

## The Implication of UNHCR in Addressing the Problem of Afghan Refugees Against Global Security Stability

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### Abstract

*This article aims to examine the implications of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in dealing with the problem of Afghan refugees scattered in various countries caused by the internal conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The role of UNHCR under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol contains the objectives of protecting the rights of refugees throughout the world and providing various facilities both in the health sector and to regulate the placement of refugees in third countries. The international community is feeling the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In its implementation, the distribution of Afghan refugees to the destination countries often raises a new problem for the country concerned with security stability. There is a new problem that the Afghan government is also facing due to several countries being less willing to accept the large number of refugees arriving. In understanding the condition of the problem, a qualitative analysis approach is used by observing the strategies taken by UNHCR. This article finds that UNHCR, which acts as a facilitator, mediator, and initiator, has a significant role in preventing global threats due to the high flow of refugees. In this way, it can realize the rights of refugees and the international security stability to be achieved.*

**Keywords:** *Refugees; UNHCR; Security Stability; Afghanistan Refugees; International Conflict*

### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implikasi *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR) dalam menangani permasalahan pengungsi Afghanistan yang tersebar di berbagai negara, yang disebabkan oleh konflik internal antara pemerintah Afghanistan dan kelompok Taliban. Persebaran pengungsi Afghanistan ke negara-negara yang dituju dalam implementasinya kerap memunculkan suatu permasalahan baru bagi negara yang bersangkutan terkait dengan stabilitas keamanan di negara tersebut. Sesuai dengan peran UNHCR dalam Konvensi Pengungsi Tahun 1951 dan Protokol 1967 yang bertujuan untuk melindungi hak-hak yang dimiliki oleh para pengungsi di seluruh dunia, seperti halnya menyediakan berbagai fasilitas baik dalam bidang kesehatan hingga mengatur pemulangan dan penempatan untuk pengungsi di negara ketiga. Di tengah pandemi COVID-19 yang sedang dialami oleh dunia internasional saat ini, terdapat suatu masalah baru yang juga sedang dihadapi oleh pemerintah Afghanistan, dikarenakan adanya beberapa negara yang kurang bersedia menerima banyaknya pengungsi yang berdatangan. Dalam memahami kondisi permasalahan tersebut digunakan pendekatan analisis secara kualitatif dengan mengamati strategi yang diambil oleh UNHCR. Sebagaimana artikel ini menemukan bahwa UNHCR yang berperan sebagai fasilitator, mediator, dan inisiator memiliki andil yang cukup besar dalam mencegah ancaman global akibat dari tingginya arus pengungsi. Dengan demikian, hak-hak para pengungsi serta stabilitas keamanan global yang hendak dicapai dapat terealisasi.

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## **Kata Kunci: Pengungsi, UNHCR, Stabilitas Keamanan, Pengungsi Afghanistan, Konflik Internasional**

### **Introduction**

Afghanistan is arguably one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries globally. The ongoing conflict has affected all aspects of civic and economic life in Afghanistan. Significant financial resources have switched over to war costs, so military enlistment has become a way for young Afghans to meet the economic needs of their families. Based on data from the World Bank, Afghanistan's financial income is heavily dependent on international aid. A low level of GDP income from various sectors and economic growth in Afghanistan is supported mainly by international grants of around 75% in financing public spending. So this makes Afghanistan's financial strength very weak, followed by the political instability that occurs in the country, making Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank, 2021).

The impact of poverty always shows social instability that can trigger criminal acts. As demonstrated in the Afghan population scheme, there has been an increase in crime rates related to the production and sale of drugs due to the low economic level of the community. In addition, the conflict in Afghanistan has also damaged the large-scale industry, agricultural infrastructure, housing, and medical infrastructure. Civil society is often the direct target and has no other choice. Many of them have lost their homes and can only depend on international assistance and their compatriots in Afghanistan for their survival. Corruption and organized crime in various sectors of Afghanistan also appear as a threat to the population because it has a reasonably large scale. The relationship between corrupt government officials and criminal networks will make the country crisis (Sullivan and Forsberg, 2014:165).

Not only have conflicts and wars damaged Afghanistan and threatened the population's survival, but also the drought in various parts of Afghanistan, which has increasingly made Afghanistan's territory considered a threat to the population's welfare. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), approximately 554,000 Afghans have been internally displaced this year due to violence and natural disasters. As of September 2018, the UNHCR estimates that over 2 million Afghans were internally displaced.

In general, the driving factor for large-scale migration carried out by a group of people is war or conflict in their country. The security threats in Afghanistan prompted the indigenous people to leave the country and become refugees in other countries, searching for a peaceful life. They have lost their homes and jobs, in addition to the fear of torture and insecurity that a government cannot fulfill. Moreover, people leave their country due to economic factors, which can happen because of the military coup in the country. Such was the case with the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979 which resulted in the Afghan people, who knew to be religiously devout, taking up arms against the Soviet occupation. A new conflict emerged after the 30-year war in the Afghan government devastated Afghanistan when the war ended.

