

# Turkey bracing for Afghan refugee crisis after fall of Kabul

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ANKARA: Turkey is bracing to deal with a mass of Afghan refugees entry following the Taliban's rapid takeover of the war-torn country, with the capital Kabul falling to the group on Sunday.

Speaking during a ceremony on the same day, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Afghan migrants to avoid traveling to Turkey, and pledged to continue efforts to ensure stability in Afghanistan.

"We need to continue our cooperation with Pakistan in order to achieve that. We are determined to activate all means we have for that purpose," he said.

Erdogan added that Turkey will prevent transit from the Iranian border through a high-security wall that Ankara is constructing.

However, the increasing number of refugees in Turkey, mostly Syrians and Afghans, has the potential to trigger further social tensions, with the country already facing significant unemployment and inflation, and citizens searching for scapegoats amid the pandemic economy.

In the meantime, Mullah Mohammed Yaqoob, son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar, recently spoke to The Independent's Turkish service, and said: "Turkey is a country that houses many Afghans and that we want to build close relations with. We perceive Turkey as an ally and not an enemy."

Ankara is still in talks with Washington over its offer to deploy troops at Kabul airport amid the final withdrawal of NATO forces.

But Ankara has put forward some financial, logistical and diplomatic prerequisites.

"The main problem is that Turkey does not have a master plan for its refugee policy," Sinan Ulgen, executive chairman of Istanbul-based think tank Edam and a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe, told Arab News.

"Looking at the different voices that we hear from government and people close to the government, there is uncertainty about what Turkey is ready to do with regard to this potential wave of refugees from Afghanistan."

According to Ulgen, Turkish society appears to have reached a tipping point on the refugee issue.

"When the Syrian refugees were coming between 2011 and 2016, the Turkish

economy was booming, whereas now Turkey is under economic duress, with unemployment mushrooming under pandemic conditions," he said.

"The reaction to having more refugees have become much more severe, with very tragic incidents like the one in Ankara a couple of days ago," he added.

Ulgen was referring to an incident on Aug. 12, when a crowd of Turks attacked shops, cars and houses belonging to Syrians following the killing of a young Turkish boy by a Syrian refugee in Ankara.

On the technical level, experts have underlined the need for effective border management by addressing existing deficiencies.

Ankara recently decided to expand the construction of the wall along its border with Iran to cover the entirety of the 295-kilometer frontier. So far, 149 kilometers have been completed, with plans to erect watchtowers, wireless sensors and trenches to boost security.

"The first major decision that awaits the government is to physically control Turkey's borders and to demonstrate to the Turkish population that this physical control is in place," Ulgen said.

"Unless that is done, my fear is that the recent provocations will create even more social difficulties and reactions within Turkey about the phenomenon of refugees," he added.

As a means to resolve the issue, Turkey should have a "social contract" on refugee policy, Ulgen said.

"Historically, Turkey has been a target destination for many of the refugees because of its geography, and with many countries nearby being a source of instability," he added.

"Turkey should have a social contract about what it wants to do about the question of refugees.

"Like in many other policy areas, today we cannot have an inclusive deliberation about this issue in an environment that is very polarized and driven by the government.

"The need is to have an open debate that would underpin Turkey's refugee policy."

Ankara-based Research Center on Asylum and Migration President Metin Corabatir recently visited the eastern province of Van, a Turkish region bordering Iran, where groups of Afghan migrants typically move through.

"There is a significant increase of border control in the city, with commando teams, special units and police guarding against migrants who try to infiltrate the border. State authorities who apprehend migrants and transfer them to removal centers are also present," he told Arab News.

"Although border reinforcement efforts have served as a disincentive, there

are some spots along the border that are easier to cross, like valleys.”

Corabatir said that the management of Afghan refugee inflow requires the engagement of the international community, with effective negotiations with Iran and other countries that can also host large numbers of people.

