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Pakistan Declares Safe Zones, Tightens Migration Controls

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Pakistan has designated Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Murree, and Haripur as “safe zones” where undocumented migrants will not be allowed to reside, according to reports from *Khaama Press*. The move strengthens visa enforcement while restricting undocumented migrants from purchasing property, opening bank accounts, or obtaining SIM cards.

Officials confirmed the decision was finalized during a meeting at the Capital Development Authority, attended by senior representatives from the Interior Ministry, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and counterterrorism police units. “These cities have been classified as protected areas. Only foreigners with valid visas will be permitted to stay,” officials stated. Authorities warned that violators would face strict security action.

A new centralized database is being developed to track foreign residents across Pakistan, providing access to multiple state agencies. The database will link information on housing, banking, and mobile usage to verify legal status. Officials confirmed that SIM cards will no longer be issued to undocumented individuals, and real estate transactions involving such persons will be prohibited.

The tightened measures follow a series of government-led initiatives targeting undocumented migration, particularly concerning Afghan nationals who have lived in Pakistan for decades.

According to *Dawn*, more than 30,000 Afghan nationals illegally residing in the Quetta division have been repatriated to Afghanistan in less than a month. The Pakistani government had set July 31 as the deadline for all undocumented Afghans to leave the country. While many complied, thousands remained, prompting legal action and forced removals.

Joint enforcement teams, including the police, Frontier Corps, FIA, and district administration, were tasked with executing the crackdown. Officials said these teams now conduct daily operations to identify and deport undocumented Afghans.

On Tuesday, Quetta division commissioner Shahzeb Khan Kakar chaired a high-level meeting to review the progress of these efforts. Attendees included district commissioners, FIA and NADRA representatives, senior police officials, and other relevant agencies. Deputy commissioners of Qila Abdullah and Pishin joined the session online.

Authorities confirmed that coordination between agencies had been intensified to speed up repatriations, with strict monitoring of migrants’ financial records and mobile connections. Commissioner Kakar emphasized that women and children should receive special consideration during operations, calling for cooperation from community elders to ensure the process remains peaceful.

While Pakistan defends the measures as necessary for national security, international organizations have raised concerns about humanitarian consequences. Several rights groups have urged Islamabad to ensure that enforcement efforts respect the dignity and safety of those affected, particularly vulnerable populations.

The measures come amid heightened security concerns and mounting pressure on public services. Officials argue that undocumented migration places a strain on infrastructure and creates security risks. Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades, many of whom fled during the Soviet invasion in the 1980s and later during the Taliban's rise.

As the government accelerates repatriation, the challenge remains in balancing border security with humanitarian considerations. The newly declared safe zones reflect Islamabad's determination to control migration flows while sending a clear message that only individuals with valid documentation will be permitted to stay.