After the Cold War, disputes between the West and countries in the Middle East led to international conflict. The defeat of the Soviet Union over the United States made the US power even bigger and tried to reach more areas to be controlled, one of which was countries in the Middle East. Interventions carried out by the United States (US) against countries in the Middle East caused public resistance

in responding to the threatening US presence. Countries in the Middle East are closely related to eastern culture that emphasizes morality and religiosity, in contrast to western culture, which tends to depart from the principles of eastern culture, so that an anti-western attitude appears in the minds of some Middle Eastern people. The absence of peace and a strong central government in Afghanistan sparked the birth of the Islamic fundamentalist movement, the Taliban, in 1994, which was pioneer by young students in religious schools in Pakistan and Southern Afghanistan. The Taliban took over the Afghan government for five years, until the September 11, 2001 tragedies in New York and Washington.

The occurrence of the 9/11 case can be said to have traumatized the western world against the threat of terrorism and created prejudice against the Muslim community so that Islamophobia emerged. After the terrorism case initiated by Al-Qaeda at the WTC Building, the United States placed its troops at several points in Middle Eastern countries. One of them is in Afghanistan, which is suspected to be the location of Osama bin Laden's escape. Security instability in Afghanistan is heating, political and social conflicts in the country have also contributed to the increase in Afghan refugees spreading throughout the world. In overcoming the issue of refugees, international community involvement is crucial. Therefore, the role of UNHCR as an organization that oversees refugee issues has a significant contribution to the welfare of refugees. In addition, the refugee problem can be a global problem, so international cooperation is potential in dealing with these problems as a representation of world peace that the international community wants to achieve.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research refers to the concept of global security as the goal of the state to achieve prosperity. Based on an

understanding study related to security, Barry Buzan (1984:110) explains that the concept of security is broader in describing the problems in international relations than the concepts of power and peace. From this description, it can interpret that the idea of security in his study seeks to reach a broader understanding in responding to the problems that occur. Since World War I, security studies have included a military approach (hard power), but now studies on security are broader in covering humanitarian security. It can say that the concept of security that used to be often associated with the military approach has evolved more deeply to include human security. According to Alkire (2003:24), the concept of human security is used to respond to humanitarian threats. As for the threat to humanity in the form of human rights violations to living well and the right to obtain security that the state should provide.

The ongoing conflict is inseparable from the efforts of a country to achieve its national interests. Since the past, the conflict has often been described as a not conducive situation and threatens national security. According to Lewis A. Coser (1957:203), conflict is an effort followed by values that aim to achieve status and power by using existing demands to intervene against the opposing party. Therefore, the situation in international conflicts shows that disputes arise between two or more countries in the world and often involve the international community on a larger scale. It can be seen in the escalation of the World War, conflicts that trigger clashes between countries often cause traumatic feelings experienced by war victims. That is why almost all societies globally try to minimize as much as possible to avoid significant conflicts that result in damage. It should understand that conflict has a substantial negative impact on global development. As shown during the world war period, conflicts tend to raise the dangers of psychological and

economic concerns felt by many countries involved in the conflict.

One of the most significant impacts people feel in conflict-ridden countries is insecurity and the fear of a substantial war erupting that threatens their well-being. Therefore, many people who come from conflict countries choose to become refugees in safer countries and can guarantee their lives for the better. Refugees are essential to understand because the increasing number of refugees shows the large number of people who feel threatened in their lives. Based on the 1951 Convention concerning the Status of Refugees, a refugee is defined as a person afraid of the threat of persecution caused by race, ethnicity, religion, and political problems in his country of nationality and prefer to be outside his country. According to Malcolm Proudfoot (1939), refugees are a group of people who urgently leave their home country to a safer area due to persecution, political clashes between governments, and dangerous wars (Holborn, 1957:874). It can conclude that refugees flee their country of origin to a safer place because of the ongoing conflict that threatens security stability in general.

In dealing with refugee problems worldwide, an international organization plays a role in providing solutions and dealing with these problems, namely the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), which is under the auspices of the United Nations. In general, the resolution of conflicts in the international world uses a soft power strategy, such as diplomatic relations. As assumed in realism theory, some consider hard power or a military approach to be more effective. Nowadays, the soft power strategy method is emphasized because it is seen as more helpful in maintaining peace between countries. Many countries have widely used soft diplomacy in conflict resolution because building a diplomatic meeting room between countries involved will minimize physical damage from various military attacks. As Joseph Nye's

(2014) view on soft diplomacy explains that using an intimidating attitude will not provide effective results in achieving national interests, it is necessary to use soft power to influence other country's interests. It can also use it in conflict resolution to avoid humanitarian security threats such as those that occur to refugees.

## **The Result and Discussion**

### **History of Conflict Development in Afghanistan**

During the Cold War, two superpowers ruled the world, namely the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (USSR). This concept of multipolarity developed from 1947 to 1991. Many countries were also affected by the power struggle between the two countries, Afghanistan. Since 1978, there has been a civil war in Afghanistan, showing the involvement of the US, the Soviet Union, and other Western countries. The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, giving rise to an ideological struggle between pro communists and non-communists. Many civilians fell because of the military invasion by the Soviet Union. In 1992, USSR could withdraw from Afghanistan (Khurun'in, 2016:100). Furthermore, the US began to intervene in Afghanistan in 1998 because of the suspicion that there was a hiding place for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan after the bomb attack on the US embassy in Africa. Furthermore, the 9/11 tragedy in 2001 made the US occupy its military troops in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan (BBC 2019). US carried out humanitarian intervention against Afghanistan because the Taliban group refused US requests to inform the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden. Hence, the US used a military invasion in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan.

