Refugee crisis worsens amid COVID-19: One pct of all humanity is now displaced

During 2020, the displacement of sizeable chunks of the global population hit a new high, worsened by the crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of forcibly displaced people across the world rose to 82.4 million, the United Nation's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported.

This figure accounts for one person for every 95 on Earth. One percent of humans have been displaced due to war, violence or persecution.

It's a staggering rate considering that 2018 saw an all-time high of 26 million refugees, half of whom were under the age of 18.

More than half of the world's refugees today come from Afghanistan, Syria and Somalia. None can return home for numerous reasons, but ultimately arriving back to their nations would put them in danger, under international law.

Over 181 million people have been diagnosed with COVID-19, of which more than 3.9 million have died since the pandemic's onset, according to Worldometer. Refugees are particularly vulnerable.

Rohingya refugees suffered a great deal during this time due to the unsanitary circumstances they have been living in, without access to basic needs such as food, water and appropriate healthcare, Turkey-based news agency TRT World reported.

Although 2020 saw over 160 countries close their borders during the peak of the spread of coronavirus, the number of displaced individuals grew by three million, accounting for a four percent increase from 2019, indicating a constant rise for the ninth consecutive year, the UNHCR reported.

The pandemic made matters worse by dictating a huge economic downturn that forced many of these vulnerable people into extreme poverty.

Most regions experienced a decrease in arrivals of refugees and asylum-seekers due to border closures, but an additional 2.3 million people became internally displaced within their own countries.

A report released last week by the UNHCR highlighted how drawn-out crises such as those in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan continued to force people to flee. Other crises also erupted in 2020 and have continued into this year. These include conflicts and clashes in Ethiopia's Tigray region, northern Mozambique and the Sahel region all of which have caused significant displacement.

During this time, the UNHCR also saw a significant drop in the number of refugees and internally displaced people able to return home and a 20-year low in the number of resettled refugees to a third country.

What's happening now?

According to TRT World, most of the world's refugees are currently located in: Turkey (3.6 million), Colombia (1.8 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Uganda (1.4 million), Germany (1.1 million), Sudan (1.1 million), Iran (979,400), Lebanon (889,700), Bangladesh (860,400) and Ethiopia (770,800).

Involuntarily repatriating refugees has become common practice whether they are ready to return to their home countries or not. Many rights groups believe that this is a direct violation of their human rights.

In 2020 alone, over one million Afghan migrants in Iran and Pakistan were deported back to their country.

Earlier this year, the Danish government, which has one of Europe's harshest stances on migration, sent back 94 Syrian refugees, stripping them of their residence permits after declaring parts of Syria were safe enough for them to return.

According to Reuters, Denmark currently limits accepting refugees under the UN's quota system. The nation, which has gained notoriety for its tough immigration policies over the last decade, passed a law enabling it to process asylum seekers outside Europe, drawing anger from human rights advocates such as the UN and the European Commission. The new legislation is set to further complicate the EU's efforts to overhaul the bloc's fragmented migration and asylum rules.

The new law allows Denmark to move refugees arriving on its borders to asylum centers in partner countries to have their cases reviewed, with the possibility of obtaining protection in that country, Reuters reported earlier this month.

The number of refugees seeking asylum in Denmark has dropped to over 1,500 applicants last year from a peak of more than 21,000 in 2015, when more than a million refugees, mostly from the Middle East and Africa, arrived on EU shores.

"Such practices undermine the rights of those seeking safety and protection, demonize and punish them and may put their lives at risk," UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner Gillian Triggs said.

Human Rights Watch released a report in April which highlighted that Burundian refugees who had left the country back in 2015 following deadly clashes during the presidential election, were subject to enforced disappearances and torture by Tanzanian police, forcing them to "voluntarily" sign up for their return.

Ahmed Muktar, a 64-year-old refugee from Somalia, who returned to his country in 2018 through a voluntary repatriation exercise spearheaded by the UNHCR, said that life in his country of birth was not what he anticipated.

"I had hoped for an improved country, with better security and services, but what we got was different. My mother died shortly after our arrival and as we continued staying, it became harder fending for my family," he said. "For us who had been repatriated, we get no attention from the UN; new arrivals get better treatment. You can see the environment we are in, we can't even get a proper shelter."

Refugee voices

"I arrived in Greece in December 2019. I have been here for a year and six months now. When I first arrived in the camp, I was happy. But I felt discouraged with the way things were going on in the camp. The food is not good, there was no water; if it was not MSF, there would be not even water. There was no shelter. I had to struggle to get a place for myself," Bille, a refugee from the southern part of Cameroon, told NGO Mediecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

Bille fled to Europe seeking safety after his life was threatened by being caught up in the violence spurred by the linguistic split in the country where its leaders want to separate the English and French-speaking areas of the country, he explained.

