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January 1981/CFN

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

The first in our series so far of eight Refugee Reports and Sitreps about the situation in Pakistan appeared in November 1979. This contained the text of a report by Mr. Arvin Ofstad, a staff member of Norwegian Church Aid, who had visited Pakistan the month before. Since then, Mr. Ofstad has made three more trips to Pakistan, and his agency has become by far the largest donor toward the refugee assistance programme operated by the Inter-Aid Committee of Karachi, the ecumenical body supported also by the World Council of Churches and its related agencies. In November 1980 Mr. Ofstad made his most recent visit, and we reproduce here the text of his report on conditions in Pakistan as the Afghan refugees brace for another winter.

Two other reports about refugees in Pakistan are included herewith. The first is the December 1, 1980 report of the Inter-Aid Committee which gives a situation summary, what the current most urgent needs are, and a statement of the IAC's financial position. The second document, prepared by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' field office in Pakistan, furnishes candid, comprehensive information on all aspects of the situation and is particularly recommended to those readers wishing a detailed overview.

Please note that two of the Annexes referred to in Mr. Ofstad's report have not been attached. Annex II was omitted because the same information appears as part of UNHCR's report, and Annex V has been supplanted by more recent information in the IAC's report of December 1, 1980. Ten of the agencies listed in Annex IV are associated with the World Council of Churches and have been supporting the IAC either directly or via WCC/CICARWS. See the IAC's Statement of Accounts for a listing of those WCC-associated agencies and the contributions they have made.

CICARWS continues to follow closely the developments in this refugee emergency and to encourage strong support of the Inter-Aid Committee's efforts to meet the Afghans' needs. Monetary transfers may be credited directly to the IAC at

American Express Bank
Account No. 4136
Karachi, Pakistan

or via CICARWS. Inquiries about shipments of material aid should be addressed to

Inter-Aid Committee
P.O. Box 7743
74 Garden Road
Karachi, Pakistan

Because of the numerous other refugee situations in various countries which make strong claims on the resources of donors, the IAC has been urged to make available as soon as possible an estimate of its needs for 1981. It has also been encouraged to investigate the possibility of funding through UNHCR and to explore the potential of greater support from Roman Catholic sources. To date the Protestant

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churches and their agencies, and several secular organizations, have contributed nearly the entire total of monetary gifts received by the IAC.

Some resettlement opportunities are available to qualified Afghan refugees, and here too CICARWS helps by facilitating the necessary arrangements. Under the terms of the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 a limited number of Afghan refugees will be eligible for resettlement in the United States. Consular offices in Islamabad, Karachi, New Delhi and elsewhere have received the applicable instructions for processing. The number of applicants is reported to be very high, particularly in Pakistan, but the actual total that may be accepted for resettlement in U.S. fiscal year 1981 will not exceed 4,500.

According to the American Friends Service Committee, about 20,000 Afghans have come to India, 5,000 of whom are in New Delhi. They are mainly professional people and intellectuals who had passports as well as the financial means to arrange their departure. AFSC also reports an estimated 100,000 Afghans in Iran, presumably because of that country's announced policy of providing support for the mujahaddin (those who engage in holy struggle to defend the Islamic faith). 5,000 Afghan refugees are believed to have reached Turkey, most of them with family ties there, while sizeable numbers have also appeared in Western Europe. In the Federal Republic of Germany alone some 3,000 Afghans have either been accorded refugee status or their cases are under study. Entry regulations in the F.R.G. have recently been tightened for Afghans, who now are required to have visas.

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Refugee Service, CICARWS
World Council of Churches
150, route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland



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