

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

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In 2015, the European Union (EU) adopted measures to tackle the perceived 'refugee crisis'. Among them were the elaboration of the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015 by the European Commission, which developed a strategy to tackle 'irregular' migration into Europe (European Commission 2015a, 2), alongside a specific 'return' strategy called the EU Action Plan on Return in September 2015. The Action Plan set out that the 'return' of 'irregular migrants who do not have a right to stay in the EU to their home countries, in full respect of the principle of *non-refoulement*, is an essential part of EU's comprehensive efforts to address migration and in particular to reduce irregular migration' (European Commission 2015b, 2).

By the end of 2015, one of the EU's key priorities in addressing migration – as stipulated in the Agenda and in the Action Plan – was to accelerate the 'removal' of 'irregular' migrants and 'failed' asylum-seekers through readmission agreements with non-EU countries (Carrera and Allsopp 2017, 70, 73). Hence, the EU reinforced and/or edited its existing EU readmission agreements (EURAs) with non-EU countries, and agreed new ones, thus including EURAs among the main tools of the EU's migration 'policy-toolbox' (Zaiotti 2016, 8) focused on the 'removal' of 'illegal' individuals from EU territory, including 'rejected' asylum-seekers (Cassarino 2015, 219; Giuffré 2016, 263; Trauner 2017, 252). Essentially, readmission agreements are policy instruments (Wolff and Trauner 2014, 11) that 'stipulate the obligation to readmit nationals of the country with which the EU has signed the agreement' (European Commission 2005, 2).

A considerable body of literature has been developed on EURAs, focusing largely on the EU and its institutions (Carrera 2016), the relationships between EU member states and institutions (Trauner 2017), the efficiency of agreements for the EU (Carrera 2016; Carrera and Allsopp 2017; Emiliani 2016; Giuffré 2016), and the increasing numbers of informalized agreements rather than legally binding ones (Carrera 2016; Cassarino 2007, 2017; Trauner and Slominsky 2020). However, the serious consequences for people subjected to these agreements have been largely neglected in the prior research and are rarely analyzed within the EURAs framework – with the exception of studies focusing on their legal implications for deportees' human rights (Carrera 2016, Giuffré 2020). In contrast, studies focused on the practice of deportation more broadly (i.e., not within the EURAs framework) have investigated the violent implications for those who are deported and what happens post-deportation, demonstrating that deportees live in a permanent state of marginalization and precarity (De Genova 2017, 2018; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Khosravi 2017, 2018; Majidi, 2017; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2019).

Therefore, by combining an analysis of EURAs with a focus on deportation, this chapter discusses the practices of 'readmission' and 'return' as stipulated in EURAs as de facto deportations by showcasing the implications of this policy for those subjected to it as an example of the EU's regulatory power on mobility, which subjugates some populations by exposing them to yet another re-displacement through deportation. Theoretically, we employ Gibney's (2013) conceptualization of deportation as a form of forced migration and related literatures, while empirically, we utilize the 2016 Joint Way Forward Declaration (JWF) between the EU and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

case study. The JWF is particularly revealing, not least because it was signed when the situation in Afghanistan was deteriorating: between January and August 2016 alone, almost 250,000 Afghans became internally displaced, bringing the total number of internally displaced individuals there to 1.2 million (UNHCR 2016).

Consequently, through a critical analysis of international organizations' reports, official statements, and academic works, we discuss the JWF's negotiation and implementation in order to showcase the normalization of deportation as 'return' and 'removal' and the enforcement of this policy through pressure and conditionalities on the part of the EU. We also demonstrate how, despite acknowledging the worsening situation in Afghanistan and denying the financial conditionality attached to the readmission of Afghans, the EU used discourses of partnership, cooperation, and development to justify and legitimize deportations. We conclude the chapter by arguing that despite this rhetoric, the forcible removal of individuals from Europe to Afghanistan disguises the violent outcomes of such policies for deportees, namely marginalization, abandonment, and for many, another displacement and re-departure. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part briefly illustrates the theoretical background underpinning our argument, the second part discusses the case study, and the final part concludes.