"When I first got here, there were four of us and we managed to buy a small place for 300 euros. The money was not there and struggled to gather it. The first fire burned our shelter down. Some friends kept me for some time. I built a second place myself because I am a builder, but the second fire burned it down again. I had to build a shelter for the third time," he revealed.

"People here are traumatized, mostly because of this development of the new camp. We don't need the new camp. We have suffered a lot in this place. The best they can do for us is maybe to let us go out of here."

Mahar, a 26-year-old Syrian refugee who has been in Samos, Greece since September 2019 believes life holds no proper future for him.

"If there was no war in Syria or conflicts, I would never think to come here. But unfortunately, everything is destroyed in Syria. There is no education in Syria right now, no health system, no jobs. Half of my family was killed because of the war. That's why I decided to leave," he explained.

"Vathy camp is not even suitable for animals. If you brought cows, goats... they would not be able to live here. Living here, in this camp, is very frustrating and full of despair. There is no safety."

Another Syrian refugee in Samos, 37-year old Jaber al-Soud left Syria in 2019 seeking a better future and a safe place in Europe for his family and himself. During their journey, his wife, 21, was heavily pregnant with their son, who was born before crossing the sea from Turkey. **alarabiya**

Aviation in Afghanistan: Which airlines are ...

From P2

Kam Air also operates a diverse and (relatively) new fleet of 13 aircraft, according to Planespotters.net. This consists of four A340-300s, six 737-600s, two 737-500s, and one 767-300. The carrier also flew two ATR 72s until March of this year, but those have exited in favor of focusing on larger aircraft. The fleet averages an age of 23.9 years and does require renewal as soon as possible.

Kam Air also made the news in recent months for operating the first all-female crew on a flight in Afghanistan's history. The event marked an important step in women's rights in the country and drew close attention to the airline internationally.

Network

Domestically, Kam Air flies to Fayzabad, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Tarinkot, and Zaranj. The carrier has the highest market share, clocking over 50% thanks to its larger capacity availability and the collapse of rival Safi Airways. Internationally, the airline flies to New Delhi, Almaty, Kuwait, Islamabad, Dushanbe, Ankara, Istanbul, Dubai, and Tashkent. Notably, these are the markets Ariana was planning to expand into using its renewed fleet of jets. However, while there is overlap, Kam Air has not entered the lucrative Saudi Arabian market and instead focused on Central Asia.

Future

The last two decades have seen a huge expansion of the Afghanistan civil aviation market. From a few hundred thousand passengers at the start of the 2000s, traffic peaked out at 2.2 million passengers in 2011. However, numbers have fallen steadily since 2014, never to their lowest levels since the start of the century. For instance, 2019 only saw only 1.06 million passengers take to the skies and this number fell further in the next year due to the pandemic. As airlines reel from the lack of foreign traffic, there is a threat of traffic permanently falling and the last decade's gains being erased quickly. This will closely follow the political situation in the country, which remains unstable currently. Notably, Afghanistan's open skies agreement means that foreign carriers dominate international traffic. The biggest airlines are Emirates and flyDubai, followed closely by Turkish Airlines. Considering their significant networks, these airlines play the role of connecting passengers across the continent and globe.

To remain competitive, both Kam Air and Ariana will need to grow their fleets and serve more destinations. If this is possible in the short term, remains to be seen.

The author is the Lead Journalist - India - Pranjal and is an experienced journalist with a strong focus on Indian aviation. His background in political science and economics gives him unique insight into issues surrounding international travel and governmental regulations.

EU mobilizes €25 million...

From P1

The latest EU funding to Afghanistan comes in addition to the EU's initial allocation of €32 million humanitarian aid for Afghanistan in 2021. The funding will support activities that contribute to addressing the increased needs stemming from drought, including the sectors of food assistance, nutrition, health, water-sanitation-hygiene, and support to humanitarian logistics. All EU humanitarian assistance is delivered in partnership with UN agencies, International Organizations, and NGOs. It is provided in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, to benefit directly the people in need across the country, the statement added. **The Kabul Times**

Afghan Advertisement

AA3926

Specific Procurement Notice

Request for Bid

Issue Date: July 06th, 2021

Country: Afghanistan

Name of Project: Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project

Contract Title: Framework agreement for Procurement of Printing Product and Billboards Design, Installation and Monitoring for CASA-CSP Project for the period 6 Months.

Loan No./Credit No./ Grant No.: ARTF Grant No.: TF17012 Project ID: I49410

RFQ Reference No.: MRRD/CASA-CSP/GD/18

1. The **Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development (MRRD)** has received a grant from International Development Association (IDA) and Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) towards the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) toward the cost of the Procurement, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Framework agreement for Printing Product and Billboards Design, Installation and Monitoring for CASA-CSP Project for the period 6 Months.

