

DIALOGUE WITH REFUGEES AND REFUGEE RIGHTS ADVOCATES

On December 28th, 2020, Asia Culture and Art Organization (aka Asia Culture House) and the United Nations in Afghanistan organized virtual dialogue with refugees and refugee rights advocates. 5 Participants discussed the refugee crisis, the future and what it holds, what we need to do now to make the world is a better place to live, and what role the United Nations can play.

The dialogue was part of a series of global consultations that the United Nations' Secretary-General launched for its 75th anniversary. We thank the following panelists for their unique insights:

- Sultan Ali Javid, Director of Policy and Planning, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Government of Afghanistan,
- Saleh Sepaz, Founder of Parastoo Theatre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia,
- Shuaib Lalee, Founder of Litigation Watchdog of Afghan People, London, United Kingdom,
- Abdul Ghafoor, Founder and Director of Afghanistan Migrants and Support Organization, Kabul, Afghanistan,
- Abbas Arifi, Journalist and survey contributor with the Danish Refugee Council, Afghanistan,
- Khodadad Shoayb, Fulbright Alumnus, Vancouver, Canada.

You can access Facebook Live [here](#). The following is a summary of this discussion:

PRIORITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO BETTER RESPOND TO THIS CRISIS

Supporting marginalized communities and strategic coordination among countries should be prioritized. Governments cannot manage these challenges alone. Regional countries should strategically coordinate and come up with a plan.

In terms of managing the refugee crisis, closure of borders is not a solution. It only increases human trafficking. Developing countries should build their people's skills, while developed nations should break political barriers on work, allowing free labor movement.

THE WORLD IN 2045

Participants wanted to see that irregular immigration stops by 2045. Safe third countries have close and clear cooperation with the refugees. War, violence, discrimination, and injustices end, and human rights values are upheld.

Participants conditioned a better 2045 on:

- The United Nations containing the regional war in the middle east.
- The civil society and educated persons changing the state and refugee systems and distribution of resources.

Otherwise, we will have a worse 2045:

- If the war is not contained, extremism, terrorism, and insecurity increase.
- Because most workers will be replaced with machines, increasing the unemployment rate in industrialized countries. It is likely those countries avoid the intake of immigrants.

CHALLENGES

The following were significant barriers to a better 2045:

- Refugees and immigrants do not have any rights in safe third countries, like Malaysia. They are isolated, are victims of hate speech and xenophobia. The Malaysian government is not a signatory to the 1951 convention. As a result, refugees do not have the right to drive, work, study, own a home, and access healthcare. Resettlement of these refugees takes at least 10 years, which has increased suicide and depression rates.
- Economy and work are major driving factors of immigration. Third world countries lack potent governments, the rule of law, while criminal organizations continue to force people to immigrate.
- Volunteer returnees and deportees have been supported minimally. This process is not monitored, and most of the deportees abandon Afghanistan again.

ROLE FOR GLOBAL COOPERATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Global cooperation and the United Nations can better help in the following areas:

- Ending the refugee crisis is not possible without ending the war. The United Nations must get back to its original mandate of peacekeeping and conflict resolution. States must be accountable and avoid misusing the crisis for political gains. Further, terrorism and refugee are incorrectly perceived to be related. This has resulted in hate speeches and xenophobia. The United Nations could launch an awareness-raising campaign to redefine this link.
- A network of refugee supporting NGOs and countries could be created. The United Nations could make the refugee crisis an official agenda for 2021 and collaborate with countries that need human resources. Governments must engage in dialogue to preserve the environment.
- States must endorse immigration as they have endorsed freedom of speech and human rights. States must focus on preventing irregular immigration in the source countries rather than providing services in target countries. Governments should ensure international labor mobility and avoid discriminatory practices in dealing with refugees.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL

Participants recommended that:

- The United Nations act upon its mandate of conflict management and monitor the execution of the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol, obliging signatories to process refugee cases lawfully.
- The United Nations and developed countries should be better prepared. Precise information about immigration to countries with less population should be disseminated, and the UN must adopt a uniform policy toward these countries. Refugees must be resettled rapidly.
- The United Nations should act with decisiveness and pressure safe third countries. With proper coordination and cooperation, the misuse of immigrants for political and economic gains must be halted.