

Dare I Tell Afghan Women How Hard Their Lives Would Be in Refugee Camps?



We left Afghanistan in a shameful way—and our shameful ways continue.

The [Voice of America](#) tells us that America's "humanitarian parole is a broken system;" that more than 28,000 Afghans have applied for it and only 100 have been approved in 2021; that the majority of Afghans who got out on American military planes during the chaos were "[unvetted](#);" that of [14,000 applications](#) to enter Canada only 3,385 Afghans have entered that country; that America's "[resettlement](#)" plan for Afghans is "ill-conceived" and that "private voluntary sponsorship" consists of people who do not know what they are getting into; that 45,000 Afghan refugees are currently [languishing](#) in refugee camps on U.S. military bases.

The evacuation and resettlement situation is complex, difficult, problematic for many reasons but, as one Afghan woman in hiding just pointed out: One hundred days have passed and still no government is willing to recognize the Taliban.

The largest state in the 21st century may be that of Exile. In the mid-1970s, I wanted to interview expatriates and immigrants everywhere to understand what human psychology might be like in the 21st century. Unfortunately, no publisher was willing to pay for the kind of travel that subject would involve and, given my teaching and lecture responsibilities, I had no time to approach foundations or philanthropists.

Nevertheless, as awful as it might be for Afghans, the problem is bigger than just one country. Middle Eastern immigrants are [freezing](#) and starving to death on Poland's border, courtesy of Belarus's Lukashenko—who took a page from Hamas's playbook and decided to use living beings as human shields to make his political points.

And now, let's imagine how women are faring around the world in immigrant encampments, on the road with human smugglers, in refugee camps, and in hiding.

I [know](#) for a fact that the Afghan women in hiding are afraid of needing to go out to see a doctor and getting beaten or kidnapped by the Taliban; they are also alarmed by the sound of gunshots in the night; worried about running out of food, electricity, money, heat, and basic supplies; afraid of being found, tortured, raped, and murdered by the Taliban; and above all, afraid that they may never get out, never board a plane, have to remain in Taliban Hell forever.

Dare I tell them how hard their lives would also be on the road and in refugee camps? The eternal waiting, the poor food, the lack of privacy, the dangers that are specific to girls, boys, and women?

In addition to first-person accounts, there are [studies](#) which

describe and [document](#) the continued [sexual harassment](#) and [rape](#) of women refugees from 2015-2021 in the Middle East and in Africa by men. There have been reports of sexual assaults and sexual harassment of both women and men in Ramstein, an American Air Force base in Germany, and I've written about it [here](#).

Despite the ravages of Covid, cancers, poverty, incest, rape, domestic violence, and sex trafficking—so many of us are still sleeping in our own beds in our own neighborhoods, and communicating in our own languages. Many of us in America will be sitting down with friends and family to celebrate Thanksgiving. (No comment from me about the origin of this holiday.)

May we find it in our hearts to reach out and help just one refugee who is a long way from home?

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