

# Refugees deported by Europe attacked by Taliban, ISIL

Afghans deported and returned from Europe tell Al Jazeera how they are caught in the crossfire amid rising attacks.

[Shereena Qazi](#) 4 Feb 2018



Afghan medical staff treat a wounded man after a car bomb exploded in Kabul in the Taliban-claimed January attack [File: Wakil Kohsar/AFP]

Nasir, a 26-year-old shopkeeper from the northern Kunduz province, left as a refugee for Europe in July 2015 - the year his father, a local police officer, was killed by unknown assailants.

Last month, having returned to Afghanistan after being deported from Finland, he was injured in a [Taliban-claimed massacre](#) in Kabul that killed more than 100 people.

As he recovered in a hospital bed, with fractured legs and ribs, Nasir remembered the tough decisions he had to make following his father's

death.

In assaults across the country, the security apparatus, including local policemen, is often targeted.

Along with his mother and two brothers, the family used to spend "every moment in a state of constant fear".

"My mother asked us to leave. She knew after my father's death, we were in danger," said Nasir, using a pseudonym to protect his safety.

"It was a big decision to make. Leaving everything behind in Afghanistan, even my mother, was too difficult."

Shortly after his father's death, his brother was also attacked by a group of unknown men. It was then that Nasir decided to flee [Afghanistan](#).

But fewer than three years later, he was back on Afghan soil.

He claims immigration officials in Finland pressured him to sign some forms, which he did not fully understand, essentially authorising his deportation.

In recent months, European countries have tightened borders and asylum policies, resulting in large groups of refugees being pushed back to Afghanistan - a volatile country where civilian casualties are at record levels.

"About nine months have passed since I returned from Finland to Kabul, where I work as a shopkeeper," Nasir told Al Jazeera. "Only my mother and my uncle's family know that I was deported. No one else, as my life is still in danger."

Recalling his brief time in Finland, Nasir said he felt unwanted but knew he was safer than in Afghanistan.

"I remember once I wanted to buy something from a supermarket, and even though I had money to pay the shopkeeper, he refused to sell it to me.

"That bothered me a bit, but at least my life was safe there, so I let it go."

According to Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, as of September 2017, Afghans accounted for the largest group of [asylum seekers](#) to the bloc, with 170,045 applications pending approval.

Ineligible applicants are sent back to their home country or a "safe third country", which is expected to provide sufficient protection.

In 2015, 33 percent of first-instance applications by Afghan asylum seekers were rejected, according to Eurostat.

By the first three quarters of 2017, more than half of first-instance applications - or 52 percent - were rejected.

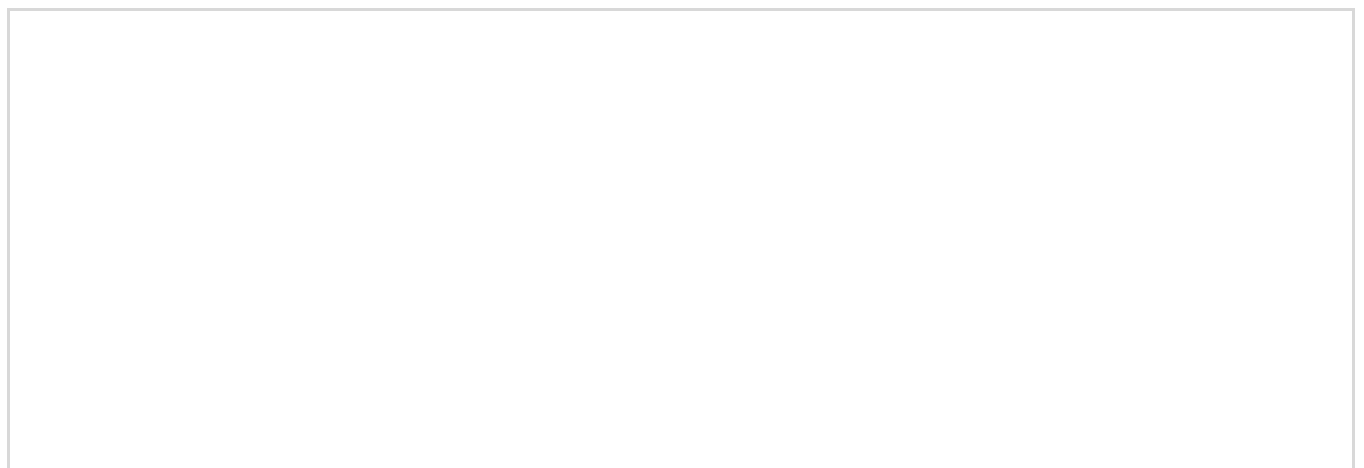
Nasir said living in Afghanistan means "facing death" every day.

## **'We don't want to die. There is no protection'**

Hayat Hooman, a member of the persecuted Hazara minority, was sent back to Afghanistan from Sweden in 2016.

As a voluntary returnee from Europe, facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), he was promised financial assistance and reintegration resources.

But in July 2016, those incentives meant little when his friend was killed and he was wounded in an ISIL attack in Kabul on a peaceful protest by the Hazara minority that killed at [least 80 people](#).





Hooman smiles to the camera a few minutes before ISIL attacked the peaceful Hazara protest in 2016 [Courtesy: Hayat Hooman]

"I thought, if I get the money I will be able to start off something in Kabul that will help my family financially," Hooman said. "I felt my family needed me back in Afghanistan. They are very poor and I had to return back to earn something for them.

"But the situation in Afghanistan is getting so bad every day, that I might go back and apply for asylum again with my family.

"We don't want to die. There is no protection."



Hooman pictured at the grave of his friend, who was killed by ISIL at a protest by Hazaras [Courtesy: Hayat Hooman]

## **Bloodshed continues**

The UN documented more than 16,290 security-related incidents in the first eight months of 2017.

In June 2017, UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres](#) said the situation in Afghanistan was "intensively volatile".

Between January 1 and June 30, 2017, UNAMA reported 5,243 civilian casualties including 1,662 deaths and 3,581 injured.

Despite the very obvious risk to citizens' safety, nine European countries - Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and France - are deporting or have decided to deport failed Afghan asylum seekers via the Joint Way Forward agreement between the EU and Afghanistan.

The 2016 agreement facilitates the return of thousands of Afghans. In return, the bloc promised to continue its aid package to Afghanistan.

European politicians and officials regularly describe some areas of Afghanistan as "safe".

But recent events have demonstrated that the security situation in Afghanistan is far from safe.

On January 21, the Taliban [orchestrated a bloody siege](#) at Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel that left at least 20 dead.

On January 24, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ([ISIL](#), also known as ISIS) fighters killed three people at the office of Save the Children, in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

A week later, more than [100 people](#) lost their lives and 235 - including Nasir - were injured in the Taliban suicide attack in the heart of the capital.

In a November 2017 survey of Afghan returnees from Europe by REACH, which researches humanitarian issues, most respondents said they would make another attempt at returning to Europe.

Nasir is among those who are willing to take the risk again, he said, if he is able to fund the expensive journey.

"I know it will be difficult to get asylum, but I cannot live in fear every second in this country," he said. "How is Afghanistan safe for me? I need to know if I am not safe in Kabul, where else would I be?"

***Follow Shereena Qazi on Twitter: [@ShereenaQazi](#)***