## Deportation as Forced Migration: A Gateway to Further Displacement?

There is no definition for the term 'deportation' in the European Commission – Asylum and Migration Glossary; instead, it is synonymous with 'removal' (EU Glossary 2018, 320). In the EU context, 'removal' is described as 'the enforcement of the obligation to return, namely the physical transportation out of the EU Member State' (EU Glossary 2018, 320) as stipulated in Article 3(5) of Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive). It also establishes that:

Under EU legislation, removal is a specific form of forced return. While deportation and removal often are understood as synonyms, deportation is not used as a legal term in all EU Member States (only DE, FI, IE and UK define 'deportation' in their legislation) and is only applicable as a general concept by the public, sometimes with a negative connotation. Because of this variation, 'removal' is the preferred term to use.

EU Glossary 2018, 320

In contrast, 'return' is defined as 'the movement of a person going from a host country back to a country of origin, country of nationality or habitual residence usually after spending a significant period of time in the host country whether voluntary or forced, assisted or spontaneous' (EU Glossary 2018, 329).

In this context, according to some scholars, deportation is a form of forced migration that 'has been made fit for the modern liberal State' (Dunn, quoted in Gibney 2013, 123) as it is legitimate for a sovereign state to deport 'aliens' from its territory if they have breached immigration laws (Gibney 2008). Similarly, De Genova (2017, 9) illustrates what the deportation of 'unwanted' individuals means to the deporting state: 'Here today, gone tomorrow. Out of sight, out of mind. Case closed. Thus, at least from the perspective of the deporting state power, deportation appears to be the final act, the proverbial last word'. Yet, it should be highlighted that despite the 'legitimate' and legal aspects involved in the expulsion of those considered by a 'destination state' as 'aliens', the act of removing an individual from a territory 'is one of the most severe forms of exclusions from a society and community' (Trauner 2017, 251), particularly since many deportees are 'returned' to conflict areas, 'converting their deportations into de facto acts of refoulement, whereby return may subject them to persecution, extortion, rape, torture, and death' (De Genova 2018, 254).

Due to the legitimization of deportation, in recent decades, this practice has become somewhat normalized (Schuster and Majidi 2019, 90–91) within migration policies in Western states, which regard it as a natural outcome in the state's instrumentalization process of governing mobility (De Genova and Peutz 2010, 1, 3; Khosravi 2018, 4). Thus, calling deportation 'return' naturalizes the process, since people are returned to where they are said to belong (Schuster and Majidi 2019, 92). Consequently, the use of terms like 'return' or 'readmission' deflect attention away from the act of expulsion and its devastating implications for deportees by implying a one-fits-all approach via the constructed and imagined natural order of going back home (Khosravi 2018, 11; Schuster and Majidi 2019, 92).

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

Further, this language conflates varied going-back-home dynamics wherein some individuals are forcibly expelled (e.g., deported 'failed' asylum-seekers and 'illegal' migrants), while others freely choose to go back (e.g., the end of a 'migration cycle', especially regarding labor) (Cassarino 2015, 220; Khosravi 2018, 11). Yet, since deportation is rarely voluntary (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010, 993; Collyer 2018, 106), to 'return' means to be forcibly removed from a 'destination state' to a place assumed to be 'home'. Nevertheless, the place considered 'home' by the deporting state might not be home for the deportee; instead, it usually means being sent back into a conflict situation, and therefore a higher risk of further displacement (Khosravi 2018, 12; Schuster and Majidi 2019, 100).

Picozza (2017, 235) asserts that consideration of the different trajectories followed by people on the move, regardless of the decisions of the 'destination state', is key to understanding the heterogeneity of such trajectories, which defy any linear and static order in migrating from a 'home' country to a 'destination country'. The heterogeneity involved is far more complex and less linear than orthodox approaches to the study of deportation have assumed. Consequently, if we analyze migration as a multidirectional process (Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2019) comprising multiple cycles instead of a pre-determined cycle of emigration-immigration-return (Cassarino 2015, 217), or as a unidirectional movement between departure and arrival, we can see that deportation is not the end of a migration cycle, but a rupture in a complex process that affects and disrupts the lives of both those being deported and those whose lives depend on that emigrant (Collyer 2018, 108; De Genova and Peutz 2010, 2; Khosravi 2018, 2; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 222–223).