The military invasion in the conflict in Afghanistan made the Afghan people become victims and threatened their survival. The contribution of the Taliban

group that protected Osama bin Laden and his efforts to occupy the Afghan government in various ways became one of the causes of the conflict in Afghanistan. The political stability in Afghanistan has historically been characterized by tension and arguably dominated by ethnic strife. The Taliban group strives to implement Islamic law and sharia in the government. In contrast, in its influence, the Taliban group uses its power by intervening in the human rights of each individual. Some of the rules implemented by Afghanistan are punishing the use of violence, such as carrying out executions for murderers and adulterers, requiring women to wear the burka and covering their genitals completely, and prohibiting children and women from going to school (BBC, 2021). If the Afghan people violate these coercive rules, their survival is at stake because the Taliban actions tend to be radical.

Since 2014, Afghan forces have taken full responsibility for fighting the Taliban group. The withdrawal of international troops in assisting the Afghan government became an opportunity for the Taliban to re-occupy the Afghan government from various attacks in the country. In general, the endless conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban impacts the security of the Afghan population. Based on a report from the United Nations, in 2009, as many as 111,000 civilians became victims of war, and 35,000 of them died (Gul, 2021). The impact of the war in Afghanistan caused a lot of damage to infrastructure, economic decline, and an increase in Afghan refugees. The Taliban's indifference to the welfare of the Afghan population has contributed to the increasingly chaotic security instability in Afghanistan. This situation drives the Afghan people to seek security in other countries with the status of refugees. The majority of the Afghan population consciously wants freedom for their lives. The complexity of the conflict in their country shows they will not have a promising future if they remain in a conflict

country. So that leaving the country of origin is one of the solutions for the Afghan population to achieve a better life.

### **Distribution of Afghan Refugees in the World**

The prolonged conflict has increasingly colored the situation and conditions in Afghanistan, which has an impact on increasing the intensity of the flow of refugees, many Afghans occupying Pakistan and Iraq in their distribution due to the location of the two countries, which are pretty close. Between 1992 and 1994, about 3.2 million Afghans fled to Pakistan, and 2.9 million Afghans fled to Iran. However, the United Nations has subsequently succeeded in helping to return refugees to their countries of origin (Arifin, 2008:24). Since the past, the conflict in Afghanistan has shown a relatively high flow, indicating that the country's severe social conditions are a significant factor in the emergence of security instability felt by the local population and encourage a sense of want to leave the country.

After the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban took the opportunity to occupy the Afghan government. It is evident in its efforts that the Taliban group succeeded in occupying the city of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Once the Afghan government is under Taliban control, those in Afghanistan who reject Taliban rule are in a position to leave Afghanistan. In the United States (US) operation in carrying out evacuations on people in Afghanistan by air, as many as 80,000 residents managed to get out of Kabul, including 5,500 Americans, and 73,500 of them were a mixture of indigenous Afghans and foreigners. In addition, the British Ministry of Defense said that until August 28, they had evacuated 8000 Afghans (BBC, 2021). People who came out of Afghanistan then spread to various countries and became refugees. Based on a press conference on August 27 delivered by the US spokesman,

Ned Price (2021) stated that the US has evacuated 105,000 people since August 14 and has relocated approximately 110,600 people since the end of July 2021. The conference results seek to make clear that the US is seeking to facilitate the evacuation of American citizens in Afghanistan, holders of special immigrant visas (SIVs), and all Afghan residents identified as vulnerable and wishing to leave the country. Efforts made by the US are aimed at maintaining diplomatic relations and upholding humanitarian assistance. Besides that, Ned also explained that the US is actively communicating with the Refugee Resettlement Agency regarding checking Afghan refugees who have arrived in the US but lost contact or separated from their families.

Pakistan is a country that occupies the highest position as a host for refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan. Based on data from UNHCR in 2020 from the BBC (2021) report, Pakistan has accepted 1,435,026 refugees from Afghanistan into its country. According to the UNHCR report, as of September 22, an estimated 35,400 refugees arrived in Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. Followed by Iran in second place, there are about 780,000 Afghan refugees. Furthermore, there were 181,100 Afghan refugees in Germany and 129,300 Afghan refugees in Turkey. The distribution of Afghan refugees has always dominated neighboring countries that directly border Afghanistan because regional areas have easier access because they are in the regions that touch each other. Furthermore, based on existing reports, most Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran mostly do not have verified documents and are based on interviews from UNHCR; refugees generally come to Pakistan and Iran for security reasons. (Aljazeera, 2021). The reception of Afghan refugees in the region was carried out to confirm the existence of diplomatic relations to prevent the possible impact of the explosion of government in Afghanistan.

