

AFGHAN PASHTUN ASYLUM SEEKERS' DEPORTATION ISSUES
AND SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE IN GERMANY.

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Abstract

This article describes the migration experiences of Afghan Pashtun asylum seekers who fled to Germany from Afghanistan. The acceptance rate for Afghan asylum applicants has experienced a decline, coinciding with the government's attempts to enhance the number of deportations. This policy is justified by the claim that certain regions inside Afghanistan are considered "safe" for deportees, despite the escalating levels of violence and poverty observed in the country. This ethnographic study focuses more specifically on how deportation difficulties drive asylum seekers to self-inflicted violence and suicide. Existing German migration research frequently focuses on three primary domains: asylum system restrictions, deportation adheres to under the nation-state approach, and far-right attitudes towards asylum seekers. Nonetheless, there has been a striking paucity of scholarly attention paid to how asylum seekers intentionally hurt themselves in order to delay the ongoing deportation process. The primary goal of asylum seekers' deliberately self-inflicted violence is to demonstrate before German asylum officials that they are not mentally stable and must postpone their deportation. In this case, the German asylum system grants them *Duldung* (toleration status). Despite using self-inflicted violence, some asylum seekers have been deported.

Keyword: Deportation, *duldung*, violence, suicide, asylum, Afghanistan, Germany

1. Introduction

This seven-month ethnography research on Afghan Pashtun asylum seekers was carried out in the German cities of Landshut and Cologne, where a significant number of Pashtun asylum seekers reside. I'm going to give a brief overview of the Pashtun ethnic group. The Pashtuns, formerly referred to as Afghans, Pashtoons, Pushtoons, Pathans, and Pukhtoons, are an ethnic group who live in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pashtuns are the most populous ethnic group, have a disproportionately large population in the neighbouring country of Pakistan. Afghanistan's national anthem includes 14 ethnic groups, including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Balochis, Turkmens, Nooristanis, Pamiris, Arabs, Gujars, Brahuís, Qizilbash, Aimaq, and Pashai¹.

My study methodologies included participant observation both within and outside of refugee camps, as well as 30 semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers (age from 15 to 48 years), refugee councils, various non-profit organizations, and political party workers. These various approaches prepared me to deliver grounded and comprehensive assessments. My research strategy decisions have been guided by the necessity for a set of tools to investigate deeply the asylum seekers' self-inflicted violence and deportation issues. In this context, I used different techniques for recruiting study participants and gaining access to venues at the start of my fieldwork. In this trajectory, I communicated with my Pashtun refugee friend, Zadrán Afghan, about my research. Zadrán Afghan arrived in France as an asylum seeker, obtained a 10-year residence permit. Zadrán Afghan admires Afghans who work for the Afghanistan's peace, prosperity, and education. In this context, he was very happy to know that I want to work on Pashtun asylum seekers' deportation issues in Germany. Following that, he quickly contacted their Pashtun refugee and asylum seeker friends in Landshut city, to assist me during fieldwork.

1 Farhan Yousaf, "Pakistan's Tribal Pashtuns, Their Violent Representation, and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement", *Sage Open* 9, no. 1 (2019): 2158244019829546.. See also Abubakar Siddique, "Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides", *Sources of Tension in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Regional Perspective* (2012).

Zadran Afghan would guide his refugee friends in Germany on asylum case procedures particularly about political asylum cases. As a result, his asylum-seeker friends Idress Khan and Ayaz Khan accommodated me in the refugee camp and made my access to the participants. Landshut is a city in the German state of Bavaria situated on the banks of the River Isar. Landshut is the capital of Lower Bavaria, one of the seven administrative regions of the Free State of Bavaria. At beginning of my fieldwork, I spent time in various refugee camps in the city of Landshut. Here, I formed strong connections with asylum seekers. These contacts enabled me to connect with other asylum seekers as well as human rights organizations "Afghanistan is not safe" and association (the German Caritas Association) in Cologne. After completing my half-research fieldwork in Landshut, I moved to Cologne city, where I met the asylum seekers through my friend Ayaz Khan's contact. In Cologne city, one of the asylum seekers, Asim Khan, and his cousin Mohsin, who have been in Germany for nearly three decades, introduced me to the "Afghanistan is not safe" organization, that works against the deportation of refugees and actively participates in Afghanistan's political issues. "Afghanistan is not safe" volunteers (mainly Germans) put me in touch with refugee councils in Germany. In this manner, I communicated with representatives of the Munich Refugee Council and the Cologne Refugee Council, who expressed interest in my work and provided me with detailed information about deportation. "Afghanistan is not safe" provided me with the emails of various political party workers for conducting interviews. I contacted the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and the Christian Social Union (CSU). After making initial contact with members of such political groups, I gained access to additional political parties, including the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Green Party of Germany, and the Left Party. Among these political groups, I found the SPD, Left, and Green parties to be more active in their opposition to the deportation of asylum seekers. Members of various political parties assisted me during my fieldwork. Apart from that, access to these camps is often highly controlled, particularly by local authorities. In this instance, the local government was extremely cautious during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, especially when I visited Landshut field-site for the first time. On the way, I was questioned by the German police about my research and location. In addition, they read my corona-virus vaccination certificate, green pass and encouraged me to rigorously adhere to other

