan workers' rights and uphold their dignity abroad. Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Abdul Ghani Baradar stated that remittances from the Gulf are expected to have a "positive impact on the national economy," and highlighted broader efforts by the regime to attract foreign investment and develop infrastructure projects. As humanitarian aid dwindles and development programs face severe funding shortfalls, the Taliban appears increasingly reliant on labour mobility and foreign partnerships to alleviate domestic economic strain. Whether these efforts translate into sustained employment and economic relief remains to be seen.

5. Taliban Diplomats Begin Duties in Germany as Bonn Consulate Reopens Amid Tensions ([Deutsche Welle News, July 21](#); [Tolo News, July 23](#); [Afghanistan International, July 25](#))

Afghanistan has resumed consular services in Bonn, Germany, after nearly four years of suspension, with the dispatch of two diplomats by the caretaker Taliban government. Allegedly, Nebras-ul-Haq Aziz and Mostafa Hashimi have been appointed to represent Afghanistan in Germany, though the Acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, has not officially confirmed their names. He did, however, acknowledge that two diplomats were sent to facilitate consular services for Afghan nationals and expressed gratitude to Qatar for mediating the agreement that made their arrival possible. Muttaqi also signalled optimism about future negotiations with Germany and described the development as a step toward improving bilateral relations. The Director of Consular Services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that the passport printing centre in Bonn, inactive for the past four years, is expected to resume operations soon.

Despite these operational changes, Germany has maintained that its engagement with the Taliban remains strictly technical and does not imply official recognition. Political observers interpret this move as a subtle shift in Germany's position. Najib Rahman Shamal, a political analyst, observed that Germany is now seeking more direct engagement with the caretaker government, a change driven in part by logistical needs such as deportation arrangements. Germany's Interior Ministry recently announced plans to resume deportations of Afghan and

Syrian asylum seekers convicted of crimes, particularly in the wake of attacks involving Islamist offenders. Until now, the absence of formal diplomatic relations with the Taliban had prevented Germany from carrying out such deportations. The arrival of the Taliban diplomats is expected to facilitate these processes. Stefan Kornelius, a German government spokesperson, confirmed that the diplomats would assist in deportation procedures, especially for Afghan migrants with criminal records. Meanwhile, tensions are reportedly rising within Afghan diplomatic missions in Germany. Diplomatic sources told Afghanistan International that staff at the Afghan Consulate in Bonn are planning to collectively resign in protest against the arrival of Taliban-appointed personnel. The mission is expected to formally notify the German government of its decision.

This internal dissent follows the earlier resignation of Yama Yari, Afghanistan's former ambassador to Germany, who stepped down under pressure from the German government. With the introduction of Taliban diplomats, deep divisions have emerged among staff in Germany's Afghan missions. If the planned resignations proceed, there could be disruptions in services such as passport issuance for Afghan refugees, and it remains unclear whether the German government will approve the addition of further Taliban representatives to fill the staffing gap. The German Foreign Ministry acknowledged that some missions continue to be staffed by diplomats appointed before the Taliban's takeover in August 2021. However, the Taliban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reiterated that it will only maintain contact with embassies and consulates that operate under its authority. The latest developments highlight both the Taliban's increasing international engagement and the political sensitivities surrounding their presence in European diplomatic landscapes.

6. Developments with China

- a. **[China Reaffirms Political & Economic Support for Afghanistan \(Afghanistan International, July 25; Tolo News, July 26; Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, July 29\)](#)**

China has reaffirmed its political and economic support for Afghanistan following a high-level meeting between Chinese Special Envoy Yue Xiaoyong and Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul. During the meeting, Muttaqi expressed appreciation for China's

consistent backing, particularly in the economic sphere, describing it as a hopeful step toward a better future for the country. According to Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zia Ahmad Takal, the foreign minister thanked China for its support to the Islamic Emirate and welcomed recent developments as a positive beginning for Afghanistan's economic recovery and international cooperation. Yue Xiaoyong stated that China will maintain its assistance based on the principle of good neighbourliness and emphasised the importance of continued engagement in both political and economic areas. The discussions also included enhancing cooperation with neighbouring countries and the broader international community to aid Afghanistan's reconstruction and ensure long-term stability.

