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Afghan Refugees in Ankara: 23rd Day of Protest, Voice Still Unheard

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Uncertainty about the future, insecurity and lack of employment opportunities are causing thousands of Afghans to travel, mostly illegally, to various countries of world each year. The journey of Afghans for a better life is not risk-free. But they never give up.

More than three decades have passed but unfortunately, the people of Afghanistan face grave violence, war and conflict. News reports of terror activities that take lives of innocent Afghans almost on daily basis run on national and international media. The Afghan government admits to the fact that Afghans do not feel safe and secure in their own country. The prevailing condition in Afghanistan has led Afghans to risk their life for reaching advanced countries of the world.

The conventional route for Afghans to enter European countries is travelling to neighboring Iran and then to Turkey. Afghan immigrants who can afford paying handsome amounts for illegally traveling to Europe finally make it to the country of their desire. Nevertheless, there are also thousands of Afghan refugees who can only make to Turkey where they apply at UNHCR for helping them get asylum.

Afghan refugees have been complaining about handling of their asylum cases at UNHCR offices in Turkey. Recently, around 300 Afghan refugees including women and children organized a sit-in protest in front of UNHCR office in Ankara, the Turkish capital. Their protest has entered into 23rd day. Meanwhile, a number of protesters including two females have sewn their lips for the past eight days. Unfortunately, still their voice has not been heard.

Instead of showing sympathy the Afghan government has said that the regional office of the UNHCR in Ankara is not responsible for resolving the problems of faced by Afghan refugees. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the said office is responsible for providing services to citizens of Syria, Iraq and Iran.

MoFA spokesman, ShekaibMustaghni told reporters in Kabul on Monday that Afghans were not considered as true asylum seekers in certain countries of the world. This is because of improper policies the Afghan government adopted in regards of Afghan refugees. Without having any appropriate solution at hand, the government has been urging the foreign countries to deport the Afghan asylum seekers. Currently, there is no reason why Afghans should not travel to seek a secure life and be considered true asylum seeker. It is their basic right as the government has no rational plan to secure their lives and provide them with job opportunities.

It is the responsibility of the UN refugee agency in Ankara, concerned organization of Turkish government and the Embassy of Afghanistan in Turkey to immediately address the demands of Afghan protesters in Ankara. If refugees of other countries can have their cases processed at Ankara, why can't Afghans?