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The Impact of South Asian Conflicts on Human Rights: A Case Study of Indian Occupied Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan

Iqra Saleem

M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad

Muhammad Raza

BS International Relations, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad

Email: mraza.202103462@gcuf.edu.pk

Aamir Nawaz*

Lecturer, Department of Physical Education & Sports Sciences, Government College University Faisalabad

Email: aamirnavaz1978@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Conflicts in South Asia have hurt the human rights of its residents. This study examines the effects of conflicts experienced in Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Because of political, ethnic and religious problems, there has been long-term violence in these areas. Regular violence and a lack of civil rights in Kashmir are due to the ongoing argument between India and Pakistan. Between the government and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, serious fighting led to thousands of deaths and serious breaches of human rights. For many years, fighting in Afghanistan—including wars by foreign invaders and battles among groups—has hurt many, driven them from their homes and led to violations of human rights. As per this research, these conflicts negatively affect innocent people, involve torture, create disappearances and slow down the growth of the regions. The report also outlines what international bodies and local groups are doing to promote human rights. Studying these cases helps the research support actions that support human rights and encourage peaceful ways forward. The findings call for increasing human rights security and investing long-term in peace building efforts in South Asia.

Keywords: South Asian Conflicts, Human Rights Violations, Kashmir Issue, Sri Lanka Civil War, Afghanistan War.

Introduction

Multiple on-going conflicts exist in South Asia that produce major obstacles to protecting human rights. The greatest number of ongoing conflicts exists between Kashmir and Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Many people suffered severe pain while huge numbers of individuals died and basic human rights violations occurred because of these disagreements. South Asian residents face the ongoing problem of forced population transfer together with dangers stemming from armed warfare and restrictions to individual liberties. These battlefield consequences affect independent civilians because they maintain no part in military combat.

A three-sided conflict has continuously enveloped Kashmir since it emerged from the rivalry between Pakistan and India together with native insurgent activities. Kashmir has



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evolved into a region where extensive human rights violations occur because of unauthorized lethal killings and tortured abductions coupled with blocked free expression and physical abuse of people. The installation of military troops in this region has made civilians experience worse hardships. The Kashmir conflict compelled millions of people to evacuate their houses while disrupting families and leading to the destruction of basic medical centers and educational establishments. Multiple military factions entrap the local people of this region because politicians prioritize regional development discussions without understanding their actual circumstances (Umer, 2021).

Sri Lanka experienced its civil war from 1983 until 2009 and brought about numerous severe human rights violations. Toward the end of this conflict Sri Lankan military forces engaged Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatists in battle. The armed factions breached human rights at a severe level during their confrontations. The civilian death toll grew from military government operations and LTTE suicide missions along with the use of child soldiers who conducted attacks that targeted civilians. Numerous Tamil civilians found themselves trapped in battle areas but humanitarian organizations failed to provide assistance to them. War criminal acts were committed by combatants who attacked hospitals systematically in combination with using ordinary citizens to protect military operations. War victims together with their families suffered enduring consequences after the conflict due to ongoing enforcement disappearances while experiencing land confiscations and uncontrolled actions from perpetrators.

Continuing conflicts have plagued Afghanistan throughout the last multiple decades. The Soviet invasion and numerous civil wars and the Taliban rule and American involvement after 9/11 have generated sustained national instability for Afghanistan. Throughout the years multiple authorities extending to Taliban militia and international forces and local leaders who controlled separated areas committed human rights abuses against Afghanistan people. Civilians lost their lives through aircraft-based assaults and anti-airplane bombings by suicide attackers along with military confrontations. Among all groups, the Taliban's reign proved most devastating because their strict regulations abolished women's rights and barred girls from education and put movement restrictions on them. The population of Afghanistan continues to live with harmful conditions post-troop departure because violence and poverty together with ongoing human rights abuses constitute regular threats to the people (Reza, 2023).