Alongside its strong political and economic relations with the interim Afghan government, China is also actively working to improve ties between Kabul and Islamabad. In recent months, Beijing has pushed to strengthen trilateral cooperation among China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, though this approach has reportedly drawn concern from India. Nevertheless, China's engagement with the Taliban government appears to be deepening, offering the possibility of improved regional coordination and international legitimacy for Kabul.

b. Wakhan Corridor: Trade Bridge or Geopolitical Fault Line? (Afghan Online Press, July 31; Khaama Press, July 31)

The narrow, mountainous strip of land in northeastern Afghanistan known as the Wakhan Corridor is emerging as a pivotal chessboard in Asia's unfolding geopolitical contest. At stake is not just economic connectivity, but the balance of influence across South, Central, and West Asia. China's push to extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through Wakhan marks a bold step in reimagining Afghanistan's place in the region. For Beijing, Wakhan is more than a trade route. It's a potential security corridor, a direct link between Xinjiang and Afghanistan that could counter extremist threats and monitor trans-border movements, particularly those linked to Uyghur militancy. But economic ambition also drives China's interest. Extending CPEC through Wakhan would allow Beijing to connect to Afghanistan's untapped mineral wealth, notably copper and lithium critical for green technologies, while expanding its 'Digital Silk Road' through fibre optics and digital infrastructure. China's cautious engagement was evident in September 2024, when Chinese and Taliban officials jointly inspected the Wakhan border. While no firm commitments followed, it signalled intent to explore long-term investment, if the Taliban can ensure security.

For Islamabad, Wakhan presents a unique opportunity to connect underdeveloped regions like Chitral with Central Asian markets, reducing dependence on unstable border routes and enhancing Pakistan's regional clout. The Taliban, under economic duress and diplomatic isolation, view Wakhan as both a bargaining chip and a potential salvation. By courting Chinese investment, they hope to gain not only infrastructure development but also political legitimacy. India has vehemently opposed any inclusion of Afghanistan in CPEC, viewing it as a direct challenge to its sovereignty in Kashmir, where parts of the corridor already pass through disputed territory. Wakhan's inclusion could tilt strategic influence further in favour of China and Pakistan, threatening India's regional outreach, including its investment in Chabahar Port in Iran. The United States and European powers, while less vocal, echo India's unease. Expansion of CPEC is seen as another step toward a Chinese-dominated regional order, with concerns over debt traps, opaque financing, and the strategic militarisation of infrastructure. For Washington, a Chinese foothold in post-withdrawal Afghanistan would complicate counterterrorism oversight and deepen the geopolitical vacuum left behind.

7. Iran Unveils New Rail Routes to Boost Regional Ties ([Nour News Iran, July 27](#); [Ariana News, July 28](#); [Khaama Press, July 28](#))

Iran has announced plans to launch three new international passenger rail routes—including a key line to Afghanistan—in a move aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and deepening economic cooperation with neighbouring countries. Jabar Ali Zakeri, CEO of Iranian Railways and deputy minister of roads and urban development, said the initiative includes new lines linking Iran to Turkey, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. The effort comes as part of Tehran's broader strategy to position rail as a strategic tool for regional integration.

The most prominent addition will establish a direct passenger service between Tehran and Ankara, expanding upon the existing Tehran-Van route in Turkey. Talks on ticket pricing and logistics are underway between the two countries, and the service is expected to begin within two months. A second route will connect Tehran and Mashhad to Herat, Afghanistan. Zakeri noted that the line to Rozanak, located near Herat, will be the first phase, with the final 70-kilometre link to Herat city to be completed by Iranian contractors. The launch of this service is contingent on resolving travel document protocols between the two countries. The third route will run from Mashhad to Mary in Turkmenistan, further extending Iran's rail reach into

Central Asia. Zakeri emphasised that the routes will not only promote tourism but also enhance economic and trade flows between Iran and its neighbours. Once operational, the expanded network is expected to improve connectivity to Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, creating new corridors for the movement of people and goods across the region.

8. UN Experts Warn ISIS-K is ‘Most Serious Threat’ To US, Europe, and Regional Stability ([Khaama Press, July 31](#))

Afghanistan is once again emerging as a global hub for foreign terrorists, with ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) now representing the “most serious threat” to Western nations and regional stability, according to a stark warning delivered by UN experts to the Security Council. The report highlights ISIS-K’s escalating use of online platforms to radicalise and recruit foreign fighters, with a focus on individuals disillusioned by global conflicts, including the ongoing Gaza-Israel crisis. “ISIS-K is actively targeting audiences across Europe and the United States, seeking to inspire terror plots through digital propaganda and extremist messaging,” the experts stated. They cited recent terror attempts linked to foreign fighters radicalised online and coordinated remotely by ISIS-K handlers in Afghanistan.

The resurgence of foreign fighters returning to Afghanistan and Central Asia is also raising alarms. UN analysts believe these developments are part of a broader ISIS-K strategy to destabilise neighbouring countries and project its influence beyond South Asia. Of particular concern are explicit threats made by ISIS-K against US citizens and interests. Intelligence agencies in Washington have labelled the group a “serious and growing threat,” warning that the vacuum created by the Taliban’s 2021 takeover has allowed ISIS-K to regroup and expand its operations. Despite Taliban efforts to portray the group as under control, the UN report underscores that ISIS-K’s ability to plan and inspire international attacks remains potent and growing. As international focus wanes and humanitarian concerns dominate headlines, experts caution that Afghanistan’s security vacuum could soon have far-reaching global consequences if left unaddressed.

