



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice every where."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The petition below was submitted to the Counsel General of Pakistan in Chicago on March 20th, 2006 for onward submission to the President of Pakistan General Parvez Musharraf.

PETITION

We, the Friends of "The Pakistan Repatriation Council", - a humanitarian, not-for-profit and non-political group working for the just cause of the "Stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh" support the lawful right of the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh to return to their homeland, Pakistan and stand with victims and activists to prevent human rights violations and discrimination, and to protect people from inhumane conduct.

Believing in fairness, justice, human dignity and basic human rights we hereby request the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh to make immediate arrangements for the repatriation of the 300,000 Pakistanis to Pakistan who have been stranded in Bangladesh since 1971.

BACKGROUND:

The events are as follows:

1. With the breakup of Pakistan and the declaration of East Pakistan in March 1971 as an independent state of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, more than 539,000 Pakistanis who stranded in the new state of Bangladesh opted for Pakistan as a result of the survey conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Bangladesh.
2. In 1972 a tripartite agreement was signed between Pakistan, India and Bangladesh that provided the basis for the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis. In the meantime ICRC took care of these Pakistanis and their basic necessities in the camps. As a result of this Tripartite Agreement the Government of Pakistan accepted only

173,000 Pakistanis under the unjust provisos of limitations and conditions placed on the repatriation of its own people.

3. The process of repatriation has now ended for unknown reason since 1993. To make things worst beginning 2004 the Bangladesh government has cut off the supply of wheat, water and electricity to the inmates of the camp on the plea that it could not shoulder the recurring expenses any further. We believe that this is a very undesirable decision and should be reversed.

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS:

- In the regime of Prime Minister Muhammad Khan Junejo in 1985 the Senate of Pakistan approved an anonymous resolution for the repatriation of the remaining stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh.
- In 1988 the Government of Pakistan signed a treaty with Muslim World League, Mecca, Saudi Arabia establishing a Trust called Rabita Trust Fund to arrange repatriation and rehabilitation of all stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh.
- The Trust was active until 1998. 10,000 houses were constructed during this period for the stranded Pakistanis in Mian Chunnu, Punjab.

A RAY OF HOPE:

A ray of hope had emerged when in 2002 during his visit to Bangladesh the President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf assured the representatives of the stranded Pakistanis for the resolve of this matter on priority basis. However, despite several assurances from different prime Ministers of Pakistan the matter is still unresolved.

THE DEATH OF HOPE:

Is it not a disaster that the only aid of 4 kilogram wheat per family per month has also been stopped by the Bangladesh Red Cross Committee? Now, there is no help going to these camps from any where in the world. It is a tragedy of events and a human catastrophe of worst kind that a quarter million people have been shamelessly abandoned whose only crime is that they maintained their Pakistani identity and want to be in Pakistan.

No one in the meantime, either from Bangladesh or from Pakistan has ever approached the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to secure a subsistence allowance for these people. When Dr Francis Lamand, a member of the UNHCR and the President of "Islam and the West" approached the UNHCR to secure for these people the status of 'refugees', he was advised that a formal request must either come from the host, Bangladesh or from the passport country, Pakistan.

CATASTROPHE LOOMING:

The situation is now so frustrating in the camps that according to one report these stranded Pakistanis have decided to self-immolate themselves if immediate practical measures are not taken to solve this humanitarian problem.

ACTION AND SOLUTION:

We the Friends of The Pakistan Repatriation Council call upon the citizens of Pakistan, Bangladesh and the United States of America to come to the rescue of these innocent stranded Pakistanis who, in the last 35 years have already lost a generation in sub-human conditions while the next is degenerating under the yolk of shameless intransigence.

We suggest the following to avoid any human catastrophe:

1. The Governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh contact the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) to secure adequate subsistence allowance for these people immediately.
2. The Pakistan Repatriation Council is asked to contact "Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Council" in Dacca to contact the leaders in the camps to control the brewing unrest and secure some more time to organize necessary infrastructure for their repatriation to Pakistan. Taking into account the growth rate of population in the area, there are now about 250,000 to 300,000 Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh. For the last 35 years they have been living in 70 camps in 13 districts, including Dhaka and Narayanganj as stateless citizens, in utter despair and sub-human conditions. These people comprise the Pakistanis and their descendants who had been registered as Pakistanis with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Bangladesh.
3. The Pakistan Government's Presidential Order of March 1978 is annulled in favor of unrestricted repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis to Pakistan, who should be issued the Pakistan National Identity Cards in the camps after proper verification to ensure orderly and lawful repatriation of the true stranded citizens. And those who are born in the camps of Bangladesh should be given the right to opt for Bangladesh or Pakistan, as they like.
4. Deposit this petition with the Consulate General of Pakistan and the Consulate General of Bangladesh for immediate delivery to the President of Pakistan and the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, appealing to them to expedite the immediate repatriation of these Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh and to grant them their constitutional right of Pakistani Citizenship.
5. Send a copy of this petition to the President of the United States of America, The President of the European Union, Un High Commissioner for Refugees, The secretary General of the United Nations, Un High Commissioner for Human Rights, American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch to mobilize public opinion and build strong pressure on the two governments to resolve this humanitarian problem without further ado.
6. Also, appeal for the granting of citizenship to those who have already returned to their rightful homeland, Pakistan on their own and are yet unrecognized as Pakistani citizens.

SIGNATURES:

1. Ehteshamuddin Arshad _____

2. Syed Wahajuddin Ahmed _____

3. Mohammad Faiz _____

4. Tariq Malhance _____

5. Ahmed Karim Jangda _____

6. Muhammad Aslam _____

7. Sadruddin Noorani _____

8. Aqeel Akhtar _____

9. Amin Haider _____

10. Hashmat Sohail _____

11. Dr. M. A. Toor _____

12. Iqrar Bokhari _____

13. Muzammil Siddiqui _____

14. Mahmood Siddiqui _____

15. Kamal Khan

16. Naveed Ahmed

17. Asif Waheed

18. Fakhruddin Khaja

19. Dr. Asad Hussain

20. Dr. Shahid Siddiqui

21. Talat Rasheed

22. Naimatullah Chaudri

23. Anjum Gauhar

24. Rasheed Shaikh

25. Nadeem Sharafi

26. Raja Razzaq

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