



# **PROFILE OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT : PAKISTAN**

Compilation of the information available in the Global IDP  
Database of the Norwegian Refugee Council

(as of January, 2003)

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Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Project  
Chemin Moïse Duboule, 59  
1209 Geneva - Switzerland  
Tel: + 41 22 799 07 00  
Fax: + 41 22 799 07 01  
E-mail : [idpproject@nrc.ch](mailto:idpproject@nrc.ch)

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## PROFILE SUMMARY

### Internal displacement in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir

*NOTE: While reliable information is available about internal displacement until the height of the recent crisis by mid-2002, it has been difficult to locate more recent information about eventual return of those fleeing during 2002. If readers have relevant information available, it would be highly appreciated if this could be shared with the Global IDP Database ([idpproject@nrc.ch](mailto:idpproject@nrc.ch))*

#### Internal displacement in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir

As of June 2002 it was reported that about 45,000 people had become internally displaced in the southern part of Pakistani controlled Kashmir as a result of the dramatic military build-up on both sides of the Line of Control (LOC) that divides Kashmir between Pakistan and India. The worsened situation in 2002 was triggered by the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001 and the intense artillery campaign by the Indian army that followed affected above all areas in Azad Kashmir south of Muzaffarabad/Tithwal (BBC 4 January 2002). As a response to rebel attacks on the staff quarters of an Indian army camp on 14 May 2002, the Indian army further intensified its shelling across the LOC, including deliberate targeting of civilian villages (BBC 27 May 2002; ICG 11 July 2002; CWI, May 2002).

It is difficult to estimate the number of internally displaced in Kashmir because of fluid movement patterns following the intensity of the conflict, and the fact that most of the IDPs find shelter individually and outside camps. Authorities reported already in January 2002 that 28,000 people had been newly displaced because of the increased deployment of Indian troops and intensified artillery shelling (CWI January 2002). By mid-2002 an assessment organized by Islamic Relief revealed that the number had nearly doubled as a total of 5,729 households (i.e. about 45,000 people) were identified as internally displaced. The assessment indicated that as many as 102,000 people could become displaced if the conflict further escalated (IR, 12 June 2002). During 2002, civilians also fled intensified shelling in the Northern Areas, but IDP figures for this area is not available. By the end of 2002, the situation had somehow stabilized, but it was unknown how many of the displaced that had been able to return (BBC 25 November 2002).

In addition to those internally displaced, an unknown number of Kashmiris have since 1947 also fled from the Indian side of the LOC into areas controlled by Pakistan. By end-2001 it was reported that about 17,000 refugees lived in camp on the Pakistani side of the LOC (USCR 2002, "Pakistan"). Although Pakistani authorities and Muslim organizations provide humanitarian assistance, concerns have been raised about these refugees not being offered adequate physical protection (Daily Excelsior 30 June 2002). Pakistan is not party to the Refugee Convention and UNHCR has not been involved in the assistance.

### **Unclear status**

Some observers have pointed at a need to more clearly define the status and rights of people displaced by the Kashmir conflict. The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, for example, claims that “international organizations” consider people fleeing from the Indian side of LOC to the Pakistani side as internally displaced and not refugees (IMTD, undated). It has also been reported that the Pakistani government does not regard these as international refugees because of the unresolved status of Kashmir (USCR 2000).

Kashmir has remained a disputed area between India and Pakistan all since 1947, and the LOC was in 1972 demarcated as an official ceasefire line. The fact that the international border and the statehood of the civilians have not been finally decided and the limited access for independent observers complicate the analysis of displacement in Kashmir. However, outside observers commonly perceive the LOC as a *de facto* international border for the purpose of dividing those displaced by the armed conflict into the following four categories:

- People are considered refugees after crossing the LOC into the Pakistani controlled side, Pakistan itself or seeking asylum further abroad
- People are considered refugees after crossing the LOC into the Indian controlled side, other regions of India or seeking asylum further abroad
- People fleeing their homes inside the Indian controlled areas are regarded as internally displaced within Indian administered Kashmir or other regions of India (see [India country profile](#))  
<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/India>
- People fleeing their homes inside the Pakistani controlled side of the LOC are regarded as internally displaced inside Kashmir areas controlled by Pakistani or inside Pakistan itself (i.e. the focus of this country profile).

The part of Kashmir which Pakistan controls is divided into the Northern Areas with a population of 1,5 million under direct Pakistani administration and the southern Azad Kashmir with a population of 2,8 million (Knudsen 2002, p34). The latter is often also referred to as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and enjoys a certain level of autonomy, albeit still controlled by the Pakistani government.

### **Fleeing Indian attacks**

A root cause of displacement in Pakistani Kashmir is the long-standing territorial dispute between Pakistan and India. Pakistan has never recognized Kashmir's accession to India in 1947, and this has been the cause for two wars fought over the area during 1947–48, in 1965 as well as intensified fighting in 1971 – which led to the present demarcation of the LOC. Since then the tensions have made the two countries mobilize for war on four occasions (1986-87, 1990, 1999 and 2002) – each time alleviated by international diplomatic efforts. Despite ceasefires, there has during recent years been regular exchange or artillery fire across the LOC. While displacement on the Indian side of the LOC is related to a more complex conflict pattern, involving internal insurgents as well as infiltration of militants from the Pakistani side, displacement inside Azad Kashmir is mainly related to the Indian artillery shelling across the LOC.