In this context, we argue that, despite employing a language of 'return' and 'readmission', deportation is at the heart of EURAs and similar expulsion policy mechanisms, as in practice, they systematize international agreements and similar declarations with third countries to deport third-country nationals (Trauner 2017, 251). In such policies, 'return' merely refers to the act of removing unauthorised migrants and rejected asylum-seekers from European territory. Moreover, it does not take into account migrants' post-return conditions' (Cassarino 2015, 219), as the language is carefully politically constructed to legitimize deportation. In this regard, Cassarino (2015, 220) brilliantly argues that 'as long as no distinction is made [between return and deportation], current "return" policies are not return policies' – they are deportation policies that forcibly displace individuals. We concur with De Genova's observation (2018, 255) that:

While deportations are plainly debasing and destructive for individual deportees, their loved ones, and their wider communities, the bureaucratic rationality that coldly executes such severely punitive measures as "standard operating procedure," and the consequently heartless disregard for the veritable cruelty of deportation for those whose lives are thereby derailed, convert a systemic violence into the simple and banal functionality of a presumptively efficient governmental apparatus.

Therefore, we understand the act of an individual's 'removal' from a given territory (i.e., their deportation) as a form of forced migration (Gibney 2013) with serious implications for deportees, including re-displacement.

## The Joint Way Forward Declaration

At the beginning of 2016, an EU memo was leaked showing that while they acknowledged the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan 'with record levels of terrorist attacks and civilian casualties', both the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) also saw this situation as a driving factor for Afghans to migrate to Europe, so they called 'for a strengthening of interventions to maintain asylum space in the region' (StateWatch 2016, 3). The memo emphasized that 'more than 80,000 [Afghans] persons could potentially need to be returned in the near future' (StateWatch 2016, 2). Similarly, the EU Action Plan on Return prioritized Afghanistan among those countries requiring high-level dialogues on 'readmission' (European Commission 2015b, 12).

Against this backdrop, in recent years, different EU member states, including Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom (prior to Brexit), have concluded informal readmission agreements with Afghanistan (StateWatch 2016, 5; Trauner and Slominsky 2020, 13). Authors have argued that, due to the difficulty of conducting negotiations with third countries and the bureaucratic nature of legally binding agreements, informal arrangements such as declarations, bilateral deals, exchanges of letters, and memorandums of understanding are

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

increasingly seen by the EU as alternatives to legally binding readmission agreements (Carrera 2016, 10; Cassarino 2007, 2017; Giuffré 2016, 272; Trauner 2017, 253–254; Trauner and Slominski 2020, 2). These informalized agreements reduce bureaucracy and usually bypass parliamentary scrutiny and debate in both the EU and the non-EU country, raising the risk that fundamental protection mechanisms such as human rights norms might be ignored (Cassarino 2017, 94; Trauner 2017, 256). Yet, importantly, Giuffré (2020, 8–9) recently argued that legally binding agreements and more flexible arrangements should be considered together when analyzing and studying EU ‘readmission’ policies, because despite their (important) legal differences, their aim is the same: to expel ‘unwanted’ third-country individuals from the EU to non-EU countries.

By the end of 2016, alongside an international conference in Brussels dedicated to issues related to Afghanistan, the EU and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed the JWF Declaration. It aimed to deport ‘refused’ Afghan asylum-seekers and ‘irregular’ Afghan migrants from Europe to Afghanistan over four years (2016–2020) and to deter others from migrating to Europe, in return for the EU maintaining its current aid funding and offering additional financial support to deportees (Afghanistan Analysts 2016; EEAS 2016a; European Commission 2016a). Deportations were to take place through scheduled and non-scheduled flights from different EU member states in coordination with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and there were plans to build a terminal at Kabul airport exclusively to receive deportees (EEAS 2016a, 4).

As an informalized agreement, the JWF did not create legal obligations; instead, it ‘pave[d] the way for a structural dialogue and cooperation on migration issues’ between the EU and Afghanistan, and it ‘establish[ed] a rapid, effective, and manageable process for a smooth, dignified, and orderly return of Afghan nationals’ to Afghanistan (EEAS 2016a, 1). However, it did create solid commitments between the two parties, similar to a formal readmission agreement (Trauner and Slominski 2020, 4–5).

