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Massacre of Afghan Refugees

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Afghans crossing the border into Iran in search of work may be putting their lives at risk, a video film telecast by a private Afghan channel shows.

The video on Tolo TV shows grisly images of some 20 dead and injured Afghan nationals on the ground while Iranian border guards stand around them, laughing and filming. The vehicle belonging to the border guards is clearly shown - nailing any claim that they are not Iranians. It's not clear how the video film was shot or how Tolo got hold of it.

For years, Afghan and international media have written about the routine violence against Afghans inflicted by Iranian border forces. This is the first video film documenting the violation of human rights.

The Iranian embassy in Kabul has called the film "bogus", but there have been other instances.

As a result of widespread poverty and unemployment, Afghans are forced to cross the porous border in search of work in Iran.

Two years ago Iranian border guards in Gandom Valley opened fire at 15 Afghan nationals who were on their way to Afghanistan, and most of them were killed. Few months ago, Iranian border guards shot at six Afghans on Nimroz border near Zahk area. Two weeks ago, they shot dead an

Afghan woman who was crossing the Iranian border. Local government authorities in Zaranj, capital of Nimroz province, confirmed this incident and have expressed concern.

Afghanistan shares a 900 kms border with Iran. Around two million Afghans live in Iran of which 900,000 are recognised as refugees. The remaining are illegal workers, and forced to clandestinely make the journey between Iran and Afghanistan, to meet relatives and family for instance.

In 2009, the Iranian government used force to expel 80,000 Afghan refugees from Iran. Afghan TV channels telecast pictures of the injured and the dead that were being transported into Afghanistan through the Nimroz border.

Illegal Afghan workers in Iran run the risk of being imprisoned. Some 5,000 Afghans are languishing in Iranian jails, a majority of them have been charged with drug smuggling. An estimated 3,000 have been sentenced to death by the Iranian courts.

Around 40 jailed Afghans were executed and their corpses were returned to their relatives in Herat and Nimroz provinces. The border guards reportedly took 2,000 dollars for each corpse from their relatives. Following an outcry in Afghanistan, Iran discontinued the practice of returning the remains of those sentenced to death.