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**RE: UNHCR Guidance Note on Afghanistan (Update II)**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to inform you that UNHCR has just issued the *UNHCR Guidance Note on Afghanistan – Update II* (September 2025) which I attach for your ease of reference. This guidance is issued against the ongoing deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as well as the security situation which remains fluid, gravely impacting civilians. This Update supersedes and replaces the February 2023 *UNHCR Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Afghanistan – Update I*, and is available on Refworld at:

<https://www.refworld.org/policy/countrypos/unhcr/2025/en/150460>.

UNHCR continues to call on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Afghanistan access to their territories, to guarantee the right to seek asylum, and to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement at all times.

Based on available reports about widespread human rights violations in Afghanistan, including accounts provided to UNHCR by Afghans in flight and those already abroad as part of UNHCR monitoring activities, many Afghans will have international protection needs. UNHCR has identified the following risk profiles:

- a) Women and girls
- b) Afghans associated with the former government, security forces or allies
- c) Journalists and other media professionals
- d) Persons (perceived as) opposing or criticizing the de facto authorities
- e) Members of minority religious groups and members of minority ethnic groups
- f) Afghans (perceived to be) of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and/or gender expression (SOGIE)
- g) Survivors of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked

This list of risk profiles does not presume to be an exhaustive enumeration of all profiles of Afghans who may have a well-founded fear of persecution. Each application for international protection should be assessed on its merits, taking into account the evidence provided by the applicant as well as all relevant country of origin information to the extent

available. UNHCR notes that family members and others closely associated with persons at risk of persecution are frequently at risk themselves.

In view of the volatility of the situation throughout Afghanistan, coupled with the grave economic and humanitarian situation in the country, UNHCR does not consider it appropriate to deny international protection to nationals and former habitual residents of Afghanistan on the basis of an internal flight or relocation alternative.

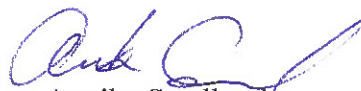
The situation in Afghanistan continues to be volatile and may remain uncertain for some time to come, creating significant challenges for the safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.

Against this background, UNHCR calls on States to exercise caution when considering forced returns to Afghanistan of those determined not to be in need of international protection, taking into account the sustained and large-scale humanitarian crisis in the country and the potentially destabilizing impact of large-scale returns on the fragile situation in Afghanistan.

In line with the commitment by UN Member States under the Global Refugee Forum to the equitable sharing of responsibility for international refugee protection, UNHCR considers that it would not be appropriate for countries of asylum to send Afghan asylum-seekers and refugees to Iran or Pakistan, as these countries have for decades generously hosted the vast majority of the total global number of Afghan refugees.

We kindly request the asylum authorities to duly consider UNHCR's guidance, and we remain at your disposal for any clarification required.

Yours sincerely,



Annika Sandlund  
Representative