“In terms of those who already live in Turkey, I think Turkey should immediately keep them under registry because most of them are not registered and cannot enjoy any rights to ensure decent life standards in the country,” he added.

“They cannot even be vaccinated or send their children to school.”

There are about 120,000 registered Afghans residing in Turkey. However, there are believed to be many more who are undocumented.

Turkey imposes a geographic limitation to its ratification of the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees.

Therefore, only people fleeing from Europe can be given refugee status, while with some others, Turkey implements a temporary protection regime with a right of legal stay, as well as some basic access to rights and services.

“Turkey should lift this limitation to provide all migrants with some basic rights. Knowing the exact number of refugees who live in Turkey will also help the international community to channel the amount of financial aid. However, this has a significant political cost for the government and needs the backing of the opposition parties,” Corabatir said.

In the meantime, the number of migrants – mostly from Syria and Afghanistan – illegally entering the EU by crossing the Western Balkans has almost doubled this year, EU border agency Frontex said.



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Saudi Arabia calls for stability and protection of lives in Afghanistan

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## [Most Algeria forest fires 'under control': Emergency services](#)

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ALGIERS: Most of the deadly forest fires that have hit northern Algeria in the past week are “under control” and no longer endanger residents, the country’s emergency services said.

Firefighters were still struggling on Sunday to put out 19 blazes, after over 90 people, including 33 soldiers, were killed in wildfires since Aug. 9.

“Most of these fires have been brought under control and don’t represent a danger to residents,” said Col. Farouk Achour, a spokesman for the Civil Protection Authority.

The authority’s efforts focus currently on the “protection of inhabited areas, notably El Tarf, Bejaia, Jijel and Tizi Ouzou, Achour said.

More than 74 fires had been extinguished in the past 24 hours, he added. The government has blamed arsonists and a blistering heatwave for the dozens of blazes, but experts have also criticized authorities for failing to prepare for the annual phenomenon.

Algerian police said on Sunday they had arrested 36 people including three women after the lynching of a man suspected of having started one of the deadly fires.

“A preliminary enquiry ... into the homicide, lynching, immolation and mutilation ... of Djamel Ben Ismail... led to the arrest of 36 suspects including three women,” said police chief Mohammed Chakour.

Ben Ismail, 38, had “turned himself in of his own accord” at a police station in the hard-hit Tizi Ouzou region after hearing he was suspected of involvement, he said.

Algeria is Africa’s biggest country by surface area, and although much of the interior is desert, the north has over four million hectares of forest, which is hit every summer by fires. Last year some 44,000 hectares went up in flames.

In neighboring Morocco, firefighters worked through the night on Sunday and into Monday to bring fires under control amid unfavorable winds.

The fires have destroyed 200 hectares of forest, according to a forestry official, but no victims have been reported.

Several Mediterranean countries have suffered intense heat and quickly spreading wildfires in recent weeks, including Turkey, where at least 16 people have died, and Italy, which saw several deaths.



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Algeria mourns more dead as firefighters battle forest blazes

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## [Egypt stepping up Japan ties to promote tech studies](#)

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CAIRO: Egypt is stepping up cooperation with Japan to promote technical education in schools and universities, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said. In a meeting with top officials on Sunday, he discussed cooperation in the field of technical education through Japan's KOSEN system.

This was a continuation of existing cooperation between the two countries on Japanese schools and universities in Egypt, according to a Cabinet statement. The coming period would see coordination with Japan in order to start a joint program in the field of technical education, the prime minister confirmed. Cooperation with the Japanese was a very good model and Egypt attached great importance to technological education, he added.

The prime minister said there were a number of specialist technical universities being rolled out around Egypt and that three had already been established.

Japan's KOSEN system accepts students from the age of 15 and provides education based on practical training for a period of five years.

The educational system in these colleges focuses on practical experience and manufacturing processes.

Nader Saad, the official spokesman for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, explained that the KOSEN system was founded in 1962 in Japan through colleges specializing in technical education as a way to meet the labor needs of factories.

