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Afghans Queue For Passports to Flee Country

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Hundreds of citizens are lining up to get passports, most of whom hope to flee the country due to unemployment, insecurity and poverty.

The passport applicants, most of them between the ages of 18 and 30, told TOLONews on Tuesday that they had no other choice but to leave the country despite knowing the problems and even the possibility of losing their lives en route to Europe.

Nearly 5,000 citizens from different provinces apply for passports on a daily basis. A huge number of applicants reportedly spend the whole night in the line to wait their turn in the morning.

"There are no jobs in the country," an applicant named Elyas told TOLONews. "We see the security situation deteriorating each day and people's problems are getting worse."

"I came at 3 am and am still waiting for my turn," Muzafar said, after standing in line for more than 11 hours.

Officials at the Passport Office, meanwhile, said that in the past, the office issued 1,000 passports per day but now the figure has risen to 7,000. This is not however helping with the refugee problem as until recently an estimated five million Afghans still live outside the country. This new wave of citizens fleeing the country is adding to that toll.

"The Ministry of Refugees announced that 40 percent of citizens are unemployed, so hearing this, how can an Afghan refugee return to homeland?" said Islamuddin Jurat, spokesman of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) officials, meanwhile, admitted there is an exodus of Afghans. They however warned that those who are fleeing the country will face more challenges than they face in Afghanistan.

"Getting a passport is the first step for our young people to flee the country. They stay days and nights to get their passport without knowing that more problems are waiting for them in those countries," MoI deputy spokesman Najibullah Danish said.

In the past month, especially after suicide bombings and armed attacks increased in Kabul, hundreds of citizens along with their families have been leaving for Iran before going illegally to Turkey.

Turkey is seen as the main route for the refugees to get to Greece by boats.

Recently, reports emerged that hundreds of Afghan families had set up camps in Athens Park, Greece.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had also recently called on the international community to help in the repatriation process of Afghan refugees in Iran, Pakistan and other neighboring countries.