AFGHANISTAN'S RETURNEE CRISIS

1. Tajikistan Accelerates Deportations of Afghan Refugees Despite Legal Status and Asylum Claims ([Khaama Press, July 17](#); [The Diplomat, July 17](#); [Kabul Now, July 25](#))

Tajik authorities have begun deporting Afghan refugees ahead of a looming 15-day deadline, with over 150 individuals reportedly rounded up and expelled in recent days. Those deported include women, children, and the elderly, many of whom hold legal refugee status or have active asylum applications under review, including resettlement processes to Canada. Human rights observers say families have been forcibly separated, with children deported alone or spouses left behind. Many of those targeted are registered with the UNHCR and carry valid refugee documentation.

Although the Tajik government has not officially explained the deportations, analysts point to regional political shifts, particularly Russia's recent recognition of the Taliban, as a possible factor. Tajikistan, once a haven for Afghan opposition groups, appears to be recalibrating its policies in alignment with Moscow, raising fears for anti-Taliban refugees and former Afghan officials living in exile. Most Afghan refugees in Tajikistan reside in the Wahdat district near Dushanbe, where limited resources and infrastructure already strain daily life. The sudden removals have added to the distress of the refugee population and their host communities. The crackdown comes despite appeals from the UN and civil society, underscoring growing concerns over the shrinking space for asylum seekers in Central Asia.

2. Pakistan Ends Afghan Refugee ID Renewals, Blacklists Deportees from Re-Entry ([Khaama Press, July 19](#); [News Nation, July 19](#))

Pakistan's Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, has confirmed that the government will not renew Proof of Registration (POR) cards issued to Afghan refugees, and that deported individuals will be permanently barred from returning. Speaking informally to reporters in Islamabad on July 18, Naqvi highlighted the government's commitment to tightening immigration controls as part of a broader policy overhaul. The announcement formalises a hardening stance on

Afghan refugees, many of whom have been living in Pakistan for decades. Naqvi explained that the blacklisting of deportees is designed to ensure stricter border enforcement and prevent undocumented re-entry.

3. Iran Extends Deadline for Undocumented Afghan Migrants ([Amu TV, July 20](#); [BBC Monitoring, July 23](#))

Iranian authorities have extended a deadline for undocumented Afghan migrants to leave the country, setting a new cutoff of September 06 (15th of Sunbula in the solar calendar). After that date, those who remain without valid documentation will face fines for overstaying, according to Iranian media. Ahmad Masoumi-Far, the head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's office in Khorasan Razavi Province, cited inadequate infrastructure and the intense summer heat as reasons for the two-month extension. He also clarified that Afghan citizens who enter through legal channels will be allowed to remain.

The announcement follows a surge in deportations and growing criticism over Iran's treatment of Afghan migrants. Human rights groups and witnesses report widespread abuses, including forced removals and violent mistreatment by Iranian authorities. Some Afghan migrants claim that even with valid residency permits and passports, they were forcibly deported, with police allegedly destroying their documents before expelling them. Iranian state figures show that nearly half a million Afghan nationals have been deported in less than two months, averaging 30,000 people per day, as Iran escalates its crackdown on undocumented migration.

4. UN Allocates \$10 Million to Support Vulnerable Afghan Returnees from Iran ([Hasht-e-Subh Daily, July 22](#); [Khaama Press, July 22](#); [ANI News, July 23](#))

The United Nations has allocated \$10 million to assist vulnerable Afghan returnees from Iran, in an effort to address urgent humanitarian needs and prevent exploitation at border crossings. Tom Fletcher, Deputy UN Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, announced that the funds, provided through the UN Emergency Relief Fund, will support Afghan migrants being expelled, many of whom arrive back in the country without shelter, food, or medical care. The new funding will be directed toward protection efforts and the delivery of essential services for

the most at-risk individuals, particularly women and children. This comes after repeated appeals from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which has called for increased international funding to meet the basic needs of returnees who face limited resources and bleak conditions upon arrival. Many returnees from both Iran and Pakistan continue to struggle with reintegration amid ongoing economic hardship and a lack of access to essential services.