safety measures. When I arrived at my study site, the police gave me a paper and ordered me to fill it out and send it to the local administration of Landshut. When I arrived at the refugee camp in the city of Landshut, I handed the form to Ayaz Khan, who instructed me to fill it out and send it to the appropriate authority, as failure to do so could cause us trouble. Ayaz Khan added, «it is indicated on this paper that I should take your responsibility because I am accommodating you here”. After that, Ayaz Khan and I completed the administrative procedure. Ayaz Khan took my responsibilities with confidence because Zadrán Afghan requested him about my research work and stay. On the other hand, Ayaz Khan knew that Zadrán Afghan’s job was to help asylum seekers with their asylum cases. He also knew that Zadrán Afghan housed a lot of Pashtun asylum seekers in France after their claims in Germany were turned down. In this context, Ayaz Khan accommodated me not only because of my ethnic roots and status as a researcher, but also because he knew Zadrán Afghan could assist him in the future if he needed assistance with an asylum case. I followed up with the majority of the asylum seekers.

Aside from that, all conversations were in Pashto language. I did not employ the services of an interpreter because I grew up in a Pashtun family in Pakistan and these asylum seekers were from Afghanistan. I was initially apprehensive that language would be a barrier because Pashto dialects differ from place to place. However, I had no issues interacting with Pashtun asylum seekers. In this way, I understood asylum seekers’ conversations and everyday fears about deportation, as they always believed the deportation process to be an involuntary step against vulnerable asylum seekers.

In this trajectory, deportation is an involuntary act since it takes place by force rather than by choice, which gives it its distinguishing character. Instead of being decided by individual migrant, the state has the authority to make the choice whether to deport someone.² Deportability refers to the perpetual risk that asylum seekers face of being taken from their daily life due to their non-citizen status. Asylum seekers are forced to live under the constant threat of deportation and endure the consequences in this situation. Precarity is also created by deportability because it

2 Susan Bibler Coutin, “Deportation Studies: Origins, Themes and Directions”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 4 (2015): 671–81.

prevents people from seeking or exercising their social and human rights³. Deportations have frequently been contentious, particularly in Germany following the Nazi government's brutal deportation system. While deportation was historically used to expel foreign criminals and keep aliens from jeopardising the public's peace⁴, in the past few years it has developed into a tool for the control and "management" of migration, which governments consider necessary and legitimate⁵. Paoletti thus calls a «deportation turn» where deportation has evolved as a unique type of state practise distinct from previous forms of deportation as a means of dealing with unsuccessful asylum seekers and also foreigners accused by crimes⁶. The "refugee issue" keeps influencing political discourse in Germany, owing in part to the emergence of new right-wing parties and organisations. The issue of deportation is increasingly dominating refugee discourse. In comparison to the number of new arrivals, the "successful" deportation process is rather low: in 2018, around 57,000 people were planned for deportation from Germany, but deportation was not carried out as it was programmed. The administration, on the other hand, is aiming to boost the number of deportations. At the time of spring 2019, the Ministry of Interior was drafting a «Law of Orderly Return» (Geordnete Rückkehrgesetz), which aim was not only to limit the rights of migrants without a secure right of residence, but also to criminalise activists who support rejected asylum-seekers facing deportation. In this path, between 2020 and 2022, more than 6,000 migrants deported from Germany. The number of returnees climbed by 74% throughout in that time period. In addition, between January and July 2023, 175,000 migrants requested for asylum in Germany, according to the government data. Corresponding to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, asylum applications have increased by 78%. The two largest groups of asylum applicants are Syrians and Afghans, with 51,692 and 31,334 cases, respectively.

3 Malin Sager, *Everyday Clandestinity: Experiences on the Margins of Citizenship and Migration Policies* (Lund: Lund Universitet, 2011).

4 Emanuela Paoletti, "Deportation, Non-Deportability and Ideas of Membership", *Work* (2010).

5 Liza Schuster, *The Exclusion of Asylum Seekers in Europe* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2004).

6 Paoletti, "Deportation, Non-Deportability and Ideas of Membership".

Moreover, in August 2024, Syrians became the largest group of asylum seekers (13340), followed by Afghans (5605) and Venezuelans (4690)⁷. Moreover, the deportation procedure was accelerated in 2024 when a Syrian refugee stabbed and killed three people during a festival in the city of Solingen, western Germany. A day after the German government pledged to strengthen asylum processes following a deadly knife assault, and which resulted the deportation flight carried 28 Afghan refugees from Germany to Afghanistan⁸. Interestingly, I observed throughout my fieldwork that asylum seekers always view such violent acts as inhumane and strongly prohibited their friends from violence, as well as instructed to follow the laws and peace of the destination country, because they had fear of deportation. Furthermore, violence had negative impact on Afghan asylum seekers' integration in Germany. In this fashion, the study examined refugees' violence against natives, also asylum seekers' liminal condition, self-inflicted violence, and suicidal inclinations that occur due to the anxiety of deportation.

Before delving into the preceding point, I examined how asylum seekers battle legally to prevent deportation.

