

Afghanistan and the Coming Wave of Refugees

by Gary Fouse

With the American military leaving Afghanistan and the apparent return to power of the Taliban, it looks like more bloodletting for that God-forsaken land. And with that, the West can expect more asylum-seekers. Thousands more-tens of thousands more.

With our military withdrawal, we are already dealing with Afghans who served with our military as interpreters (or other capacities). There is little doubt as to what fate awaits them once the Taliban are back in charge. For that reason, we have a definite moral obligation to give them asylum in the US. We did the same with our Vietnamese allies when that country fell to the Communists in the 1970s.

Aside from Afghans in that category, there will no doubt be a wave of Afghans trying to make their way to the West-be it America or Europe. It is an easy prediction because Western Europe is already awash with young male Afghans in their 20s who have decided the time is ripe to find a better life in the ever-so-generous Western European countries. In several Western European countries, the result has been increased crime-violent crime.

Just last month, Austria was shocked by the brutal drugging, gang rape, and murder of 13-year-old girl by four young men-all Afghans. Three are in custody in Austria, and a fourth was captured in Britain. And it's not just Austria. Sweden and Germany have also been plagued by violent crime (rapes, murders) committed by young Afghan males who have made their way unaccompanied to Western Europe. Many are minors, or

simply men in their 20s claiming to be minors. They have brought no skills or education, just a primitive, 7th-century Islamic culture from a country that has refused to modernize. What could possibly go wrong? The last thing Western Europe needs is thousands of more Afghan men arriving who will only contribute to the exploding crime and social welfare problems that the Europeans are dealing with.

As stated above, however, there will be some Afghans who clearly merit asylum from the countries whose military forces they worked with in the years after 9-11. Many are, indeed, educated and can contribute to their new societies. When I was teaching English as a second language, I had some of these young people as students, and I could see their potential. But the West should be very discerning as to whom they allow to come (to date, the West has not been discerning at all, especially Western Europe.)

In my humble opinion, we were absolutely justified in going into Afghanistan after 9-11 to root out and destroy Al Qaeda. Once that was accomplished-and Usama bin Laden was killed- I think we should have gotten out and left that country to its own devices. There are valid reasons why many say leaving is a mistake, but I just don't see what having a prolonged military presence can accomplish in that country. Sooner or later, Afghanistan will be Afghanistan. It will never change.

After our long involvement, we do owe it to provide asylum to those who worked with us, but for the West to simply open the floodgates and allow anyone and everyone to come would be a drastic mistake.