The distribution of Afghan refugees also occupied several European regions, and the main destinations were Austria, France, and Sweden. In addition, the track record of Afghan refugees in Germany in 2020 also shows a relatively high number. The distribution of Afghan refugees is a divide in several countries in the world. According to a report from the European Union (EU), by early 2021, there were 7000 Afghan refugees granted permanent or temporary legal status. Then about 2,200 refugees occupied Greece, in France as 1800 refugees, in Germany as many as 1000 refugees, and about 700 refugees in Italy (Buchholz, 2021). Many Afghan asylum seekers in Europe have faced rejection, although few have been accepted or granted temporary residence rights. Europe's rejection of asylum seekers from Afghanistan due to irregular migration so that they were forced to be returned to their country, the deportation policy was implemented by Austria, Germany, and Denmark. Since 2015, Afghan asylum seekers in the European Union have reached 570,000 refugees, making Afghan refugees the largest asylum seeker after Syria. However, the increasing destabilization of conditions in Afghanistan, as stated by Catherine Wollard, director of the European Council on Refugees and Exile, that following the European Court of Human Rights decision, the Austrian decision will suspend deportations and provide appropriate temporary protection until decent conditions (Morris and Denise, 2021).

Furthermore, as many as 11,000 Afghan refugees have been in Australia until 2021. Australia has been one of the destinations for Afghan refugees for a long time because, as a developed country, Australia is considered to provide adequate social security. Furthermore, the Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan also said that most refugees are young people who want to improve their economic life by migrating to Australia and having friends or family members who previously lived in Australia.

They see a great opportunity in Australia, and it is easy for them to communicate with their Australian connections. In addition, refugees can also receive short-term assistance from Australia's humanitarian resettlement services program. Then asylum seekers will also receive grants from the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme and Community Assistance Support Program. The aid that an asylum seeker will receive is not more than 89 percent of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Special Benefits (\$458.88 per fortnight for one person) and 89 percent of the DHS Rental Assistance (\$75.71 per fortnight). But, may use the assistance is to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers, such as community services and access to health (Phillips, 2015). Refugees who come to Australia come by boat, and to avoid direct rejection if they do not have qualified data, refugees usually transit through Malaysia, Thailand, or Indonesia first. Afghan refugees cross through Indonesia due to more accessible access to enter this country. As in the UNHCR data report, in 2020, there were 7,600 Afghan refugees in Indonesia; this number can be considered relatively high because Indonesia did not ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention (Missbach, 2019:421). In transit countries, refugees take care of determining refugee status first, then the focus of stopping refugees in third countries is countries that have good guarantees for refugees in Australia. However, suppose the processing of refugee status or related to Australian refugee visas does not go well. In that case, the worst-case scenario is that they have to be trapped in a transit country and often do not receive proper guarantees due to the lack of appropriate status ownership.

In reality, the distribution of refugees often encounters several obstacles, such as the refusal of the refugee-receiving country, difficulties related to obtaining documents or visas for refugees. Some asylum seekers who have difficulty accessing the country they want to go to are stranded in a foreign country without

having refugee status. However, rather than being repatriated to their home country, Afghan refugees, in particular, prefer to flee even without having rights as refugees in a safer country. Many Afghan refugees are afraid to return to their country because they cannot see a stable future. The openness of refugee-receiving countries shows the realization of diplomatic relations between nations and the implementation of humanitarian assistance. The contribution of countries in the world in accepting the arrival of Afghan refugees is a demand for global interaction in achieving peace integration.

### **The Relevance of High Refugee Rates to Global Security Stability**

Currently, the global world is facing external threats from all the ease of access present in the era of globalization. The strengthening of global interactions has fostered cooperation between countries to help each other on a humanitarian basis while maintaining diplomatic relations to achieve global political stability. Several countries still have internal problems that have become international conflicts until now. Even residents of conflict countries often feel acts of violence and injustice that affect society's freedom of human rights and psychological fear. The instability of a country due to conflict then drives the rate of refugee distribution to increase throughout the world. The distribution of Afghan refugees worldwide is the second largest after Syria, which indicates the high level of refugees in the world is also dominated by the Afghan population. In reality, the presence of refugees in the receiving country creates a new conflict by committing various crimes committed by asylum seekers and refugees. Many media reported that the high number of refugees had implications for increasing crime cases in a country. Often refugees were indicated as a threat to stability and national security. It is vital to take a deeper look at the

relevance of the high distribution of refugees and criminal cases.

Post-cold war security threats have developed more broadly, which concerns international migration. Immigrants are often referred to as a threat by some parties, for example, in the case that the collective identity of refugees and asylum seekers is often not in harmony with the culture of the receiving country. The challenges to refugees' identity, ethnicity, and race are sometimes difficult to adapt and assimilate with the local population, resulting in a sterile boundary. According to Huysmans (2000), the image of immigration seen as a threat to public security will form a political myth about a homogeneous western civilization national community caught in excluding migrants who are identified differently (Tallmeister, 2013:2). We can see this statement in the rise of Islamophobia after 9/11; Afghan refugees and asylum seekers often feel this situation. Furthermore, an increase in immigration to a country is considered vulnerable to facilitate the appearance of the threat of terrorism for the internal security of the recipient country. This opinion then influences media and political sentiment in determining a political policy (Tallmeister, 2013:4). According to Saux (2007:62), the September 11 incident and the Madrid bombings described by the Spanish media regarding the relevance of immigration and criminal acts show their influence on the political policies and public opinion used (Tallmeister, 2013:4). According to Wang (2012:743), the correlation between immigration and crime is empirically implausible (Tallmeister, 2013:5). Many studies explain that the high level of refugees scattered around the world does not strongly correlate with criminal acts in a country. Negative views of refugees or asylum seekers are generally just a matter of perception. So, we need to broadly explore the underlying differences in views on the relevance of Afghan refugees and crime in receiving countries.