1.2 The initial procedure for asylum applicants after migration

Initially Pashtun asylum seekers encounter challenges in evading deportation through legal means. During my fieldwork in the cities of Landshut and Cologne, I analyzed how male Pashtun asylum seekers first appeal for asylum in order to obtain a residence permit. In this

7 Martin Sökefeld, "Nations Rebound: German Politics of Deporting Afghans", *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 50, nos. 1-2 (2019): 91-118. See also Nina Martin, "Thousands of Deported Migrants Reenter Germany", *Deutsche Welle*, February 18, 2023. See also TIMETURK, "175,000 Asylum Seekers Arrived in Germany So Far This Year", August 8, 2023, <http://www.timeturk.com/en/175-000-asylum-seekers-arrive-in-germany-so-far-this-year/news-80511>. See also Eurostat, *Asylum Application Monthly Statistics*, 2024, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics>.

8 CNN, "Germany Depports 28 Afghans After Unveiling New Security Package", August 30, 2024, <http://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/30/europe/germany-deports-28-afghan-migrants-intl/index.html>.

context, Muller⁹ conducted research on unaccompanied minor refugees in Germany, demonstrating that refugees under the age of 18 are classified as “unaccompanied minor refugees” because they come in Germany without their families or become separated en-route. Additionally, asylum seekers over the age of 18 are sent to the Member State in charge of them depending on the applicable criteria. However, the “youth welfare office” may assign guardian to “unaccompanied refugees”. The federal office for migration and refugees (BAMF) provides well-trained personnel to unaccompanied minors to assist with asylum case interviews and procedures. These unaccompanied minors received a toleration status (*Duldung*) by asylum officials. Unaccompanied minors who meet the appropriate circumstances may be granted such permission to stay. Assimilation projects into German society and completion of vocational training or schooling are among the prerequisites. The “Youth Welfare Service” helps children who are not with their parents accomplish these standards throughout this stage. Also, the guardian look after and help them with their legal proceedings. Unaccompanied minors who face deportation may seek stay under Section 60, subsections 5 and 7 of the Residence Act, therefore extending their stay in Germany. If an unaccompanied youngster does not file an asylum claim, the entire process will be repeated. However, Section 25, subsection 4 of the Residence Act may allow teens who are not accompanied by an adult to apply for a temporary residence permit. The asylum status of rejected asylum applicants leads them to the courtroom, where they fight deportation through the legal system. In the following paragraph, I will go over this point briefly.

1.3 Different types of asylum procedures

There are several and distinct asylum case procedures in Germany. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) handles asylum cases. Asylum cases in Germany are refused based on the asylum status and can be challenged in court. In this way, the Administrative

9 Anja Muller, *Unaccompanied Minors in Germany: Focus-Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)* (Nuremberg: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2014).

Court (Verwaltungsgericht) and the High Administrative Court (Oberverwaltungsgericht) hear the initial appeal. The appeal must be submitted with the Administrative Court within fourteen days of a simple refusal, but if the asylum claim is rejected, the appeal term is only seven days. The BAMF, which has offices in every federal state, interviews asylum seekers. An applicant's asylum case may be dismissed according to the Dublin Regulation and international conventions if it is being processed in another country. In other cases, asylum requests may be rejected if another EU member state has granted the applicant's safety or if the applicant's previous application was denied in Germany. Also, if an asylum seeker submits a subsequent application following known safe third country (a location other than the asylum applicant's country of origin), the application will be dismissed. Likewise, the asylum applicant could be relocated to a safe third country¹⁰. Following that, asylum applicants would be cautioned that if they were unable to convince BAMF of their asylum claim, they must leave Germany within 30 days; if asylum seekers do not leave Germany, they will be deported; however, only a small fraction of them are deported. In this scenario, asylum seekers must seek legal counsel to fight deportation. If an asylum seeker is unable to pay a lawyer, he or she may request to the "German Caritas Association" (which provides assistance to many in need) that covers the asylum applicant's legal fees. Asylum seekers whose third asylum claim is denied, the lawyer must get a Tolerated Stay Permit (*Duldung*) for him, "*Duldung*" is given to refugees whose deportation is halted due to illness, pregnancy, lost of passport, or when the country of origin refuses to cooperate with the provision of essential papers to allow international travel. Additionally, a person's deportation may be delayed while the prosecution and criminal court handle his or her criminal case. *Duldung* may also be granted if a person is caring for a close relative who is receiving medical treatment or attending school or vocational training (*Ausbildungsduldung*). Deportation can be postponed owing to emergencies such as conflict in the country of origin, and it can also be granted if a family member's asylum claim is pending and the results are

10 Verena Hansel, Sabine Hess, and Silke Schurade, *Refugee Protection: Germany Country Report (v.1)*, Zenodo (2020), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3601630>.

expected, as in the case of small children and spouses¹¹. In relation to the above argument, I frequently went to the grocery store with my friend Idress Khan during my research in the Landshut district because he had a car. He arrived at the camp site in his car one day and drove me to the Landshut main market to get food. «I met Muhammad Muqrab, an asylum seeker, in Idress Khan's car, and he was on his way to the main market to buy vegetables and other necessities.» Muhammad Muqrab didn't say much to me other than «Salam» (Hello). He had an in-depth discussion with Idress Khan about his *Duldung* status and residence permit. I found him to be quite tense and anxious. Thus, «he was requesting assistance from any source in order to avoid deportation and obtain a residence permit.» During our conversation, he turned to me and said something quite negative:

I'm anxious about my future because I don't know what will happen ahead. I am very dissatisfied as a result of the constant renewal of my toleration status, which worsens my anxieties because most of my friends who had lived on temporary non-status (*Duldung*) were deported. I've been in Germany for five years and have the right to work, but this status has left me completely useless. I can't work and travel at the same time. I want to make enough money to support my family, but it seems like my life is coming to an end.