People becoming displaced stands as one of the major damaging results arising from these conflicts. Multiple millions of people from Kashmir and Sri Lanka together with citizens of Afghanistan have lost their homes because of violent conflicts. Refugees and people who lost their homes due to civil war live in deplorable circumstances where they lack basic necessities like nutrition and sanitary water services and health services. The dangerous setting and perilous threats to security make it impossible for those displaced individuals to return to their homes. Deported people face worsening circumstances since governments allegedly prevent their homecoming to their original territories.

The regions demand international organizations to handle human rights abuses because their influence becomes vital beyond what official power allows. Human rights organizations with the United Nations create records of abuses before they petition for justice to be implemented. The inability of responsible parties to receive proper accountability exists because of political interests and government noncooperation which continuously mixes with violent conflicts. Most victims remain without access to legal justice because human rights abuses occur without facing proper consequences (Basu, 2023).

The fights produce consequences that surpass physical combat damages. War exposure



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results in severe mental health issues which demand attention for the affected individuals. Various victims develop both post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression after observing the horrific events of war. The survivors of loss who lost loved ones or those who grew up amid war expect difficulty in returning to their normal lives besides prisoners and victims of torture including children who spent their youth during war. Conflict marks that last caused by war take years to heal because victims face injustice coupled with lack of acknowledgment of their sufferings. The challenges about this topic encounter resistance from activist groups who collaborate with journalists and rights organizations dedicated to expanding knowledge of such problems. Members of both survivor and victim loved ones struggle persistently for justice through an ongoing battle to recognize their pain as they fight for truth. Reconciliation programs established by governments through examination commissions stay under criticism because these efforts seem insufficient and appear to have political biases.

Human rights face extreme destruction due to ongoing South Asian conflicts in the present. People from Kashmir have endured the worst hardships along with citizens of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan because violent conflict drove them to live in displacement and denied their fundamental rights. These matters lead international organizations to face challenges in their pursuit of justice and responsibility through their handling approach. The region of T South Asia needs urgent intervention regarding human rights violations because achieving peace and justice depends on their specific resolution (Ramachandran & Gunasingham, 2022).

Statement of problem

The ongoing South Asian conflicts have directly destroyed numerous human rights across Kashmir as well as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Enduring conflicts alongside political instability makes civilians experience violence in addition to home displacement while their freedom remains restricted. Several different actors who function as states and non-state entities perpetrate extrajudicial killings through methods of torture and maintain discriminatory practices against their victims. The combination of justice pursuit with accountability proves ineffective for international efforts although both entities maintain their commitment because victims do not receive proper protection and relief.

Research Objectives

The ongoing conflicts in Kashmir, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan created what effects on three fundamental human rights: personal freedom, basic safety as well as access to essential resources?

What part have governments and armed groups together with international organizations fulfilled regarding human rights violations and protection efforts between these conflicts?

How do protracted conflicts influence the well-being of people who migrate, women along with defenseless populations beyond the war zone?

Research Questions

How have the conflicts in Kashmir, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan affected the basic human rights of people living there?



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Research Methodology

Qualitative research methods enable an assessment of human rights deterioration within Kashmir and Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The analysis depends on secondary documentation while using case study approaches to uncover the main human rights violations active in conflict zones.

Kashmir: A Disputed Territory Between India and Pakistan

Background

It was in 1947, when British India became two countries called India and Pakistan, that hostilities began over Kashmir. The Hindu Maharaja Hari Singh ruled Jammu and Kashmir then, but most of the people were Muslim. The ruler did not know if he should join India or Pakistan.

After the partition, Pakistan's tribal fighters traveled to Kashmir, hoping to take charge. Because of this, Maharaja asked for India's help. After signing the Instrument of Accession, India promised to send troops to Kashmir to help deliver justice. The dispute between India and Pakistan caused the first war that happened in 1947–48. After a ceasefire was agreed to in 1949, the territory was divided between India (Jammu and Kashmir) and Pakistan (Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan). But, both sides continue to claim all of the region (Ranjan, 2024).

Since those events, Kashmir continues to be the site of a dispute. Both countries have fought many wars and numerous smaller conflicts over the region. Apart from conflicts in 1965 and 1999, there have been recurring fights at the borders, together with insurgencies in Kashmir.