## Negotiations and Reactions

According to a report from the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN 2016), more than a year passed before the JWF was signed due to internal disagreements on the Afghan side. In contrast to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, the Minister for Refugees and Repatriations, Sayed Alemi Balkhi, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani, did not agree to sign the JWF and suggested that it receive parliamentary scrutiny and voting, which caused internal friction, leaving EU diplomats worried about delays (AAN 2016), as this statement from the European Commission and EEAS shows:

The dialogue with Afghan authorities is difficult and uneven. While President Ghani and parts of the Afghan Government are publicly committed to cooperate on readmission, other members of the Government do not appear to facilitate the return of irregular migrants, while attempting to re-negotiate conditions to restrict the acceptance of returnees

StateWatch 2016, 4

After the impasse in the Afghan parliament, the Afghan Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriations, Alema Alema, together with Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Afghanistan, George Cunningham, ‘quietly signed the Joint Way Forward in a low-key event at the presidential palace on 2 October 2016’ (AAN 2016). The next day, the EU released the following press statement:

Yesterday, the European Union and Afghanistan reached an important political arrangement, ‘The EU-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on Migration issues’, to effectively tackle the challenges in both the European Union and Afghanistan linked to irregular migration. This is the result of a constructive dialogue based on partnership and a willingness to enhance dialogue and bilateral cooperation in this area.

EEAS 2016c

Upon the announcement, several international and European organizations, including Amnesty International, the

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), the European Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AEDH), PRO ASYL, Save the Children, Oxfam, and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), jointly signed a letter to the members of the European Parliament (MEP) stressing their concerns (Relief Web 2016). The letter stressed that the JWF had been signed without proper parliamentary and civil society scrutiny, preventing 'any form of democratic accountability'; thus, it would instigate 'major risks of rights violations such as the principle of non-refoulement, protection against collective expulsions and the right to asylum' (Relief Web 2016, 1). Dimitris Christopoulos, FIDH President, argued that 'attempts by the EU to leverage its humanitarian and development aid to Afghanistan to secure the readmission of Afghan nationals in their country of origin represents a new low. This dubious deal negotiated behind closed doors opens the door to the deportation of an unlimited number of failed asylum-seekers' (FIDH 2016).

Moreover, some members of the European Parliament, such as Dutch MEP Judith Sargentini, opposed the Declaration, arguing that the EU was breaking its own laws by sending people back to war zones, including violating the international legal principle of *non-refoulement* (Sargentini quoted in Schultz 2018). In 2017, the ECRE argued that an asymmetric European priority was placed on the number of Afghans being deported, on the speed of those deportations, and on short-term solutions to the EU's own perceived 'crisis, rather than on negotiating a sustainable solution that considers Afghanistan's interests and needs, the Afghan people's history of mobility, and their motives for fleeing their homeland in its current situation (ECRE 2017a, 13).

## The Declaration: Reciprocity, Financial conditionalities, Human Rights, and Safe Areas

In theory, the obligations of the parties involved in readmission agreements and similar arrangements appear equal and reciprocal (Cassarino 2007, 182; Giuffré 2016, 268; Trauner 2017, 253). However, authors have argued that, although each side has its own agenda, the EU often has leverage to offer incentives to non-EU countries, such as development aid, financial packages, visa facilitation, and other so-called benefits to persuade third countries to sign readmission agreements (Cassarino 2007, 183; Giuffré 2016, 268; Trauner 2017, 253; Wolff and Hadj Abdou 2017, 387). For instance, both the Agenda and the Action Plan asserted that the EU should make use of all leverage available to return non-EU citizens residing irregularly in Europe back to their countries of origin, or to the transit countries through which they arrived in the EU (European Commission 2015a, 10; 2015b, 13–14; Trauner 2016, 319).

The language utilized throughout the JWF mentions 'partnership' and 'reciprocity' between the EU and Afghanistan. It stresses that both parties face migration challenges and that to tackle them, 'solidarity, determination, and collective efforts' are needed from both sides (EEAS 2016a, 1). It also contends that 'the return programmes and reintegration assistance are separate from and irrespective of the development assistance aid provided to Afghanistan' (EEAS 2016a, 6). Nevertheless, reports and interviews with members of the Afghan government revealed concern over the conditions of the EU's allocation of aid to Afghanistan.

To attempt to persuade ministers of Parliament (MPs) to support the Declaration's signing, the Afghan Minister of Finance, Eklil Hakimi, told the Afghan Parliament that 'if Afghanistan does not cooperate with EU countries on the refugee crisis, this will negatively impact the amount of aid allocated to Afghanistan' (AAN 2016). Salahuddin Rabbani, the Afghan Minister for Foreign Affairs, also stated in parliament that 'European countries told us: you should either receive our aid to Afghan refugees in our countries, or for development projects in Afghanistan; you can choose between these two options. They asserted very clearly that they could not help Afghanistan in both areas' (AAN 2016).

