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Pakistan Grants Afghan Refugees Brief Reprieve

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Pakistan has extended its deadline for Afghan refugees' voluntary return until September 1, offering a 25-day grace period beginning August 4. This eleventh-hour decision comes after mounting international pressure regarding the fate of 1.4 million registered refugees holding soon-to-expire Proof of Residence (PoR) cards. While UN officials cautiously

welcomed the move, concerns persist about potential forced deportations when the new deadline lapses.

The extension follows Pakistan's initial June 30 cutoff date for PoR card renewals, which would have rendered hundreds of thousands vulnerable to immediate deportation. Home Department spokesman Lateef-ur-Rehman confirmed the government-approved extension, emphasizing that refugees should utilize this window for orderly return. However, human rights organizations warn that Afghanistan's deteriorating conditions under Taliban rule make large-scale returns dangerously premature.



This complex situation stems from four decades of Afghan displacement into Pakistan, with successive waves fleeing Soviet occupation, civil war, and Taliban rule. Islamabad argues hosting refugees indefinitely strains its resources and security, particularly amid economic crises. Yet critics counter that sudden mass deportations violate international norms and could destabilize Afghanistan further by overwhelming its collapsed economy and humanitarian systems.

As the clock ticks toward September, the world watches Pakistan's next moves carefully. This temporary extension offers breathing room but fails to address systemic issues of refugee protection in the region. With neither Pakistan willing to permanently host nor Afghanistan capable of properly receiving these populations, a lasting solution remains elusive. The coming weeks will test whether compassion or expediency prevails in this decades-long humanitarian challenge.