

PAKISTAN REPATRIATION **COUNCIL (INT'L)**

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Dated: October 06,2003

Honorable Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali
Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Your Excellency,

We, the members of Pakistan Repatriation Council (International) of North America would like to draw your kind attention towards the humanitarian Issue of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh.

As you know that quarter million Pakistanis have been stranded in Bangladesh since 1972. Their living conditions are beyond 'inhumane', and their lives are in great destitute. This is all due to the fact that 250,000 people have all been cramped into sixty-six camps. The Red Cross society of Bangladesh is providing them four kilograms of wheat per family per month. This is the only humanitarian aid that is coming their way from any corner of the world.

Several efforts have been launched to rescue these Pakistanis, but their future, to this date, is still bleak. Under the 'Tripartiate' agreement between Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, about One Hundred Thousand Pakistanis were repatriated in 1973. In another effort, a few hundred more managed to return to Pakistan in 1993. Unfortunately, a quarter of a million of these Pakistanis still remain stranded in Bangladesh.

After an indefinite incarceration (lasting about 18 years), the stranded Pakistanis received a meaningful assurance in the form of an International Agreement signed between the Government of Pakistan and the Muslim World League. On July 09, 1988 the establishment of an International Trust endorsed and specified the details of a Master Plan. This plan clearly focused on the objectives, organization, methodology, and logistic of a high powered Trust, which comprehensively covered all aspects of a complete and well-considered relocation and rehabilitation strategy for the unfortunate human souls abandoned in Bangladesh.

Due to the lack of interest of bureaucracies of governments, unfortunately the fate of these stranded Pakistanis remained unchanged. Time after time, their hopes of repatriation have vanished leaving them helpless and in despair.

An Identity Card on the pattern of the Pakistan National Identity Card, were made, duly processed, approved and stamped by the Pakistan High Commission, Dhaka. These cards have been retained on their behalf by the High Commission and MWL (Muslim World League) office at Dhaka for safe custody.

As per procedure adopted in January 1993, these Identity Cards can be made to serve as travel documents in the absence of passports for the time being as and when the flights are resumed from Dhaka to Lahore.

There can be no two opinions that the Issue of stranded Pakistanis constitutes a purely humanitarian problem and requires to be totally de-politicized and treated and handled accordingly.

The Irony of fate is that the Government of Punjab has already generously earmarked the lands in four or five districts of the province for construction of the housing units. The current cash balance in the Bank Account of the Trust according to the Cabinet Secretary, Government of Pakistan (as in November 2002) was well over Pak RS. 600 million.

The UNHCR has reaffirmed its commitment to foot the bill of transportation of a quarter million repatriates from Bangladesh to Pakistan. The European Union Council has kindly committed to actively participate substantially in the fund raising process of the project.

The Pakistan Repatriation Council (PRC) Proposal:

1)- The PRC is considering a proposal of 'Self Finance Repatriation Scheme'. Under this proposal, heads of 37,000 families will be provided with the opportunities of employments in the middle-east and gulf countries prior to their repatriation to Pakistan. This plan obviously enables these heads of families to gain employment and manage a small savings that would be later used to move their families to Pakistan without becoming an economic burden on others. This proposal, when is brought into effect, will also provide valuable work experience and rehabilitation.

2)- The Government of Pakistan should approach UNHCR to get the stranded Pakistanis declared in the category of "Refugees". This will allow certain living expenses, Medical Grants and Funds for the Transportation of repatriation process.

3)-The Government of Pakistan should approach OIC (Organization Islamic Conference) to also include in their agenda the collection of funds for the rehabilitation of the repatriated families.

4)- The Government should also approach Islamic Development Bank and Asian Development Bank to finance the construction of 37000 houses in the Punjab districts where the land has already been allocated in 1988.

The above mentioned proposed steps would lead to the settlement of about 40,000 families within 2-3 years without any economic burden on Pakistan. In fact, their

productive employment experience will provide valued foreign exchange to our progressive economy.

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, we believe that the patriotism of these stranded Pakistanis will bring the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. As a result nationalism will flourish and the parochial and ethnic differences will diminish.

We must not forget the painful 32 years of atrocities and sufferings of these unfortunate human beings. It is worth mentioning here that Pakistan was created as a safe haven for the Muslims in general and, in particular, for the Muslims of Indo-Pak.

Allah has blessed you with an “Authority and Responsibility” to bring an end to the sufferings and to re-establish the identity of these ill-fated Muslims. Therefore, we appeal to you to look into the matter very sympathetically in order to resolve this long waited humanitarian Issue as early as possible. We thank you for time and consideration in these regards.

Yours truly,

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