
K-P opposes deporting 'legal' Afghans

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KARACHI:

The Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa government has said that Afghan citizens residing legally in the country should not be harassed or deported. “This might [further] strain ties between Pakistan and Afghanistan,” warned Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, the provincial government’s spokesperson. Speaking to a private TV news channel on Saturday, Saif maintained that all Afghans living illegally in the province had been sent back to their homeland. However, he added that the K-P government was not taking steps against those living legally in the country. Saif said during the first phase, the K-P government was directed to identify the illegal Afghans residing in the province. He claimed that all Afghans without any documentation in K-P had been deported to their country. He continued that the only ones who were allowed to stay in the province were those who had Afghan Citizen Cards in accordance with the country’s law and international resolutions

from global organisations including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The PTI leader said the Centre had told the K-P government to find out how many Afghans were legally living in the province. “Our mapping has shown that 359,000 [legal Afghans] are residing in the province,” he added. The K-P government spokesperson said no orders had been issued to take measures against the Afghan citizens living legally in the country. He maintained that the K-P government would take it up with the relevant authorities if it was ordered to deport the Afghans residing legally in the province. “It was justified to deport the Afghans living illegally, but we can’t harass or target the Afghans residing legally here.” Saif cautioned that any action against Afghans living legally in the country would create “hatred, misunderstanding and mistrust” between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He advised the federal government to deal with this situation in a sensitive manner. In September last year, Pakistan decided to expel all illegal foreigners, especially unregistered Afghan refugees, in a major policy decision. The caretaker federal cabinet, through a circulation summary, approved the decision to repatriate as many as 1.1 million Afghan refugees residing illegally in Pakistan as well as other foreigners living in the country without proper documentation. In November, the government began rounding up undocumented foreigners—mostly illegal Afghan refugees—from all parts of Pakistan after the deadline of the 1st of that month for them to leave the country expired.