5. Afghan Migrants in Iran Face Alarming Rise in Violence, Disappearances Amid Deportations ([Hasht-e-Subh Daily, July 27](#); [Omi Radio, July 27](#); [Khaama Press, July 30](#))

A surge in killings and disappearances of Afghan migrants, especially women and young girls, has gripped Iran in recent weeks, raising alarm among rights activists and fueling urgent calls for international intervention. The most recent case involves 15-year-old Samaneh Tajik, who disappeared on July 24 after leaving a sewing workshop in the Chahardangeh Hosseinabad area of Tehran. Her family, already facing dire conditions after the imprisonment of their father and the death of their mother, has received no information from Iranian authorities since her disappearance. Samaneh's case mirrors that of another 15-year-old Afghan girl, Farida Mohammadi, who went missing earlier this month in the Salehabad district of Tehran after leaving her tailoring job. Two months ago, the mutilated body of Kobra Rezai, a young Afghan woman who had been missing for 50 days, was found in Varamin. Authorities have since confirmed her killer. Adding to the growing crisis, the human rights group Hengaw reported the murder of a 25-year-old Afghan woman and her three children, aged 2, 3, and 5, in Tehran's Mortezaqerd district. These incidents are part of what rights organisations are calling "systematic violence" against Afghan migrants, who face little to no legal protection in Iran.

Simultaneously, forced deportations of Afghan nationals have accelerated, with accounts of violent removals becoming increasingly common. Afghan migrants report being expelled in harsh conditions, with little regard for their safety or basic rights. The Taliban administration has remained notably silent, issuing no statements or taking action in response to these incidents. Families of the victims say this lack of response has left them feeling abandoned and powerless. Human rights advocates warn that without immediate attention and protection

measures, Afghan migrants, especially women and children, will remain exposed to escalating violence and marginalisation in Iran.

6. UK to Resettle Afghan Veterans and Families in Blackburn as Part of National Support Plan ([Khaama Press, July 30](#); [South Asia Newline/YouTube, July 31](#))

Former Afghan soldiers who served alongside British troops during the Afghanistan war will soon be resettled in Blackburn with Darwen, following their escape from the country after the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Now granted legal residency, these veterans and their families are being welcomed as permanent residents in the UK. The UK Ministry of Defence has designated the Tickled Trout Hotel near Blackburn as a central hub for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) program. The initiative aims to support the integration of those who supported British military efforts during the 20-year conflict.

7. Taliban Criticises Mass Expulsions of Afghans From Neighbouring States ([Associated Press News, July 30](#))

The Taliban administration has strongly condemned the mass deportation of Afghan nationals from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, calling it a grave violation of international norms and Islamic values. Speaking at a press conference in Kabul, Deputy Minister for Refugees and Repatriation Abdul Rahman Rashid described the ongoing expulsions as “unprecedented in Afghan history.” The remarks come amid a regional crackdown on undocumented migrants, with Iran and Pakistan enforcing strict deadlines for foreigners to leave or face detention. While officials in both countries deny targeting any one group, Afghans, who constitute a significant migrant population, have borne the brunt of the expulsions. In the past three months alone, nearly 1.8 million Afghans have been deported from Iran. Another 1,84,000 have returned from Pakistan, while over 5,000 have been expelled from Turkey since the start of 2025. Taliban officials also confirmed the repatriation of nearly 10,000 Afghan prisoners, primarily from Pakistan.

Rashid labelled the forced removals as a “serious humanitarian crisis,” accusing neighbouring states of disregarding their obligations under international refugee law and Islamic humanitarian tenets. The Taliban’s Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation estimates that around 6 million Afghans still live abroad. Compounding the crisis at home, nearly 2.5 million Afghans are now internally displaced, with over 13,500 families newly uprooted due to extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, and storms. The ministry announced plans to dispatch high-level delegations to Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey to discuss legal protection for Afghan migrants and to negotiate long-term solutions for those seeking asylum.

8. Trump Vows Support for Afghan Allies Amid Refugee Program Uncertainty ([Khaama Press, July 31](#); [Military Times, July 31](#))

US President Donald Trump has pledged to support Afghans who worked alongside American forces by helping them gain permanent residency in the United States. Speaking at a White House press conference on July 30, Trump assured that his administration would assist the majority of applicants, about 90%, stating, “We know who the good people are, and we will take care of those who supported us.”

Despite this promise, recent decisions by the Trump administration have created confusion. Several refugee assistance programs, including the Afghan Relocation Coordinator initiative, were suspended earlier this year. This program has played a key role in facilitating the transition of eligible Afghans to life in the US. The abrupt halt in these programs has sparked concern among lawmakers and advocacy groups. Texas Representative Julie Johnson criticised the administration for making promises while simultaneously ending critical support systems, leaving thousands of Afghans, many of whom risked their lives for US missions, in limbo. Advocates now warn that unless these programs are reinstated, a significant number of Afghan allies may remain stranded, uncertain about their future and still waiting for the support they were once assured.

About the Author

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