As a country directly bordering Afghanistan, Pakistan also feels worried about the conflict in Afghanistan. Therefore, Pakistan cannot accept the influx of Afghan refugees into its country after the reinstatement of the Taliban. The Pakistani government considers that the conflict between the Taliban and the Afghan government might become a civil war. If the Pakistani government accepts the influx of Afghan refugees, it is worried that it will be very vulnerable to national security stability in Pakistan. Currently, Pakistan is also involved in a conflict in India, so this is also one of the reasons for refusing the arrival of refugees for fear that it will be an opportunity for agencies in India to infiltrate Pakistani territory. Furthermore, as stated by Pakistan's National Security Advisor, Moeed Yusuf, the solution that Pakistan can give is for UNHCR to set up camps for refugees along the Afghan side of the border (Furqan, 2017). Pakistan's rejection of the large number of refugees who will come to the country is generally due to concerns about the security risks of the Afghan conflict because Pakistan has an area that is directly adjacent to each other and can even be easily reached by land.

After the Taliban returned to occupy the Afghan government, the European Union is also open to providing housing assistance to Afghan refugees. But as a precaution against the risk of security threats, refugees or asylum seekers who want to enter European countries must go through a screening process first as a mitigation measure from external threats. The mitigation effort was carried out because, according to Ylva Johansson, the European Union's home affairs commissioner in charge of migration and security issues, everyone can be a security threat. Without offending any parties, the screening and registration process through Eurodac is solely for security reasons (CERULUS, 2021). Referring to the research of Khan, Ahmed, and Ayyub (2020:19-22), based on the results of a



study from 150 respondents in Quetta, Balochistan-Pakistan, regarding the possible involvement of Afghan refugees in crimes in Quetta such as terrorism, kidnapping, theft, murder, and drugs trafficking shows a positive correlation, which means that there is the involvement of Afghan refugees in Quetta. Cases of crime by Afghan refugees are generally associated with difficult economic conditions, and then poverty encourages Afghan refugees to act criminally. Furthermore, in their analysis, Feltes, List, and Bertamini (2018:621) explain that the increase in refugees in Germany also impacts increasing crimes that occur in refugee shelters and public spaces. Still, these immigrants often become victims who are often ignored. In analyzing the crime rate in Germany, Feltes and Bertamini observed based on the crime rate listed in the 2016 Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) report refugees committed 295,100 crimes in early mid-2017 recorded 133,800 crimes (Feltes, List, and Bertamini, 2018:604). Data reports on crimes committed by refugees show that there is a follow-up impact of the increasing flow of refugees in Germany. Structural problems related to refugees need further evaluation regarding prevention, from increasing crime and paying attention to refugees as victims.

However, it seems that the relationship between the involvement of Afghan refugees and crime cannot be generalized in general. If you look at the analysis from Bednarczyk (2021) in the news article *The Conversation*, countries that treat refugees well in large numbers, such as Europe and North America, tend to show a lower risk of violent crime. Likewise, Germany, Malta, and Sweden, which are pretty significant in accepting Afghan refugee populations, still show the lowest levels of violence in the western region. Furthermore, according to Timo, the role of the host country towards refugees has a more significant impact than the high flow of refugees, so Timo said that

the relationship between the flow of refugees and the increase in violent crimes is negatively correlated. From the two contradictory views described previously, if we look at the general perspective of media coverage which is often excessive, it may also have a role in influencing public sentiment, which then describes refugees as a security threat. So, it can say that the involvement of refugees in violent crimes is more relevant. It is related to perception because, in reality, the correlation cannot be generalized as a whole.

It can be concluded from the previous explanation between the relevance of the increasing flow of refugees and the increasing level of crime occurring in a country that the problems experienced by refugees are related to being victims and perpetrators of crimes being in a balanced position. However, media reports, political institutions, and public opinion often focus more on describing that the presence of refugees in receiving countries dominates the level of violent crimes that occur in that country. In reality, based on community reports and data reports registered with criminal investigation agencies, it found that refugees were involved in committing crimes in the receiving country. In addition, crimes against refugees are also often seen due to acts of racism or xenophobia experienced by residents. The conditions that occur in refugee problems are very complex. Therefore, preventing crimes committed by refugees requires in-depth discussion and evaluation. Because describing the face of refugees as a source of security threats cannot be justified, because on humanitarian grounds, too many Afghan refugees, especially in the unstable situation of their country, require the fulfillment of a safe and stable condition in their lives. So, it can say that one of the European Union's steps in screening incoming refugees is quite good in preventing security threats between the two parties.

