

## **Statement from the Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Settlement Services**

**Toronto, June 14, 2020**

In light of recent news of the brutal burning of Afghan asylum seekers in Yazd, Iran, and Iranian border guards killing 45 Afghan migrant workers by forcing them at gunpoint into a mountain torrent on the border, the AWO Refugee and Immigrant Services shares this statement to condemn the continued injustice and dehumanization of Afghan asylum seekers by Iranian authorities. About three million Afghans – including refugees and migrants – live in Iran.

As an organization that has served refugees and immigrants in Canada for 30 years, we are deeply troubled by the international community's neglect to bring awareness and take action on this issue.

Unfortunately, this is just the latest indignity suffered by the Afghan community in Iran. This is perpetuating the already precarious position that Afghans find themselves due to the decades long historical discrimination of Afghans in Iran. Human Rights Watch has documented numerous violations against Afghan migrants and refugees in Iran, including physical abuse, detention in unsanitary and inhumane conditions, forced payment for transportation and accommodation in deportation camps, forced labour and forced separation of families.

Moreover, during the current global pandemic, there are reports of Iranian officials and healthcare providers denying Afghans treatment and care for COVID-19. It is essential that the Government of Afghanistan, the peace-loving people of Iran and the international community act together to address cases of racism against Afghans in Iran.

It should be recognized that Afghanistan's ongoing war of over 40 years has created vulnerability and chaos forcing many to migrate to avoid death or persecution, leaving the country with the largest population of refugee/asylum seekers.

The AWO Refugee and Immigrant Services has made efforts in the past to bring these issues to the attention of the Canadian government and has made small gains in resolving refugee cases at risk of unfair treatment by Iranian authorities. It is our

hope that the broader community will stand together to continue to spread awareness about the injustices, racism and mistreatment of refugees and asylum seekers globally.