2. The Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for Framework agreement for Framework agreement for Procurement of Printing Product and Billboards Design, Installation and Monitoring for CASA-CSP Project for the period 6 Months.

3. Bidding will be conducted through Request for Bid (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016 of applicable Procurement Regulations ("Procurement Regulations"), and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Mohammad Mansoor Amiri email: m.amiri@ccnpp.org , a.farahi@ccnpp.org; and inspect the bidding document during office hours 08:30 to 15:30 hours at the address given below.

5. The bidding document in [*English language*] may be obtained free of charge by interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below.

6. Bids must be delivered to the below address on or before **August 03rd, 2021 at 14:00 hrs local time**. Electronic Bidding will *not* be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on **August 03rd, 2021 at 14:00hrs local time**.

7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security, with total amount of Afghanis **170,000**.00 or equal amount in USD lot#1 **(Billboards Design Print and Installation)** and Afghanis **150,000** or equivalent in USD for Lot#2 for (**Printing Product)**

8. The address is: Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project,
CCAP Building Five, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development,
Tashkilat Road, Darul-Aman, Kabul - Afghanistan
Attn: Amanullah Farahi, Head, Procurement Division or Mohammad Mansoor Amiri, Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services Senior Officer.
E-mail: m.amiri@ccnpp.org Copied to: a.farahi@ccnpp.org
Website: - www.ccnpp.org

Egypt's Sisi still has a blank cheque for repression

On June 14, just two weeks before the eighth anniversary of the coup against President Mohamed Morsi, an Egyptian court confirmed the death sentences of 12 supporters of the late president. The decision came as no surprise to the human rights community. Ever since he overthrew Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, on July 3, 2013, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has ruled Egypt with an iron fist, trying to eradicate any form of opposition.

More than 1,000 people were killed in the events of 2013, tens of thousands were imprisoned, many forcefully disappeared and tortured. Since the coup, the Geneva-based rights group Committee for Justice has also documented the cases of 92 political prisoners who have been executed in Egypt.

Death sentences for another 64, which have been upheld by the highest appeals court and ratified by el-Sisi, could be carried out at any moment. The confirmation of the 12 death sentences is the climax of one of the most farcical trials in Egypt's history which dealt with the brutal dispersal of the Muslim Brotherhood's sit-in at Rabaa al-Adaweya square in Cairo following the coup. Instead of prosecuting the security forces who perpetrated what Human Rights Watch described as "one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history", the Egyptian authorities put the sit-in leaders on trial. Many of those who survived the massacre were jailed in conditions that amount to premeditated murder and a number of them have already died in jail, including Morsi himself.

The intelligence agencies were preparing the public opinion for several months for a potential move against the leaders of the Rabaa sit-in.

In addition to a media campaign demonising the anti-coup demonstrations, a TV series aired in Ramadan depicted the demonstrators as terrorists, while absolving the security forces of any responsibility for the massacre.

Despite repeated condemnations by human rights organisations, el-Sisi does not seem to feel threatened by any potential international backlash against the executions. In fact, he currently appears to be at the peak of his power, both domestically and regionally. During Donald Trump's term as US president, el-Sisi felt emboldened to press forward with his repressive policies.

'Afghan forces plan...

From P1

This comes as Afghan forces pushed back Taliban fighters out of the center of 14 districts in last 24 hours.

The Ministry of Interior said the collapse of some districts was Taliban's propaganda and that Afghan troops are present throughout Afghanistan.

The ministry acknowledged that in some districts, Afghan troops have been relocated from one location to another to protect the lives of soldiers. **The Kabul Times**

UK may keep special...

From P1

Earlier reports in the UK media suggested that British troops might exit Afghanistan by July 4.

Officials in the UK, however, did not commit to a certain timeframe, saying that London "reserves the right" to dispatch troops back to Afghanistan, either as part of a coalition or unilaterally, if parts of the country are overrun by terrorists, the report added.

The Kabul Times

Turkey's possible Afghanistan mission...

From P3

The mission Turkey wants to undertake in Afghanistan must be read in the context of Ankara's historical sense of responsibility towards Kabul and its understanding of its role as a regional power. However, we shouldn't forget that Afghanistan will be a new challenge for Turkey, who has taken initiatives to increase its influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and the Caucasus in recent years.

Turkey's presence in Afghanistan contains elements that would affect its relations with this country as well as the countries of the region. This region will become more important for Ankara in the coming years if Turkey gains the trust and support necessary for the continuation of its presence in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan's security and social problems, the region being a competitive field for many regional/international powers, and the reluctance of the Taliban for Turkey's presence are factors that shouldn't be ignored.

Translated by Can Atalay. Opinions expressed in this article are the author's own. This article also appeared in Anadolu News Agency.