In this context, asylum seekers were terrified of being deported because of their toleration status (*Duldung*). Although they were unsure about their future with such a toleration status, asylum seekers with toleration confronted a constant fear of deportation. Numerous Pashtun asylum seekers depended on negotiating the deportation issue in this context to put themselves in the "serious illness" category, which was also a major component of *Duldung*. According to asylum seekers, if you are critically ill, the relevant authorities will not deport you. Also, on the day of deportation, asylum seekers only have two options to escape deportation. Option one is to enrol in "vocational training", and Option two is to declare "serious illness".

11 Marina Raditsch, *Tolerated Migrants in Germany: Migration Practitioners' Perspectives on the Changing Meaning and Purpose of Duldung Since the 1990s* (Doctoral dissertation, 2015).

1.4 *Duldung* and violence

«Asylum seekers often resort to self-inflicted violence to be categorized under ‘serious illness.’» Precisely, asylum seekers commit self-inflicted violence in this regard, cutting their hands, feet, faces, and any part of their bodies to demonstrate to BAMF that they suffered from a “serious sickness”. «Asylum seekers categorized as ‘seriously ill’ often exhibit signs of mental illness and self-harm.» These asylum seekers would be presented to a mental health examination on the day of their deportation. Doctors would be in charge of determining whether asylum seekers’ mental conditions were normal or abnormal. Those asylum seekers whose physical and mental state are found to be normal after a medical examination will be deported. Asylum seekers with mental health issues, on the other hand, would not be deported until they recovered. In this fashion, some form of hidden resistance, for instance hunger strikes or refusal to reveal one’s real name in order to stop the deportation process, takes place inside immigration detention centres. One notable example is Campesi’s research on the immigration detention facility in Bari showed how detainees can use self-harm as a means of preventing deportation¹². Moreover self-harm is unpleasant and might endanger the lives of the detainees involved, it can be difficult for medical professionals to understand or support such behaviour. However, certain individuals may regard this type body language of resistance as more powerful and effective than words, particularly in severe and unhealthy environments like immigration detention¹³. The supremacy of body within this approach of “everyday resistance” must be highlighted, as it opposes the typical subaltern position that Cartesian-

12 Giuseppe Campesi, “Hindering the Deportation Machine: An Ethnography of Power and Resistance in Immigration Detention”, *Punishment & Society* (2015): 427–53.

13 Gillian Straker, “Signing with a Scar: Understanding Self-Harm”, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* (2006): 93–112. See also Anna Motz, *Managing Self-Harm: Psychological Perspectives* (Routledge, 2009). See also Anna Motz, “Self-Harm as a Sign of Hope”, *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy* 24, no. 2 (2010): 81–92. See also Peter Steggals et al., “The Social Life of Self-Injury: Exploring the Communicative Dimension of a Very Personal Practice”, *Sociology of Health & Illness* (2020): 157–70. See also Rossana Puggioni, “Speaking Through the Body: Detention and Bodily Resistance in Italy”, *Citizenship Studies* 18, no. 5 (2014): 562–77.

inspired philosophy has historically assigned to human physicality¹⁴. Since the mind and body are inextricably intertwined, as Puggioni has noted, the anguish and loneliness that migrants endure in immigration detention facilities are profoundly felt by their entire physical selves. She asserts that «it is precisely this corporeal experience that triggers corporeal responses» including behaviours related to self-harm¹⁵. These actions may be interpreted as both a «optimistic» cry for help - in Motz's words - and a means of deploying power against the authorities, as bodies are the main tool that prisoners have to affect the people who are keeping them¹⁶. According to Johansson and Holmes' analysis of psychiatric patients use their humiliating body fluids to scare and upset their caretakers and make them feel uneasy and disturb. Likewise migrants aim is the same to provoke a similar reaction against prison staff by exposing them to the reality of their bleeding wounds¹⁷.

In this trajectory, I've collected and studied a few accounts from asylum seekers. In order to illustrate the aforementioned point, I interviewed Ibrar Ullah, Idress Khan, and another asylum-seeker, Saddiqi, about similar violence and deportation during my research in Landshut city. According to Ibrar Ullah:

I had a friend who was about to be deported, but he later cut his hand and foot with a knife to persuade the authorities that he was insane and not prepared to be deported.

The same Idress Khan indicated that:

Asylum seekers are treated according to the medical conditions they have reported. In this situation, however, doctors do not clarify whether an asylum applicant is indeed ill or whether he purposefully placed

14 Murray A. Adelman, "The Sociology of the Body", *Current Sociology* 64, no. 6 (2016): 907-30.

15 Rossana Puggioni, "Speaking Through the Body: Detention and Bodily Resistance in Italy", *Citizenship Studies* 18, no. 5 (2014): 562-77.

