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## Journey to Europe was a big mistake: Returning Afghan family

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An Afghan family who returned to Kabul from Turkish borders after succumbing to hardships during their journey to Europe has urged Afghans not to put their lives in danger by going to Europe through illegal ways.

Recently tens of thousands of Afghans in droves left for Europe especially Germany through illegal ways, but some ended up sinking in seawaters between Turkey and Greece and others facing numerous hardships on their way.

Mohammad Ibrahim Taqaddosi, a resident of Neili, the provincial capital of central Dikundi province, told Pajhwok Afghan News he wanted to reach Germany along with his wife and two children but faced several problems on the way and finally changed his mind in border areas of Turkey and returned to Kabul.

The 47-year-old said he had been in Tehran with his family, but a month ago, he contacted some human traffickers and started the trip to Europe.

“We had a happy life in Tehran and there was no need to leave for Europe, but I started the trip only for my three-year-old disabled child whose treatment was impossible in Iran,” he said, calling the trip a bitter experience of his life and a big mistake.

In addition to other expenses, he paid nearly 200,000 afghanis to the human traffickers who took them to Turkey borders.

They conveniently travelled up to Urmia, the northwestern city of Iran near the Turkish border, but after that they faced a lot of difficulties.

“We were huddled like sheep into a container and taken to Khoy city of Iran near the border with Turkey. It was difficult for us to breath in the container,” he said. He started regretting the trip to Europe after seeing women and children in great trouble.

“We paid all of the money we had to the smugglers in order to reach Europe for the treatment of our daughter, but we were unaware that it was a mistake to take the illegal route,” wife of Taqaddosi said, while holding her three-year-old daughter in her lap.

Recalling their journey, she said the traffickers kept people in caves for several days before they could enter Turkey from Khoy city of Iran. She said many illegal migrants died in the caves due to no access to enough food and water.

She saw a dead body lying in front of one cave. Some other women told her that there were other dead bodies also. They spent two days in the caves and they were about to suffocate due to bad smell.

Their daughter developed difficulty in breathing and this forced them to take her to Imam Hassan Mujtaba hospital in Khoy city where they saw some Afghans who had fallen sick in the same caves.

She met an old Afghan woman, Hajja, who was trying to cross the Turkish-Iran border with two sons, as many daughters and a daughter-in-law, but her young son was shot dead and the second was wounded by unidentified gunmen in the bordering area.

While quoting the woman, she said, her two daughters and the daughter-in-law had been missing for more than 10 days but she could not find them and now she was attending her injured son in the hospital.

In the same hospital, there was another dead body of an Afghan whose wife was also missing in the bordering areas.

“In Khoy City, the smugglers told me that they would first take me to Turkey and then my husband. At the beginning we agreed, but later I realised such a decision could be a fatal mistake,” she said. Then the couple decided to change their mind and return back to Kabul.

“We surrendered to Iranian police who mistreated us, saying that we Afghans are going to Europe for money. As I showed my sick daughter to them, they believed me and took us back to the hospital,” she said, adding after the treatment of their daughter, they directly returned to Afghanistan.

They returned to their country because they lost everything they had in Iran and had no money to live on in Iran, she said.

She said human traffickers killed male members of families in bordering areas and took hostage their women. She said a family who were their relatives including the mother, four daughters and a son, started their journey from Iran to Europe 20 days ago, but since they had been missing.

In her message to the people of Afghanistan, she said “it is meaningless to put ourselves in danger for going to Europe and face such problems on the way. Don’t be misled; going to foreign countries has no value to be dishonored for.”

“My sister who lives in Germany told me the situation of Afghans there saying the people who came to the country are living in barren areas without food. They only eat leftover food from German people and wear their old cloths.”

The couple asked the Afghan government to improve security and living condition of the people in order they were not compelled to leave their motherland for other countries.