Similarly, at the time of signing of the Declaration, Rasmussen (2016) reported in the *Guardian* newspaper that 'the pressure on Afghanistan is part of a broader EU strategy of making aid to poor countries conditional on them accepting deported migrants'. Hence, because Afghanistan is highly dependent on humanitarian and foreign aid (StateWatch 2016, 5), the Afghan government had little choice but to sign (Quie and Hakimi 2018). In an interview in 2018, Hafiz Ahmad Miakhel, a spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, stated that the Afghan government 'have 1.6 million refugees back from Pakistan and Iran... We [the Afghan government] have signed the deal [with the EU] and we are cooperating, but we have requested again and again that Europe review its

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

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Afghan policies' (Miakhel, 2018).

Yet, despite apparently making the EU's financial aid allocation dependent on the Afghan government receiving Afghan deportees from Europe, EU officials denied this connection, with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, claiming at the time of the Brussels Conference, 'There is never, never a link between our development aid and whatever we do with migration' (EEAS 2016b). Nevertheless, in a leaked memo, the Commission and EEAS stated that:

The EU should stress that to reach the objective of the Brussels Conference to raise financial commitments 'at or near current levels' it is critical that substantial progress has been made in the negotiations with the Afghan Government on migration by early summer, giving the Member States and other donors the confidence that Afghanistan is a reliable partner able to deliver.

StateWatch 2016, 8

Although the Declaration references the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 New York Protocol, the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (EEAS 2016a, 2), it 'ignores both the inhumane upheaval and trauma caused by deportation and discredits the imminent danger facing asylum-seekers upon returning to their home country' (Wakil 2018). The leaked memo detailed that even though conflict was recognized as widespread in Afghanistan, some areas of the country needed to be classified as 'safe' so that Afghans could be deported (StateWatch 2016, 3). In legal terms, this 'safe areas' prerogative within a non-EU country can be found in Article 8 (1) of Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive), which states that 'an applicant is not in need of international protection if in a part of the country of origin there is no well-founded fear of being persecuted or no real risk of suffering serious harm and the applicant can reasonably be expected to stay in that part of the country.'

Nonetheless, organizations such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA 2018), Oxfam (2018), and Amnesty International (2017a, 2018) have claimed that the EU and its member states made efforts to present parts of Afghanistan as 'safe' for Afghans to be deported to through the internal safe area prerogative, thus prioritizing the number of individuals being deported over the actual situation in the country (Relief Web 2016, 1). The policy classified Kabul as safe for Afghans to live in, and consequently to be deported to, despite it being among the least secure cities in the country (EASO 2018, 26–27; Oxfam 2018, 3; Schuster and Majidi 2019, 97–98; van Houtte 2017; Trauner and Slominski 2020, 14; Warin and Zhekova 2017, 155).

## **Afghan Deportees: Forced back to displacement, hardship, and re-migration**

A year after the Declaration was signed, in a parliamentary question to the European Commission (E-007189/2017), EU parliamentarians asked the age and gender of the deportees, the total amount of money spent on deportations, and who paid for them (European Parliament 2017). The Commission answered as follows: the flights were 'financed by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA)' with a total cost of €5,479,694.95 (European Parliament 2018b) – just over €15,000 per person. Moreover, the Commission stated that most deportees were male adults, 'with a small number of females (11) and minors (6), who have been returned as part of a family. The Commission and the EBCGA do not have information on the exact age of the returnees' (European Parliament 2018b).

These answers illustrate the concerns of Amnesty International (2017a, 2017b), the ECRE (2017a), and other international organizations regarding deportations from the EU to Afghanistan: despite the volatile situation in Afghanistan and the expense involved, there is an urgency on the EU's part to deport Afghans. Indeed, one year into the JWF, Abdul Ghafoor from the Afghanistan Migrants Advice and Support Organization said in an interview that 'it does not make any sense to deport people to Afghanistan right now. It is a loss on both sides. The European countries spent a lot of money to return people while people re-migrate again' (Ghafoor quoted in ECRE 2017b). Similarly, Gerry Simpson from Human Rights Watch stated that although it is not unlawful for a state to deport 'aliens' from its territory, in the case of the JWF, 'it ma[de] no sense to do so if the EU wants to stabilize Afghanistan. By

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

doing this, they are fueling the flames for the situation on the ground and for more Afghans to come [to Europe]' (Simpson, quoted in Birnbaum and Van den Berghe 2016).