16 Motz, *Managing Self-Harm: Psychological Perspectives*.

17 Jonatan Johansson and Dave Holmes, "Abjection and the Weaponization of Bodily Excretions in Forensic Psychiatry Settings", *Nursing Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (2022): e12480.

himself in the “severe illness” category. It is suggested that a patient take the prescribed pills and injections if he is not “severely ill”. Indeed, these medications and injections are meaningless to asylum seekers and might lead them to become “severely sick” or mentally harmed.

Similarly, Saddiqi remarked:

I was feeling a bit ill, and the doctors prescribed me plenty of medications and injections, but they didn't help my condition and instead made it worse. I can't sleep because I'm afraid of deportation, so I take injections and medicines to help me for sleeping. Due to a lack of sleep and medication, I gained weight and became immobile. Because of my weight, I can't breathe correctly. Because of my fragile mental state, I am terrified that I will unintentionally harm myself. Aside from that, I want to stay in Germany since I worked as a social worker for the German Army in Afghanistan and would be killed by the Taliban if deported back to my own country. I informed local authorities about my previous employment with Germans and my safety in Afghanistan, but they ignored my concerns.

Muhammad Noman, a 21-year-old asylum seeker, stated:

The doctors claim I'm just 30% disabled since one of my eyes cannot function properly. My mental impairment, on the other hand, is far worse. As a result of my cognitive handicap, I am unable to stand normally. In this way, the doctor does not regard me as having a mental disability. I work one day and sleep for the next 48 hours. Because I am unable to wake up on my own, my friends sometimes wake me up. I used to be psychologically and physically stable, but when I became concerned about deportation, I began to feel depressing and anxious all of the time.

In a Landshut refugee camp, I met Sohaib Khan, another asylum seeker. He couldn't walk properly since one of his hands and one of his feet were paralysed. He was 42 years old at the time. He was delighted with the doctors' treatment of his physical disability. However, he criticized German doctors for not declaring him disabled due to his physical impediment. He went on to say:

I have a disability. I am unable to obtain a driver's licence. When I contact doctors, they tell me that I am not physically disable because my mind is working. Despite having job skills and understanding of the German language, I am completely useless in Germany. It is a waste of my time, energy, and relationships with my family. It is expected that I will marry a woman in my country when I find a job and become a citizen here, I plan to marry her. I've been here for five years, which has harmed my memories because I can't recall the streets of my village, let alone my own people and relatives.

To summarise the above segments, the asylum seekers questioned the doctors' authority for failing to diagnose their deliberate self-inflicted violence (cutting any part of the body) as "serious illness" or for ignoring their mental or physical problems. Asylum seekers would be deported in this situation because their medical and mental conditions were not deemed serious by their treating doctors despite asylum seekers tried to put themselves in "serious illness" category in order to be saved from deportation. Moreover, asylum seekers were aware that certain medications and injections prescribed by their doctors had worsened their psychological, emotional, and physical conditions. As a result, the majority of asylum seekers condemned their treatment of doctors as unfair. During my time in a refugee camp in Landshut, I met Mansoor Ahmad, a 27-year-old asylum seeker, through my mutual friend Idress Khan, who was also an asylum applicant. During my stay in camp, «Mansoor Ahmad told me that I would not sleep in his room because he couldn't sleep and hadn't slept for two days; at first, I thought he was joking, but it turned out that I didn't sleep because his loud breathing prevented me from getting asleep.» He was incapable to sleep and would stay awake all night. The next day, Mansoor Ahmad apologized for keeping me up at night due to his health concerns, but «he blamed the doctors for prescribing him medicines and injections that did not treat his health but instead increased his mental and physical problems.» As a result, he could not breathe properly and exhausted. As Fassin and D'Halluin¹⁸ researched that medical certifications as proof for asylum seekers in France, as well as what they term as the «truth of the

18 Didier Fassin, "Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France", *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 3 (2005): 362-87.

body» and explain that doctors are no longer concerned with “emotions” but rather describe what the body indicates and reveals. The doctors examine, inform, and seek to demonstrate the relationship between cause and effect. In this way, a medical certificate is utilized in asylum proceedings to prove that the client has been subjected to the alleged assault. These asylum seekers, however, were also aware that a number of their friends had been deported after an official doctor placed their names in the “serious illness” category. Likewise, Ibrar Ullah and Idress Khan revealed that «one of their asylum-seeker friends had cut his face in an attempt to avoid deportation, but the police eventually deported him regardless. Nonetheless, these asylum seekers were less in number and used justifications to continue using such violent methods. Idress Khan, for example, stated that he had a cousin in the city of Landshut who was a refugee. His asylum case had been denied a few years ago, and he was facing deportation. He wanted to cut any part of his body to avoid deportation at the time. Idress Khan warned him not to act in this manner, but he refused to listen. Idress Khan learned a few days later that his relative had severely damaged his face with a knife. Idress Khan hurried him to the hospital at that moment, where a doctor stitched up the wound. As a result, he showed his mental disability to the concerned authorities, and his deportation was subsequently postponed. According to Idress Khan, his cousin primarily used the method of violence because he believed it would be extremely beneficial in terms of delaying deportation. People whom asylum cases rejected, deployed a similar method in this situation, and these stories serve as examples.» Therefore, I contend that self-harming actions can be used both overtly and covertly as a form of resistance, and that their effectiveness is contingent upon whether or not these gestures are made explicit. Manghi’s field research on Turin’s *pre-removal detention centre* (CPR) facility supports this idea as well, highlighting how detainees learn survival methods to negotiate against the system’s oppression, particularly with the prejudices of medical personnel towards mental illnesses and incidents of self-harm, in order to avoid the administrative detention system¹⁹. In this way, James Scott’s significant work *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* argues that each realm of open resistance to domination is accompanied by an infra-political twin sister