The meeting also discussed experiences with the KOSEN system outside Japan, using Thailand and Vietnam as examples, which relied on strong partnerships with the governments of the two countries.

It focused on the expected cooperation mechanisms between the two sides and the organization or body that would represent Egypt in implementing this program.

The meeting also touched upon cooperation with the Japanese side in the field of technical education coming within the framework of the industrial sector's need in Egypt for highly skilled labor, similar to the scenario in Japan that led to the founding of the system.



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## [Thousands of Yemeni children brainwashed in Houthi 'summer camps'](#)

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ALEXANDRIA: Iran-backed Houthis have arranged graduation ceremonies for thousands of children who joined their summer camps this year in the densely populated areas of Yemen under their control.

The biggest ceremony was organized in Sanaa, where hundreds of children, their relatives and Houthi officials showed up to see the graduating children display their skills.

The Houthis claim that for 45 days, the children were educated, trained and "immunized from false cultures."

But Yemeni government officials and human rights activists have accused the group of using the camps to indoctrinate Yemeni children with sectarian

ideologies and antisemitic propaganda, before sending them to the battlefields.

“These camps prepare children and adolescents to be part of the war machine,” Ahmed Al-Qurashi, director of SEYAJ Organization for the Protection of Children, told Arab News.

During the ceremonies in Sanaa, Saada, Hajjah, Hodeidah and Al-Bayda, children in military attire displayed their combat skills and chanted slogans cursing the US and Israel, blaming them for starting the war on Yemen.

“We tell the world that the Yemeni youth are at the forefront of the ranks in fighting off brutal aggression. These people say no to the damned culture of the US and Israel,” a Houthi figure said at a Sanaa gathering, as nearby children carried the movement’s slogan and pictures of leaders before their relatives.

Parents in Sanaa warn that the Houthis blacklist families who do not encourage children to join recruitment camps during the school summer break.

“There is a clear brainwashing process going on for our children, and we cannot do anything or would be accused of being mercenaries. Those camps and centers turn our children into soldiers loyal to Abdul Malik Al-Houthi,” Mohammed, a middle-aged father of a child who joined the Houthi camps, told the Al-Sahwa news site.

He added that he later had to re-educate his child at home in order to correct some of the Houthi-taught radical ideologies.

Jamel, an 11-year-old student, told the same news site that he “learned in the Houthi camps the true Islam and was educated about expressing loyalty to the Houthis and hating the US and Israel.”

When the Houthis first demanded people in their areas send their children to the summer camps, Yemeni officials and activists quickly warned people against joining the events, and said that the group was “indoctrinating children into joining the battlefields and hating Yemenis and the West.”

However, SEYAJ Organization said in a report that the Houthis have recruited more than 500,000 children through summer camps in 2021.

“SEYAJ is concerned that large numbers of children will be involved in the fighting. We call on the Houthi group to immediately stop the recruitment and involvement of children in the armed conflict, and the use of schools for military purposes.”

Al-Qurashi said that the Houthis woo children into joining recruitment centers and summer camps through financial incentives.

Families that send their children to the battlefields or summer camps are given money and food baskets. The recruited children are usually given the nickname Mujahid.

“Those titles give teenagers big social status and they think that they are important,” he said.

A joint report released by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor and SAM for Rights and Liberties in February said that the Houthis turned schools and other educational facilities into military camps, and modified textbooks with texts that incite violence and glorify the movement.

“Houthis also deliberately used schools and educational facilities for military purposes and used the education system to incite violence and indoctrinate students with the group’s ideologies. They did this by giving lectures with sectarian propaganda contents and promoting their military victories,” the report said.



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[Surging poverty in Gaza Strip as](#)

# residents decry Israeli siege

Author:

Mon, 2021-08-16 23:17

GAZA CITY: More than two months after a fierce 11-day war between Palestinian factions and Israel, 2 million Palestinians in the small coastal Gaza Strip are still suffering from the repercussions of the violence.