To date, research investigating 'migrants' post-deportation lives in Afghanistan remains scarce, and little is known about their long-term experiences (Collyer 2018, 111; Schuster and Majidi 2019, 98). The few available studies and reports indicate that deportation is extremely harmful, especially to deportees' mental health and chances of reintegration into Afghan society, leading many to re-displacement or re-migration (Carrera and Allsopp 2017; Erdal and Oeppen 2017; Khosravi 2017, 2018; Kumar 2018; Majidi 2017; Schuster and Majidi 2013, 2019; van Houte 2017; van Houte et al. 2014).

These post-deportation challenges include stigma for different reasons, such as their 'failed' migration to Europe, lack of money to repay debts, belonging to an ethnic minority, Western 'contamination' (i.e., in the ways they speak, behave, and dress), and suspicions from local governments (Schuster and Majidi 2013, 230–231). These factors and the situation in Afghanistan mean that for many deportees, deportation is not the end of their migration journey, and they are likely to flee the country again (Kumar 2018; van Houte 2017). Moreover, many Afghans who migrate to Europe have never been to Afghanistan before; they are second or third generation undocumented Afghans born in Iran or Pakistan. Hence, when deported to Afghanistan, they are again displaced, having nowhere to go and no one with which to be reunited (Carrera and Allsopp 2017, 77; ECRE 2017b; Khosravi 2018, 2).

Khosravi (2017, 3) contends that although for the purposes of Afghanistan's commitment with the EU, deportees are considered Afghan nationals if they have lived their whole lives in either Iran or Pakistan, but upon arrival in Afghanistan they are denied Afghan national ID cards, which makes integration into society all but impossible. They eventually become 'denizens': 'The condition of social abandonment is experienced by being regarded as both "failed citizen" and "failed migrant" before and after deportation. Deportees in their country of citizenship are turned into denizens with limited access to their citizenship rights' (Khosravi 2018, 4). Consequently, such people are not only displaced again, with no connections to loved ones, but have no possibility of integration into society.

Those who do have relatives in Afghanistan face difficulties travelling to their hometowns due to widespread conflict, adding to their risk of being internally displaced (ECRE 2017b; Norwegian Refugee Council 2018, 10). For instance, the main road from Kabul leading to Hazarajat, in central Afghanistan, is called the 'Death Road' due to the dangers individuals face on it, leading some Afghans to stay in Kabul rather than doing crossing this road, at the cost of becoming internally displaced (Khosravi 2017, 2).

With the above in mind, we argue that by deporting individuals back to Afghanistan, a country experiencing widespread conflict and which has a deteriorating outlook, the EU becomes complicit in the forced displacement of Afghans in that country, so the urgency with which deportations are taking place should be scrutinized. Moreover, the EU claims that it is committed to the development and stability of Afghanistan (European Commission 2016), but studies (Khosravi 2017; Schuster and Majidi 2019; van Houte 2017) show that as the vast majority of deportees do not reintegrate into society but become internally displaced or decide to leave the country again. The more deportees that are sent back to Afghanistan, the more unsustainable the situation might become, both for deportees without support there, and also for the Afghan state.

Finally, by December 2019, the number of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan reached 4,191,000, of which 1,198,000 were displaced by natural disasters and 2,993,000 by conflict (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2020). Thus, 'return' to Afghanistan does little for Afghan deportees, as Khosravi (2017, 2) brilliantly argues: 'opposite to what European states attempt to show, the [Afghan] deportees do not go back home, but they re-(join) a transnational space of expulsion, oscillating between re-departure and re-deportation'.

## Conclusion

By utilizing the JWF Declaration as a case study alongside research and reports on Afghan deportees, this chapter has elaborated on the conceptualization of deportation as a form of forced migration (Gibney 2013) to demonstrate that despite using terms such as 'return', 'removal', and 'readmission' combined with the normalization of the

# European Union Readmission Agreements: Deportation as a Gateway to Displacement?

Written by Manuela da Rosa Jorge

practice of deportation, the EU subjugates individuals by enforcing them to another re-displacement through deportation. Hence, the violent outcomes of such policy are disguised, and Afghans' re-displacement and their 'return' to a place some of them have never been before are normalized, like deportation itself.

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