19 Nicola Manghi, “Self-Harm in Turin’s Centre for Undocumented Migrants (CPR): The Camp, Agency, and Subjectivation”, *Anuac* 10, no. 1 (2021): 115–37.

who strives for similar strategic goals but prefers a low-profile approach to combat an opponent who is likely to win any open confrontation²⁰.

1.5 Deportation paves the way to violence

When the deadline for deportation approaches, certain rejected asylum seekers (those whose asylum case interviews were denied) are transferred to a designated refugee camp before they are returned to their home country. Chaplains from the Jesuit Refugee Service have access to all regions of the detention institutions in Germany, but they are overwhelmed by the number of people in their care and are deeply concerned about the conditions in the detention centres. Dieter Müller, is a priest who visited the detention center in Landshut city, she reported that some detainees were held for the long period, partially due to challenges with identity verification. Such detention centre was designed to look like an abandoned jail. Metal bars around 2 feet from the outer wall of the cells make opening and closing windows difficult, and guards must regularly be called and permission requested. The noise levels are fairly high 24 hours a day, which is a common complaint in European detention facilities. Moreover, visitors are separated from detainees by thick Perspex, making discussion and privacy is impossible. Detainees have also complained about lights being left in their rooms for 24 hours a day or being turned on early in the morning so that guards can conduct a head count²¹. Similarly, the studies of Ellermann²² and Nesterko et al.²³ explored that Germany have the authority to detain migrants following deportation orders for up to six months and in rare cases (such as when a person hides her/his identity) for up to eighteen months. As a consequence, if a migrant has the capacity to endure the

20 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

21 Liza Schuster, *The Exclusion of Asylum Seekers in Europe* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2004).

22 Antje Ellermann, "Undocumented Migrants and Resistance in the Liberal State", *Politics & Society* 38, no. 3 (2010): 408–29.

23 Yuriy Nesterko et al., "Suicidal Ideation Among Recently Arrived Refugees in Germany", *BMC Psychiatry* 22, no. 1 (2022): 183.

stresses of detention and continues to resist the state's efforts to identify her, immigration officials have little power to prevent the individual from returning to her/his community or disappearing into illegality once the time limit has passed. Individual resistance is thus enabled by detention time limits, which are a feature of immigration legislation in the vast majority of liberal democracies. According to the experience of a social worker working in one of Germany's largest detention centres, some people throw their passports after being detained for a long period of time. This is not often the case with people from Sub-Saharan Africa, India, or Pakistan. They simply do not wish to return. There is no doubt that detaining someone for months at a time is a strong intervention for creating liminal situation for detainees. Many people lose hope in detention camps, and while detention official personnel are not permitted to kill them, however conditions push certain prisoners to commit suicide. According to official German statistics between 1993 and 2004, forty-eight people committed suicide while imprisoned. Moreover, recently within two weeks preceding the assessment, 171 (30.3%) participants who had recently arrived in Germany reported having suicide thoughts. In addition to having worse self-rated mental and physical health, those who reported suicide thoughts also had greater rates of physical signs of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sexual violence traumas. Suicidal thoughts were also significantly correlated with (1) younger age, (2) longer flight duration, (3) sexual violence events, (4) indicators of post-traumatic stress disorder, and (5) signs of sadness. The mental health of the asylum seekers worsened as a result when the German government tightened its hold even further by forcing migrants to stay in "departure centres" (Ausreisezentren). These camps are often placed in remote geographic areas and are designed to compel people to cooperate with identification and document application tasks. While the centres are open in the sense that residents are free to come and go, which is considerable control on the state's part, a number of administrative processes are being taken to eliminate any viable alternatives to deportation. Asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the locale surrounding, the centres or work; they are denied social assistance payments and housing benefits; and they have access only to food and shelter provided by the centres, as well as emergency medical care. They are distinctive in that the regulations that govern them do not apply to citizens. Asylum seekers in these camps are true social outcasts, deprived of many of the rights and benefits provided to citizens and restricted by geographical

seclusion. As a result, it may be argued that the state fosters conditions prone to self-harm in departure spaces. Deportation would also induce fear and hardship among Pashtun asylum seekers in such a situation. Asylum seekers would be enraged and dissatisfied if they were deported. There would be regular arguments in that camp about contentious matters like religion and nationalism. In this backdrop, I remembered Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Noman's discussions. I came upon these two teenage asylum seekers outside of a camp in Landshut.

