

# URGENT ACTION

## MILLIONS MORE AFGHANS IN IRAN FACING EXPULSION

More than one million Afghans, including those born in Iran and those living in Iran for decades, have been forcibly returned to Afghanistan in 2025 as the Iranian authorities wage an unlawful expulsion campaign. The mass expulsions scaled up around the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran, with over half a million Afghans expelled since 1 June 2025, including several thousand unaccompanied children. Millions of others are at risk, including women and girls who must be treated as prima-facie refugees and not returned to Afghanistan where the Taliban are committing the crime against humanity of gender persecution against them.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Minister of interior, Eskandar Momeni** c/o Embassy of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva  
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr. Eskandar Momeni

I am alarmed by the Iranian authorities' ongoing and unprecedented mass expulsions of over a million Afghans, including unaccompanied and separated children, refugees and asylum seekers, individuals born in Iran to Afghan parents and Afghans living in Iran for decades, since the start of 2025. This pattern has escalated since 1 June 2025, [according](#) to UN Refugee UN Refugee UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), with millions more Afghans at risk. This comes amid severe human rights and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, where many of those returned face imminent risk of persecution and human rights violations by the Taliban.

After the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran on 13 June 2025, the mass expulsions further escalated. On 22 June 2025, state media quoted an official from Iran's border force saying "all unauthorized nationals must leave Iran" – a term often used by the authorities to refer to Afghans. The unlawful expulsion campaign has involved home raids, stop-and-searches, arbitrary arrests and forcible returns of people with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Iranian officials have intensified their use of dehumanizing rhetoric against Afghans, fuelling hate speech and hate crimes. They are also depriving Afghans, including children, of socioeconomic rights, including primary and secondary education and healthcare.

Those forcibly returned to Afghanistan, including women and girls, artists, dissidents, former officials, journalists and human rights defenders, face a real risk of human rights violations by the Taliban. Under the non-refoulement principle, as laid out in international law, states are prohibited from returning anyone to a country where they would be at real risk of violations. If returned to Afghanistan, women and girls would be deprived of their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, belief, education, work, freedom of movement, protection from torture and other ill-treatment and bodily autonomy. All states, including Iran, must recognize Afghan women and girls as refugees and not return them to Afghanistan where the Taliban commit the crime against humanity of gender persecution against them.

**I call on you to immediately stop the mass expulsion of Afghans and provide all Afghans in Iran with protection, including a regular migration status that protects them from refoulement. I further call on the Iranian authorities to protect all Afghans in Iran from arbitrary arrest, torture and other ill-treatment and discrimination, including in access to housing, healthcare and education. All Afghan women and girls must be recognized as refugees and anyone arbitrarily detained based on their Afghan identity and/or nationality must be immediately released.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Iran has hosted one of the largest populations of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in the world for 40 years. According to [UNHCR](#), as of 2022, there were more than 4.5 million Afghans in Iran, and [at least a million](#) fled to Iran since the return of the Taliban to power in 2021, including Afghan human rights defenders, women activists and protestors, journalists and other dissidents. The population of Afghans in Iran, including recently arrived Afghans, those who have lived in the country for decades and individuals born in Iran to Afghan parents, face [widespread discrimination](#) in law and in practice, including barriers to education, housing, employment, healthcare, banking services and freedom of movement. They also face a pervasive climate of racism and xenophobia, fuelled by hate speech from authorities and resulting in acts of violence against them by both state and non-state actors that often go unpunished.

Iranian laws do not offer a reliable pathway to naturalization, except through marriage to an Iranian national or under a few other exceptional circumstances. As a result, most Afghans residing in Iran retain a precarious migration status, even after decades of living in the country, and their children, despite being born in Iran, are not automatically granted Iranian nationality either. Until March 2025, several million Afghans had been permitted to temporarily legalize their stay in Iran through obtaining a “headcount” document (*bargeh-e sarshomari*). Those granted this document could access limited socioeconomic services, including access to state healthcare, public education, work authorization, banking access and ability to enter into rental agreements. On 12 March 2025, Iran’s Centre for Foreign Nationals and Immigration Affairs, which falls under the Ministry of Interior, announced that “headcount” documents for Afghans would automatically expire from the start of the year 1404 on Iran’s calendar (corresponding to 20 March 2025) and that access to all socioeconomic services would be terminated. In the following months, the Iranian authorities [stated](#) their objective to return Afghans whose “headcount” documents had expired to Afghanistan by June 2025. Between 1 June and 10 July 2025, Iranian authorities [expelled](#) at least 546,000 people, [including](#) 5,000 “unaccompanied and separated children” in June 2025.

Amnesty International documented the testimonies of seven Afghans, which demonstrate the patterns of violations Iranian authorities are committing against Afghans through expedited expulsions. An Afghan man still in Iran at the time he spoke to Amnesty International in early July 2025 said he had been unable to enrol his children into public school as their “headcount” documents had expired, and that due to fear of arbitrary arrest and deportation, he was unable to freely leave his house during the day. He said, “I feel I am under house arrest. I only go out for a walk during nights. I sleep during the days so that time passes.” He further stated that his SIM-card had stopped working and, as he had fled to Iran after the Taliban takeover in 2021, he was at risk of arbitrary arrest by the Taliban due to his prior media work in Afghanistan. If arrested in Afghanistan, he would be at risk of grave human rights violations. Others who spoke to Amnesty International had been forced to leave Iran due to the expiry of their “headcount” documents. They said that the Iranian authorities charged them exorbitant fees for forced return transport to Afghanistan and that they were also forced to pay for municipal taxes for each of their family members before being sent to the Afghanistan border, or face arbitrary detention if these fees were not paid.

After hostilities between Israel and Iran escalated on 13 June 2025, Iranian officials, who have historically referred to Afghans as “foreigners” or “unauthorized nationals”, intensified their use of racist, xenophobic and dehumanizing rhetoric against this community. They have repeatedly called for the rapid “mopping up” of “foreign nationals” ordering them to leave Iran, scapegoating them for the government’s own failures in the area of social welfare and blaming them for strains on public education, state healthcare and the employment sector. Authorities have also made unsubstantiated accusations against Afghans alleging “espionage” for Israel. At least five individuals identified as Afghans have been arrested since 14 June 2025 on such accusations, and state media has aired the forced “confessions” of at least four of these men.

Amnesty International has documented [extrajudicial executions](#), [arbitrary arrests](#), torture and ill-treatment, enforced [disappearances](#) and [war crimes](#) under the Taliban rule. The Taliban have deprived women and girls of [almost all rights](#), including access to education beyond primary school and work. This, together with the commission of torture and ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and imprisonment targeting women and girls, amounts to the [crime against humanity](#) of gender persecution. Afghanistan is the only state in the world where women and girls are banned from education beyond primary school. The Taliban have also imposed restrictions on religious and ethnic minorities.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English, Persian/Dari, Pashto and Balochi.  
You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 31 December 2025.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** All.