Displacement during 2002 appears to have followed a similar pattern to previous displacements with civilians moving away from the LOC to areas outside the range of the Indian artillery (10-20 kms). However, it was reported in January 2002 that opportunities for even temporary return was constrained because homes close to the LOC had been mined in anticipation of Indian ground attacks (CWI January 2002). In Azad Kashmir there is a pattern whereby the IDPs with sufficient resources on their own will rent accommodation in towns. In fact, one observer has estimated that about a quarter of the IDPs move to major towns like Muzaffarabad or even leave Kashmir and settle in Pakistani towns like Rawalpindi (IR 2002, "Refugees").

In the Northern Areas, ICRC assisted IDPs who had fled intensified shelling in May 2002 and sought shelter in three camps near the city of Skardu. In consultation with provincial authorities, ICRC made efforts to protect these IDPs from the freezing winter conditions in the mountains by offering them shelter in empty building in Skardu or accommodation with local residents (ICRC 5 December 2002).

When the situation worsened in 2002 there were still civilians who had remained internally displaced since the intensified fighting in 1999, and even longer than that. The 1999 displacements occurred when India responded both with artillery and aerial attacks after several high altitude positions were taken over by militants in the Kargil area on the Indian side of the LOC. The fighting resulted in the deaths of hundreds of combatants and non-combatants and Pakistani authorities estimated that over 40,000 people in Pakistani controlled Kashmir fled their homes before US diplomatic efforts took effect (BBC 15 June 1999). The majority of the displaced returned home by late 1999 (US DOS February 2001). However several thousand people had by 2002 still not been able to return, as the sporadic shelling has continued together with a constant high level of violence and killings on both side of the LOC (Knudsen 2002, p35; AI 12 July 2002).

The fighting in 1999 forced in particular women and children to flee their homes (SCF 1999). Many had to endure long exhausting mountain treks before finding shelter with relatives in nearby villages, in schools, government offices or temporary makeshift camps. Others would stay at their homes during daylight and seek shelter elsewhere during the nights when shelling became more intense. These population movements were allegedly discouraged by the authorities that stated that the population should stay in their towns and villages despite the fighting in order to build "defensive positions" (BBC, 16 June 1999). It has been reported that some who tried to seek shelter in towns like Skardu, were refused entry by local authorities for such reasons (Mehdi 2000, p.90). Many of those fleeing in 1999 still remained in camps when the situation again worsened in 2002. ICRC reported in August 2001 that approximately 1,300 persons were sheltered in two IDP camps in Azad Kashmir (Hattian Bala: 225 IDPs and Garhi Dopatta: 1,100 IDPs) and some 430 persons being sheltered in an IDP camp in Mayurdo, Northern Territories. In addition they identified 1,500 persons (i.e. 262 families) remaining internally displaced in the Nelum Valley and unable to return because of military activities along the LOC during the last 10 years (ICRC August 2001). It appears that by end-2002 the IDPs living in the camps had still not returned.

**Humanitarian response**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is one of the few international humanitarian organization with access to the war affected people in Kashmir. ICRC has continued a dialogue with the authorities on options for a more permanent solutions for the displaced people sheltered in two camps in the Neelum Valley, and were during 2001 for the first time able to monitor the situation of civilians who had been trapped by shelling in remote areas of the Neelum Valley (ICRC, 2002, p.169). As mentioned above, ICRC was during 2002 also working to improve the shelter conditions for IDPs in the Northern Areas.

By mid-2002 , the international humanitarian organization Islamic Relief made efforts to coordinate assistance to the war affected populations on the Pakistani side of the LOC. Among others, this resulted in an assessment of affected areas inside Azad Kashmir and coordination meetings where Government representatives and local humanitarian actors prepared an emergency preparedness plan. The assessment showed that district authorities and Islamic Relief had a certain capacity available to respond to increased displacement (e.g tents, medicines and health personnel), but that this would have to be complemented by additional emergency assistance, especially tents and food aid, if the emergency should worsen (IR, 12 June 2002). Islamic Relief itself implements major humanitarian projects in the Neelum Valley, including improvement of health care, livelihood projects, water and sanitation as well as strengthening the local capacity for first aid and evacuation of civilians in times of intensified conflict (IR 2002, “Preparedness Project”).

Less than 50 military observers from the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) monitor the LOC. This UN presence, however, is not accompanied by UN humanitarian assistance, neither in Pakistani nor in Indian controlled areas. Although the security situation may be one reason for this, the respective national governments are apparently reluctant to welcome international humanitarian assistance.

While being “overseen” by the Pakistan Ministry of Kashmiri Affairs, Azad Kashmir has its own state council and a state president. Despite a certain level of autonomy from Pakistan it is clear that local authorities, similarly to the Pakistani armed forces, are bound by international humanitarian law and human rights law with regard to their obligations to assist and provide protection to people displaced within the areas under its authority. As the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement reflects these legal frameworks, these principles constitute a relevant framework to guide the assistance and protection offered IDPs inside areas of Kashmir controlled by Pakistan.

The Azad Kashmir authorities and the Pakistani government assist the refugees who have arrived from the Indian side of the LOC. While many of the refugees find temporary or long-term shelter in one of the 17 camps in Azad Kashmir, many are never registered and seeks ways of making their own living. According to the USCR, the authorities have not provided the same level of assistance to IDPs because they do not want to encourage the border areas to be depopulated for strategic reasons (DIRB, August 1997, sect.5.3; USCR 2002).

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