Ahmad Khan, a 23-year old asylum seeker told me:

I remembered a fight in a refugee camp between an Iranian asylum seeker and a Pashtun asylum seeker that erupted after a Pashtun asylum seeker insulted one of the Iranian religious leaders. They eventually battled with knives and smashed bottles. In that case, they gravely injured themselves, and their blood was all over the camp. The police arrived later and handled the matter. All of this occurred because these asylum seekers' asylum claims were denied, and they were transferred to a detention centre for deportation.

Another asylum seeker, 21-year-old Muhammad Noman, stated:

I knew a Pashtun asylum seeker who assaulted a German female worker before he was deported. She was assigned the task of cleaning the refugee camp. She arrived one morning to clean the room of a refugee who was due to be deported in a few days. In the morning, the asylum seeker was sleeping, and she later tried to wake him up and clean the room. The asylum seeker, on the other hand, refused to wake up. He slapped her across the face when she asked for it again. He became angry and violent as a result of the stress of deportation. Beating a lady is against the norms and values of the Pashtun code of conduct.

Deportation, on the other hand, exposes the frustration, anger, and depression that asylum seekers have felt from the start of their asylum case process. The anger and animosity caused by rigorous bureaucratic procedures, deportation, and a lengthy wait for German citizenship and a residence permit, as well as the fear of being deported, contributes to the difficulties and can lead to violence, crime, or even suicide. In this

trajectory, in Germany asylum seekers with unsure legal statuses, such as subsidiary protection or temporary suspension from deportation for a year, reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress compared to those with granted residence statuses²⁴. However, after receiving a residence permit, asylum seekers' symptoms of anxiety, PTSD, depression, and mental health functioning improved, according to the research studies by Silove et al., Bogic et al., Nickerson et al.²⁵. On the other hand, without receiving stay permit and start a job compelled asylum seekers to have mental health issues because in refugee camps they had close social ties with each other. Such close ties enhance their mental problems particularly suicide tendencies. However, some studies revealed that associated risk of depression, self-harm and suicides among refugees and asylum seekers are the feelings of social isolation. The incapacity of the individuals to interact successfully in the common language with other refugees and asylum seekers causes their social isolation²⁶. Nevertheless, I explored throughout my fieldwork that Pashtun asylum seekers shared a common ethnic background, spoke the same language, and had close social bonds; they would frequently go together for lunch and dinner. But they still had strong suicide tendencies. In this way, family pressure on asylum seekers to support them financially when they were unemployed and the shame of returning home were some of the factors contributing to their suicide tendencies. In this insane situation, when asylum seekers don't have proper documents, so they fight with each other on small matters.

24 Lena Walther, Leonie M. Fuchs, Jürgen Schupp, and Christian von Scheve, "Living Conditions and the Mental Health and Well-Being of Refugees: Evidence from a Large-Scale German Survey", *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 22, no. 5 (2020): 903–13.

25 Derrick Silove et al., "The Impact of the Refugee Decision on the Trajectory of PTSD, Anxiety, and Depressive Symptoms Among Asylum Seekers: A Longitudinal Study", *American Journal of Disaster Medicine* 2, no. 6 (2007): 321–29. See also Marija Bogic et al., "Factors Associated with Mental Disorders in Long-Settled War Refugees: Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia in Germany, Italy and the UK", *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 200, no. 3 (2012): 216–23. See also Angela Nickerson et al., "Change in Visa Status Amongst Mandaean Refugees: Relationship to Psychological Symptoms and Living Difficulties", *Psychiatry Research* 187, nos. 1–2 (2011): 267–74.

26 Katherine Robjant, Rita Hassan, and Cornelius Katona, "Mental Health Implications of Detaining Asylum Seekers: Systematic Review", *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 194, no. 4 (2009): 306–12. See also Julie Cohen, "Safe in Our Hands?: A Study of Suicide and Self-Harm in Asylum Seekers", *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine* 15, no. 4 (2008): 235–44.

For instance; asylum seekers fiercely defend their nationalist and religious identities, particularly during deportation. They know that whether they fight or not, they will be deported, so they are more free to engage in violence and aggression than they were in the past. Similarly, the second quotation depicted the same occurrence in which an asylum seeker slapped a lady without fear of being deported to his home country. Nonetheless, the Pashtuns consistently believed that women should be respected in both public and private spheres. At all times, a Pashtun is supposed to defend his land, family, women, and possessions from intruders. His name's honour must be protected. To defend the honour even if it is associated with death of someone. Pashtuns always take care of their women and respect other women in this way. However, such Pashtunwali norms of life cannot work during deportation since asylum applicants are scared of being deported without success. Further, if a Pashtun is deported, he will face Phighor (taunt) from his own people, who will ask why he did not get "citizenship" and earn a lot of money. Such taunt and failure also compel asylum seekers for committing violence. In this liminality, deportability can last for years, and even if a person is granted a residence permit, he still holds deportation fear. Deportation also has long-term and far-reaching consequences. Deportees may be sent to towns or countries where they have no social connections, resulting in social isolation. Deportation typically carries a failure stigma that people must bear for the rest of their life. It also shatters the kinship bonds of asylum seekers²⁷. According to Muhammad Noman, «a Pashtun asylum seeker would send his two job salaries to his family, and he recently received his residence permit after an 8-year wait.» His relatives in Afghanistan paid him a visit and congratulated him on his residence permit. However, the asylum seeker's family was disappointed because he received his residence permit only after a long wait. Moreover, family members in Afghanistan told their relatives that they are dissatisfied because he did nothing in the past, and they still do not have high hopes from him despite he has a residence permit. «In this regard, when the asylum applicant learned of his family's statement through a friend, he felt frightened and committed suicide a few days later