## **The Role of UNHCR and the International Response to Afghan Refugees**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works under the auspices of the United Nations, which focuses on the problem of the global refugee crisis, the role of UNHCR as an NGO also seeks to overcome the issue of the distribution of Afghan refugees throughout the world. The main goal of UNHCR is to commit to responding to the dangers or impacts felt by Afghan refugees by meeting the basic needs needed by refugees, such as shelter camps, food, water sanitation, voluntary repatriation, and other assistance. UNHCR has an international responsibility to protect refugees from getting a better life in third countries until conditions in their home countries improve. UNHCR also plays a role in returning refugees to their lands through an organized process. According to a UNHCR report, 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees worldwide have to leave their homes to find a safe place. UNHCR is committed to providing a safe situation for refugees to overcome the refugee problem. By 2021, UNHCR, through its emergency program, had assisted in life support to 340,000 Afghan internally displaced persons seeking access to security within their country. Since 2002, UNHCR has succeeded in supporting the voluntary repatriation of 5.2 Million Afghan refugees to return to their country, and by 2021 as many as 900 refugees have returned (UNHCR Refugees, 2021).

After the reinstatement of the Taliban in the Afghan government in August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan is increasingly unfavorable. Many Afghans have fled their homes and sought safer areas at home and abroad. In the emergency, Mantoo (2021), the spokesperson for UNHCR, said that UNHCR warned against the forcible repatriation of Afghans. In this situation, UNHCR plays a role in seeking security for the lives of Afghan refugees to

avoid danger. UNHCR emphasizes that countries in the world can respect the principle of non-refoulment. Thus, UNHCR supports countries to temporarily suspend the deportations of failed asylum seekers until conditions improve. UNHCR has a role in organizing so that the fate of displaced refugees and asylum seekers can be addressed as the basis for humanitarian implementation. Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol on refugees and refugee rights, UNHCR acts as the "guardian" in protecting and respecting refugee decisions under international law. UNHCR cooperates with countries concerned with refugees in protecting refugees under the principle of non-refoulment (The 1951 Refugee Convention n.d.). Since January 2021, an estimated 270,000 Afghans have become internally displaced. In this era of COVID-19 which has impacted the world's economic situation, Afghan refugees also feel an increasingly urgent need in a deteriorating case. UNHCR reports that the Human Resources to the public authority and individuals of Afghanistan have diminished significantly, with just 43% of the absolute US\$337 million in reserves coming in. Along these lines, UNHCR desires the worldwide local area to focus on giving haven admittance to Afghan outcasts and refuge searchers dependent on helpful fortitude (Babar Baloch, 2021). UNHCR's efforts are carried out with the hope that they can resolve the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan soon due to the integrity of the international community in helping the smooth resolution of the refugee issue. It means that the cooperation between UNHCR and the governments of countries globally will significantly impact the handling of refugee problems in achieving strategic solutions.

Furthermore, the role of UNHCR in overcoming refugee problems is related to being a mediator, facilitator, and initiator. In more detail, UNHCR plays a significant role in responding to and organizing the issues experienced by

refugees as a whole. Because the part of UNHCR is to ensure that can protect the rights of refugees, comprehensive solutions are often carried out in reaching refugee problems to the root. UNHCR's role as a mediator is represented in its efforts to mediate issues between refugees and certain parties. In September 2021, Afghan asylum seekers demonstrated in front of the UNHCR building in Jakarta, demanding refugees' right to request transparency to promptly send them to a third country. Dwi Patrifia, a Communications Associate of UNHCR Indonesia, said that UNHCR has mediated with representatives of Afghan refugees. As for the mediation process carried out, UNHCR has provided several alternative solutions to asylum seekers to further discuss with other countries in international forums (AI, 2021). The mediation carried out by UNHCR in listening to the aspirations of the refugees aims to maintain security stability, both for refugees and the recipient country concerned. Furthermore, the role of UNHCR as a facilitator is related to UNHCR's efforts to facilitate all the needs of refugees, both materially and non-materially. The task of UNHCR is to promote the necessities needed by refugees, such as food, water, health, and in assisting the voluntary repatriation desired by refugees. In dealing with refugee repatriation, UNHCR is fully responsible for protecting and organizing refugees until they return to their country. Repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin must be carried out voluntarily, referring to respect for the rights of refugees. As stated in Article 13 (2) of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (UNHCR, 1996: chapter 2). The points in the article serve as a reference for UNHCR in protecting the process of voluntary repatriation. The function of the facilitator in the repatriation of refugees carried out by UNHCR is related to providing information about the condition of the refugees'

countries of origin, assisting in material terms, playing a role in arranging guarantees for refugees, and monitoring the security of refugees (UNHCR, 1996). The form of voluntary repatriation can be seen in the UNHCR report, which since 2002 has succeeded in assisting the repatriation of 5.2 million Afghan refugees to their home countries. UNHCR, in dealing with voluntary repatriation based on the solid will of refugees, also pays attention to the qualifications possessed by refugees, for example, the existence of refugees displaced in the receiving country. Furthermore, UNHCR coordinates with the recipient country and the refugee country of origin to follow up the repatriation process by prioritizing security protection for refugees.