Severe restrictions imposed by Israel since then – deepening the siege imposed in Gaza since mid-2007 – have caused hardship for residents in the occupied territory, despite the end of violent clashes in May.

Egypt, which has acted as a mediator in the conflict, succeeded in putting an end to the killings and destruction by reaching a cease-fire agreement.

However, Cairo's efforts have not yet been successful in restoring the situation in Gaza to what it was before the outbreak of the war.

Israel has attributed its continued siege and ban on reconstruction in Gaza to Hamas' detainment of Israeli prisoners.

Through these restrictions, Israel is pressuring Hamas – which has ruled Gaza since its seizure by armed force in 2007 – to release four Israelis, including two who entered Gaza under unknown circumstances, and two soldiers who were captured during the 2014 war and whose fates are unknown.

Hamas insists on releasing them within the framework of a prisoner exchange agreement similar to the 2011 Shalit deal, through which hundreds of Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli prisons.

Officials in Gaza said that the strict Israeli restrictions are resulting in "negative effects on all aspects of life," and have led to an "unprecedented rise in poverty and unemployment rates."

During the past few weeks, Israel gradually allowed an increase in imported items to the Gaza Strip, but the most important materials still forbidden are construction supplies.

This prevents the start of a reconstruction process and the resumption of infrastructure projects funded by international groups.

Rami Abu Al-Rish, an official for the Palestinian Ministry of Economy, said that the industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors in Gaza are "paralyzed."

This is reflected in the lives of Gazans, with the unemployment rate rising to 75 percent amid surging poverty, said Abu Al-Rish.

"Thousands of workers in various sectors lost their livelihoods, whether due to the destruction of commercial and industrial facilities, or the suspension of production due to the blockade and restrictions," he told Arab News

Abu Al-Rish said that “the horizon is blocked” and the situation in Gaza was “getting worse day by day.”

There is “no indication of a breakthrough soon,” especially for reconstruction and repair, he added.

Israel is also preventing funds from a \$30 million Qatari grant from entering the territory.

The monthly fund is intended for poor families and temporary employment, and normally arrived in Gaza accompanied by Qatari Ambassador Mohammed Al-Emadi of the Qatari Reconstruction Committee.

The Gaza Municipality – the largest in the Gaza Strip – has complained about the continued suspension of work on infrastructure projects.

A member of the Municipal Council, Hishem Skaik, said that 13 infrastructure projects were halted after the outbreak of the war, as Israel prevented the entry of building materials and materials for completing infrastructure projects.

The tightening of restrictions at the Kerem Shalom commercial crossing in Gaza has also caused delays for about 16 other infrastructure projects.

The projects were fully funded about two years ago, and all the relevant contracts have been signed, Skaik said, but work cannot begin.

He added that the municipality did not receive funding to repair the recent damage to infrastructure as a result of the war, which has been estimated at \$20 million.

The war on the Gaza Strip lasted for 11 days, leaving 243 Palestinians dead, thousands of housing units destroyed and infrastructure in rubble, with total losses of \$479 million in damage.

Samir Al-Attar, a clothing merchant in Gaza, said that summer holidays and weddings are the “most prominent times in our trade,” but that this year “was the worst, as a result of the war and the continued closure of the Kerem Shalom crossing.”

He told Arab News: “The economic reality in general in the Gaza Strip has been suffering for years, and many sectors have been hurt during the recent period as a result of the tightening in the entry of goods, which has been reflected in other sectors to which goods are allowed to enter as well, as a result of weak purchasing power.”

There are daily reports that Palestinian factions led by Hamas intend to ramp up activity along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel with marches and night activities, as a means of putting pressure on Israel to ease the siege and allow the entry of the Qatari funding.

Hamas warned through its spokesman Abdel-Latif Al-Qanou that “more restrictions and tightening on Gaza will only generate an explosion in the

face of the occupation.”



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