27 Kaarina Horsti and Päivi Pirkkalainen, "The Slow Violence of Deportability", in *Violence, Gender and Affect: Interpersonal, Institutional and Ideological Practices*, 181–200 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

in the Frankfurt river.» Deportation and long wait for documents thus go hand in hand with transnational cultural norms, values, and taunting that force asylum seekers for committing suicide. During my fieldwork in 2021, I met a 19-year-old asylum seeker named Zaki Jan in Cologne's city centre. I confined his talk into the quotation below. I come from a low-income family, and my journey to Germany cost me 10,000 Euros. For my travel, my family borrowed money from relatives. We must now repay the money we borrowed from our relatives. I'd like to work here and support my family financially. If the German government deports me to my native country, I intend to commit suicide. I did not leave Afghanistan due to economic insecurity, but the local Taliban urged me to join them. They can use you for their own personal purpose and can send you to the war. I saw Zaki Jan after our meeting, and he seemed really worried regarding his future in Germany. He wanted to work and earn money, but lacked the required skills. He needed to learn the German language quickly so he could get a job. He repeatedly threatened to kill himself if he was sent back to Afghanistan. He would occasionally get out of breath and his face would turn yellow as he talked of his pre- and post-migration experiences during the war, the deaths of his close companions on the journey to Germany, and the border violence in other European countries. In addition, Zaki Jan was apprehended while trying to cross border in Czech Republic. When his friends were deported from Germany, he was likewise worn out. After that, he told me that his fear of being deported kept him away from sleeping for the entire night. Zaki Jan would view suicide as an appropriate way to deal with his problems, especially during deportation. In this context, Sokefeld's²⁸ study on nations-rebound and German deportation policy for Afghans revealed that the bulk of refugees deported from Bavaria. At Munich Airport on July 3, 2018, substantial number of Afghans were deported. There were 69 Afghans in total, 51 of them from Bavaria. The Federal Minister of the Interior, Horst Seehofer, celebrated his birthday on the same day of deportation, and the next day, during a news conference, he quipped that 69 Afghans were deported on his 69th birthday. This deportation attracted a lot of attention. One of the deportees committed suicide in Kabul a few days later. Suicide is a complicated issue

28 Sokefeld, "Nations Rebound: German Politics of Deporting Afghans".

of several vulnerabilities and risk factors in a person's life that is generally unpredictable. The experiences of refugees and asylum seekers have many risks. The idea of deportability can also be used to describe the confusing, unpredictable, and unstable circumstances related to asylum application procedures²⁹. It is important to note here how many regimes around the world appear to be actively working to destroy particular wealth by making policies of violent borders, enmity, and 'removal fetishism'³⁰.

2. Conclusion

This research paper finished the study by summarising and discussing the significant research findings connected to the research objectives and questions. My goal for writing this article was to look into and understand how Germany's deportation procedures restrict migration. As I previously stated, deportation authority dominates the lives of asylum seekers, and asylum seekers use self-inflicted violence to negotiate their ongoing deportation in exchange for a future stay. In this perspective, asylum applicants should place themselves in the "serious illness" category, which was also an important part of *Duldung*. If you are critically ill, the authorities will not deport you, according to asylum applicants. Also, on the day of deportation, asylum seekers have just two choices to avoid deportation. The first option is to engage in "vocational training", while the second is to declare "serious illness". While asylum applicants prefer the second option since it provides a greater chance of postponing deportation than enrolling in vocational training. Moreover, deportation would also encourage asylum seekers to discuss the difficulties of their asylum application in order to identify solutions to avoid deportation. Asylum seekers were also instructing each other to avoid any open confrontation with concerned

29 Nicholas De Genova, *Detention, Deportation, and Waiting: Toward a Theory of Migrant Detainability*, Global Detention Project Working Paper No. 18 (2016), <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/De-Genova-GDP-Paper-2016.pdf>. See also Malin Sager, *Everyday Clandestinity: Experiences on the Margins of Citizenship and Migration Policies* (Lund: Lund Universitet, 2011).

30 Susanne Strasser and Martin Sökefeld, "The Affective Economy of Removal: Ethnographic Perspectives on Deportation and (In)Voluntary Return", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2024): 1-17.

officials during deportation because they were afraid of deportation. Similarly, they had stories of deported asylum seekers who committed self-inflicted violence but were deported by German police. Overall, when rejected asylum seekers did not have any option for resistance or escape from deportation, they would become more dangerous not only for themselves but also for the rest of people. In such circumstances, asylum seekers were more likely to commit suicide or engage in violence against concerned officials, as I reported when an asylum seeker assaulted a German lady in a refugee camp. In this madness, we cannot label all asylum applicants as violent. The key aspect, however, is how the asylum system forces asylum seekers to commit suicide or engage in violence.

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