

Tents village of Refugees and IDPs, Jalojai Camp

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Jalojai Camp is located 35 kilometers in south east of Peshawar. This camp used to be the largest camp in Pakistan and Asia for refugees. When Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1980, millions of Afghan refugees migrated in search of safer lands to Pakistan through the historic old route of Khyber Pass. More than 70 thousands settled in Jalojai Camp then. In year 2000, influx of Afghan refugees increased exponentially, escaping from the tyranny of Taliban. After 9/11 when US took military action against Taliban of Afghanistan and refugees started to migrate towards Jalojai camp. After the defeat of Taliban, majority of refugees from Jalojai Camp left for their country or moved out from the camp. In February 2002, camp was vacated from Afghan refugees.

In 1979, Peshawar was used as the undeclared headquarter, to manage the activities against Soviet Union. This city replaced Kabul and Qandahar to promote the cultural heritage of Pushtoons.

In 1980's, Osama Bin Laden was seen visiting Jalojai Camp many times. He along with an influential Palestinian Scholar named Dr. Abdullah Yusuf Azzam planned and formulated Jihad against Soviet Union. Haji Dost Muhammad, from



Peshawar used to be Chief Security Officer in Jalojai camp mentioned in an interview he gave to Reuters in 2001 that Osama Bin Laden visited Jalojai camp in 1987. He said that he was there to spread the message of love and sympathy. He hasn't been seen there after that and Dost Muhammad did not know who Bin Laden was at that time.

In 1989, after the defeat of Soviet Union, war lords in Afghanistan started civil war. People escaped from their internal war and also in the rule of Taliban, came to live in Jalojai Camp and other Camps in Pakistan.

When US started military operation against Al-Qaeda network, many international relief organizations came to Pakistan to support and help the refugees. When US started air strikes against training camps of Al-Qaeda, influx of Afghan refugees increased in Jalojai Camp.

In the last two decades of previous century, Jalojai Camp was inhabited by Afghan Refugees. In November 2000, New Jalojai Camp was established beside the Old Camp. 50,000 Afghan refugees were staying in new camp till July 2001.

In early 2001, about 1.1 million Afghan refugees were residing in different camps and about 1.9 million were in different regions of Pakistan. According to Reuters, about 300 thousand refugees were living in Jalozai camp at the end of year 2001.

Jalozai Camp (both Old and New) was a temporary location for camping. UN did not even give it an official status of Refugees Camp. Due to lack of any registration process, facilities proved were below international standards. According to Melita Sunjic , Spokesperson of UNHCR , United Nation gave Jalozai Camp the status of Refugees Camp on 11 September 2001 and registered 10 thousands Afghan Refugees. Then later the refugees were relocated to Shamshato Camp, near Peshawar.

After the fall of Taliban regime, about 50 thousands Afghan refugees were shifted from Jalozai Camp to other camps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, those included Kotkai, Bajaur, Shalman, Old Bagzai, Baso and Ashghar.

On 12th of February 2002, Eva Demant, Representative of UNHCR in Pakistan and Commissioner of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan officially closed the Jalozai Camp. In March 2002, UNHCR started campaign for voluntary retrieval of Afghan Refugees to their country. By the end of 2002 UNHCR sent back 1.53 million Afghan refugees to Afghanistan in which 1.4 million amongst them were from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In 2005, UNHCR devised a plan to facilitate voluntary return of 400 thousands refugees back to Afghanistan. 19 thousands returned home by April 2005. By Mach 2005, flow of returning refugees increased from 250 to 500 per day and was expected to increase more before summer started. As per 2002 program of return of refugees, 580 thousands refugees had returned Afghanistan voluntarily. Matter of concern was that Agreement for Stay of refugees amongst three nations was expiring in March 2006 and about 1.5 million Afghan Refugees might have to stay back in Pakistan.

UNHCR and Pakistan reconsidered their strategy and from March 2002 till 2005 about 2.4 million were facilitated in returning to Afghanistan. It is the largest successfully executed program of UNHCR in the world.

MALAKAND OPERATION:

In 2009, when Militants challenged the writ of Government in Malakand Division, Pakistan Army started military operation against them. About 2.5 million people migrated towards safe grounds. They were retained in the various camps of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Many amongst them preferred to stay at their relatives. According to a formal survey, 329,792 families (approximately 2308544 individuals) were registered as Internally Displaced Persons-IDPs.



27966 families were from Dir, 71860 from Buner, 8429 from Shangla, 5152 from Malakand and 141582 families from Swat. 54826 families from Bajur Agency and 19977 from Mohmand Agency were registered as IDPs in different camps established by Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Jalozai camp had 19 thousands families of IDPs from Malakand due to Pakistan Army Operation Rah-e-Rast. Influx from Mohmand and Bajur raised the total count of IDPs to 95 thousands families in Jalozai Camp, 11 thousand families from Mohmand Agency and 65 thousands families from Bajur.

After operation was over in Malakand division in September 2009, IDPs returned. With passage of time, most of Bajur and Mohmand were declared safe. 10500 families from Mohmand and 63900 families from Bajur returned to their homes from Jalozai Camp as well.

Till 5th of April 2012, 500 families of Mohmand Agency and 1100 of Bajur are still in Jalozai camp.

BARA AGENCY OPERATION:

When military operation was started in Bara Agency on 12th of March 2012, IDPs started to move into Jalozai camp. Thousands of families migrated and started living in the camp. 49955 families were registered till 12th of April 2012. This count leads to a figure of 232883 individuals. 9672 families are living within the camp and 40283 families are living off-camp with their relatives. Number of IDPs in Jalozai camp is expected to increase with time.



Many prominent people from across the world visited Jalozai Camp to observe the facilities provided to the people living inside the camp. Robert Kesy, US senator and chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee and Angelina Jolie, famous Hollywood actress and UN ambassador for peace also visited Jalozai camp.

There are Six Phases in Jalozai Camp. Temporary markets at the entrance of camp consisting of about 400 shops of different items have been established. Free medical



facilities are provided in 7 BHUs. NGOs also arrange free medical camps frequently. Medical staff ensures the immunization of children, specifically against polio. Educational needs are fulfilled through 17 schools, including 6 for boys and 6 for girls and one high school. 4 other non-vocational schools are operating under the support program of UNICEF. 3 more schools are under construction for children to facilitate the increased influx.

Most of the IDPs in Jalozai Camp daily listen radio to aware themselves from local and international news. Educated and average rich IDPs also read newspapers. Most of the men at night gather at some point and shared the news with each other which has become a part of daily routine.