In addition, UNHCR also implements its role as an initiator in overcoming complex refugee problems. One form of UNHCR's realization of this method is to build initiatives in coordination with host countries, origin countries, and third countries. Refugees have a vast influence on global stability because unorganized international migration can become a security threat to the international community. For this reason, UNHCR's efforts to build strategic coordination with the governments of each country, as well as other institutions that have an interest in tackling and assisting refugee problems. Meanwhile, UNHCR cooperates with the Human Initiative, a humanitarian organization that focuses on humanitarian issues. The collaboration is carried out to form strategic partnerships in overcoming refugee problems both locally and internationally. As stated by Ann Maymann, UNHCR's representative for Indonesia, during the signing session of the memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Human Initiative, he said that the collaboration was aimed at strengthening the protection of refugees, as well as finding long-term solutions in handling refugees (Human Initiative, 2020). In general, UNHCR cannot act

alone, so the cooperation from various parties is intended to facilitate the handling of refugee problems, more specifically, supported by the involvement of the integrity of the global dimensions.

Furthermore, UNHCR establishes an international system in the management of refugees specifically. Therefore, the role of UNHCR generally reflects the function and purpose of resolving refugee problems as the basis of an objective international system (Adhaniah et al., 2021:56). According to Archer (2001:57), the role of UNHCR in dealing with Afghan refugees can be seen in the functioning of international organizations. It can say that UNHCR is a medium for distributing refugees to countries of origin and recipient countries. The power of a country does not influence decisions from UNHCR based on international law because UNHCR is an independent actor that seeks to implement its goals. The subject of the refugee issue also has a significant impact on global activities, so various international responses are crucial in dealing with refugee problems more broadly. The position of the Taliban in the Afghan Government not only overwhelms the Afghan population but also has an impact on international relations. The international community's response in understanding refugee problems will significantly influence decision-making on their future. Afghanistan's neighboring countries have long-established close ties in handling the refugee issue, so this cooperation between the Afghan Government and neighboring countries is trying to maintain the bordering region's stability. Moreover, UNHCR is also engaged in coordinating countries internationally in finding a comprehensive solution to the problem of international refugees.

UNHCR has been cooperating with Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan in the High-Level Segment on the Afghan Refugee Situation since 2015. In the context of the meeting on refugee solutions, the international community's

responsibility in the regional sector. Furthermore, in 2018, Afghanistan and Pakistan built bilateral cooperation in protecting refugees under the Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APPPS). The Government of Afghanistan in 2016 established a policy on the high number of displaced refugees in the Displacement and Return Executive Committee (DiREC). It cooperated with the World Bank in supporting the reintegration of welfare for Afghan refugees. In addition, Iran as a recipient country for Afghan refugees in 2015 in the Supreme Leader's decree issued to assist Afghan children with access to school. In its Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan Nationals, Pakistan facilitates Afghan refugees in protecting migration management. Cooperation between the government of Pakistan and the government of Afghanistan and UNHCR and IOM resulted in the successful identification of the undocumented Afghan population from 880,000 to 380,000 successfully admitted (UNHCR at EXCOM, 2018:11-14). The development of social protection and peace carried out in regional cooperation and contributions from UNHCR can mitigate movements in global security stability. Moreover, welfare investments on Afghan refugees will also directly impact Afghanistan's stability prospects. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, together with Pakistan, Iran, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), identified 20 Priority Areas for Return and Reintegration (PARR) in 2019-2020, including the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, Citizens Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2019, the Returnees Business Development Project, valued at USD 670,000, provided the company's initial skills and asset development to 5,000 families. The government's main focus in overcoming refugee problems in 2020 is under the objectives of the SDGs. The focus areas of

solutions strategy for Afghan refugees are in Education, Health, Shelters and Energy, Livelihoods, Water & Infrastructure, and Voluntary Repatriation (UNHCR SSAR, 2020).

After the return of the Taliban to the Afghan government, the political situation in Afghanistan became again not conducive. Of course, it also triggers the international community's concern about the emergence of a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Therefore, there are many responses from countries globally to offer several protections to Afghanistan regarding assistance to Afghan refugees. However, some countries also refuse to increase the inflow of refugees into their countries. Likewise, Pakistan and Iran, hosting millions of Afghan refugees, have refused to accept a surge in refugees to their countries after the Taliban took over the government in August 2021. Therefore, Iran only recommends that Afghan refugees take refuge only around the border. Likewise, Pakistan only allows refugees to remain at the edge. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry also said that a comprehensive strategy would prevent the surge of refugees crossing the border into Pakistan. In addition, Turkey is also working with Pakistan to reject the escalation of Afghan refugees who want to enter the country. Meanwhile, western countries such as Great Britain have opened their land to welcome 20,000 Afghan refugees in new resettlement programs. Likewise, Canada will allow 20,000 Afghan refugees to be resettled, which is indicated to be quite vulnerable to attacks on their human rights.

Several countries have not changed their policies regarding the arrival of new refugee flows after August. As with Australia, Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated that Australia will only grant Afghans approximately 3000 visas for a year. Furthermore, Switzerland will only accept Afghan refugees in cases these refugees face as there is a direct threat that these refugees are facing. Austria, as a

country in the European Union that also hosts the most significant number of Afghan refugees with a total of 44,000 Afghan refugees, in the case of the new refugee flow, Austria refused the arrival of refugees and supported the deportation center. Furthermore, the United States (US) also played a significant role in evacuating Afghan refugees on August 31 through special immigrant visas. In addition, the US also asked other countries to accommodate Afghans who left their country. These countries include Uganda with 2,000 temporary refugees for three months, North Macedonia with 450 temporary refugees, Albania with 300 temporary refugees, and Kosovo, which also cooperates with the US in protecting Afghan refugees after the rise of the Taliban (Al Jazeera, 2021). The responses from several countries described previously indicate cooperation in the international community to follow up the problems faced by Afghan refugees.

