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Former Afghan Interpreter Denied UK Relocation

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A former Afghan interpreter exposed in a major Ministry of Defence (MoD) data breach has had his UK relocation offer revoked, despite waiting in Pakistan for nearly two years.

The interpreter, who worked alongside British troops, had been accepted for sanctuary in the UK by the MoD. However, the Home Office has now rejected his application, leaving him and his family in precarious circumstances. He was detained on Wednesday by Pakistani

police, who entered the UK-run hotel where he was staying and moved him to a deportation camp, according to his lawyer.

The interpreter's details were leaked in a breach affecting thousands of Afghans who reported fearing Taliban reprisals due to their links with UK forces. Many of those affected had applied for relocation to Britain.

His family has been given 14 days to leave the hotel where they have been accommodated. They currently have no visas, financial support, or alternative arrangements.

Rafi Hottak, a former interpreter for the British Army and campaigner for Afghans left behind, described the decision as “morally bankrupt.” He said, “There is a real risk of deportation to these people. I think it is morally bankrupt for the UK government to do this. They have not been able to go out, their wives and children are suffering, and suddenly you throw a bombshell at them. Whatever the reason is, they need to be given a clear answer to why their case is rejected.”

Erin Alcock, the lawyer representing the former interpreter, filed an urgent application to the High Court on Thursday. The request seeks to continue support for the family long enough to allow an appeal against the sudden refusal.

Ms Alcock, senior associate at law firm Leigh Day, stated: “It is a horrifying development, following a sudden and unexplained visa refusal that our client is seeking to have reviewed in the Special Immigration Appeals Commission. We are working urgently to challenge the decision to remove support from our client's family in the meantime.”

A spokesperson for the MoD emphasised that relocation for Afghans depends on passing security and entry checks before arrival in the UK. They said: “We are honouring our commitments to all eligible people who pass their relevant checks for relocation. As the public would rightly expect, anyone coming to the UK must pass strict security and entry checks before being able to relocate. In some cases, people do not pass these checks. All letters of eligibility clearly state that relocation is conditional on passing these checks.”

The case comes as another family waiting for relocation to the UK in Pakistan was also detained and prepared for deportation to Afghanistan, according to the son of a former Afghan special forces commando.

He told The Independent that his family had been waiting nearly ten months for relocation and that he feared for their lives under the Taliban. “The British government knows that as soon as we fall into the hands of the Taliban, we will all be killed,” he said. Thirteen members of his family, including his father, have been taken to the same deportation camp. His father, whose details were also exposed in the MoD leak, had been approved for sanctuary in the UK along with family members.

The son, who escaped arrest, added: “We are even willing for only our children and wives to be relocated. If we are sent back to Afghanistan and killed, so be it, but why should the children of our family and our wives have to face such punishment? At least in this way, we would know that our children and wives are safe and will survive.”

He expressed concern over the psychological toll on his children, saying: “Our children should be enjoying their childhood games at the age of four, not suffering from PTSD because of circumstances that have been unfortunately forced upon us.”

The unfolding situation highlights the ongoing challenges faced by Afghans seeking refuge in the UK after serving alongside British forces. The legal process and security checks for relocation continue to determine who can reach safety, amid concerns about the immediate risk of deportation for those already in temporary accommodation.