### **The Long Journey of Refugees: Afghan Refugee Perspectives**

Throughout human history, wars have impacted the displacement of local people to find new places to live and build a new future of life. One of the effects of war on individuals, namely the search for refugee asylum, is a relatively new condition. Each migration process brings with it several stresses that can result in emotional trauma and the resulting suffering if not handled adequately. Rack (1982:151) classifies the problems experienced by refugees as Gastarbeiter (immigrant), settlers, and exiles. The state of migration will determine the development of cultural displacement and the associated feelings of loss, anxiety, anxiety, or depression. Some authors have also argued that torture is an essential predictor of emotional distress, especially withdrawal and emotional retardation (Lavik et al., 1996:726). However, others say that demographics are not related to symptom levels, but post-migration factors

such as social isolation, friendlessness, being unemployed contribute to high scores of anxiety and depression (Pernice and Brook, 1994:177-178).

Mghir and Raskin (1999:35) observed that previous socioeconomic status and ethnicity were crucial in developing psychopathology. Implications for service. Clinicians should be aware of the heterogeneity of personal experiences and responses. Individuals in this situation may be afraid to come forward and seek help and become suspicious. From better professionals who may feel that refugees need to align; or adapt reasonably quickly to the host culture. Both options are fraught with difficulties for the service provider and the user. Clinicians need to be aware of the cultural implications of their judgment and the role of the perceived power inherent in them as mental health care professionals (Bhugra and Bhu, 2017:236). One of the victims considered vulnerable as war victims are generally children and women. Sultana Pravanta in "Refugee Women and Their Mental Health," explains that since the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, many children and women victims had to leave their homes and become refugees (Cole, Rothblum, and Espin, 2013:115). Sultana then tried to give an overview of the experiences faced by Afghan women as victims of war in her case study. The problems faced by female victims were cultural shock when living in a different place from their places of origin, such as the language crisis and economic conditions that did not allow it. Worries about an uncertain future dominate the feelings they experience; only help from those around them can hope for at that time.

For approximately 40 years, the conflict in Afghanistan has continued and caused refugees' flow to increase. The difficulties faced by Afghans amid a heated war illustrate a struggle to escape the threats they face as individuals. Barbara Molinaro (2019).in her writing on the UNHCR page, tries to tell the experience of Afghan refugees who have to cross ten countries by

land to leave their country. Farouk, 15, chose to flee Afghanistan in 2018 to escape the threat of war. After a long journey, Farouk stopped in Italy and asked for help from UNHCR to reunite him with other brothers. UNHCR said that Farouk's case was typical because many migrants and refugees who came to Europe were children. Farouk explains that his mother in Afghanistan asked him to save himself. In May 2019, UNHCR managed to bring together Farouk and his family in London. The incident experienced by Farouk illustrates that the conflict situation in Afghanistan has a relatively strong influence on children. At an age that is still not mature enough, they must dare to make decisions to avoid the security threats they face. Furthermore, in responding to the conditions experienced by asylum seekers who are children, UNHCR strives to provide adequate accommodation to support their lives temporarily.

## Conclusions

It has been about 40 years since war conflicts have colored the situation in Afghanistan. The humanitarian crisis felt by the Afghan population is quite worrying with the intervention in their human rights. Feelings of insecurity about security threats at home encourage Afghans to leave their homes to find new, safer settlements as asylum seekers or refugees both within their country and abroad. The flow of Afghan refugees has long since spread to various countries globally. The countries that accommodate the most refugees include Pakistan and Iran, as neighboring countries directly border Afghanistan, making these two countries a target country for Afghan refugees because of their easy access. Furthermore, the position of the Islamic extremist group the Taliban in the Afghan government illustrates that the country's condition is becoming increasingly chaotic with the existence of political policies that are contrary to human rights freedoms. Followed by the events of

9/11, the situation in Afghanistan has become a picture of a conflict country. Moreover, with the success of the Taliban in re-occupying the Afghan government in August 2021. The waves of Afghan refugees who are displaced and fleeing their country are increasingly spreading worldwide. Furthermore, in dealing with refugee problems in Afghanistan, there is the role of UNHCR as an NGO that focuses on refugee issues which are very influential in overshadowing the refugee issue. The role of UNHCR as a mediator, initiator, and facilitator is very supportive of strategic solutions in determining aid policies for refugees. The complexity of the refugee problem also impacts global security stability, high levels of poverty, and the spread of undocumented asylum seekers giving rise to several criminal acts in receiving countries. However, the situation faced by Afghan refugees does not always match the exaggerated news presented by the media with its various wrong assumptions. In essence, the emergence of Afghan refugees, in general, is not a threat to global stability. According to that sentence, most refugees are only trying to get a safe and decent life as a place to live. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with countries globally opening their lands to welcome the arrival of refugees. In this position, UNHCR strongly supports the coordination of the international community in finding strategic solutions related to the problems of Afghan.

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