An armed struggle was launched in 1989 by those still seeking independence for Indian Kashmir or for the territory to join Pakistan. Hindu nationalists have grown the military which is being accused of human rights violations such as killing without trial, making arrests and using torture.

In 2019, revoking Article 370 of its Constitution removed special status for Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan reacted very strongly and that event resulted in more tension.

At present, the people in Kashmir must deal with the strict supervision of security forces and continued issues with politics and their human rights (Afzal, 2024).

Human Rights Problems in Kashmir

The continuing conflict between India, Pakistan and local armed groups has resulted in severe human rights challenges for people in Kashmir for many years. Many are particularly concerned about the large number of armed forces in the region of Indian-controlled Kashmir. There are many soldiers and the area is frequently locked down under different restrictions.

A lot of complaints have been made about people being executed without a fair trial. Sometimes family members lose people from their lives because of disappearances that can never be explained. It has been reported that torture and illegal arrests happen, mainly during searches (Shabbir, 2021).

Citizens can't express themselves completely in public messages without fear of repercussions. Shutting down the internet has frequently occurred during protests, preventing many from talking or sharing information. Forces can stop peaceful protests which can result in both casualties and deaths.

Young people and children are in danger as well. People have been injured by pellet guns fired by security forces. Education and schooling can be cancelled by both violence and strikes.



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In general, people in Kashmir struggle daily with obstacles and their most basic rights—security, freedom and justice—are often not defended (Kuszevska, 2022).

How the situation in Kashmir is impacted by militarization

Militarization refers to the presence of many military people and weapons on an area. Militarization is the biggest concern in Kashmir. After the uprising started in 1989, the Indian government sent a huge force of troops to hold things under control. At present, Kashmir is considered one of the most heavily militarized areas on the planet.

There are a great many army bases and checkpoints all over the country. There are regular patrols, searches and raids by the military to end militant actions. Even so, the strong military can influence the ordinary people on a daily basis. People in Kashmir often explain that their lives are like those in a war zone.

Because of the military's presence, it has been reported that officials have searched people's homes without their permission, arrested people at random and used violence against protesters. A number of people have become lost and their families do not know why. Many kids are exposed to guns, armed forces and fear as they grow up which hurts their mental health.

Women also suffer from its toxicity. Women sometimes say they were abused or harassed by soldiers, but not all situations are reported out of fear and feel of embarrassment. Moving around is particularly difficult for students, employees and people who are patients, because they get checked many times.

The army insists its soldiers help keep them safe, though many area people think the troops have done nothing to ease their fears but increase their suffering. Many people dream of a future where they can be free, at peace and respected (Saxena, 2020).

People in Kashmir have gone missing and been found murdered.

The greatest human rights issue in Kashmir is the widespread problem of disappearances and murder. The problem of terrorism began to take hold mostly after 1989, when armed actions began in Indian-administered Kashmir. Many youths were either members of militant groups or believed to assist them. As a result, Indian security agencies carried out many big operations.

In addition, several individuals were arrested and something without anyone knowing exactly why. Families were never told where their loved ones were. Many people who disappeared never came back. These are known as "enforced disappearances." Years often pass for the families before they have clear answers about their loved ones.

There are also reports of people being killed extra-legally. They were executed without ever being put on trial. On several occasions, authorities claimed a person was a militant, but the truth was that they were a regular civilian. In some instances, entirely innocent people have apparently been shot and incorrectly identified as terrorists (Singh, 2023).

The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) exists to make more people aware of the problem. Some claim thousands of people have vanished from Kashmir over the past two decades. Many of these claims have been rejected by the Indian government or authorities say they are still being checked.

However, those families do not receive answers from the authorities. It can take courts a long time to decide cases, so many of them remain open for years.

A family is deeply hurt by not knowing the outcome for a missing loved one. It also leads to greater distrust among people and those running the country and creates more fear and offence in the region.

The society of Kashmir is greatly affected by missing persons and killings which human



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rights groups everywhere consider a serious issue.

Freedom of Speech in Kashmir

Because of freedom of speech, anyone can say what they think, feel or believe, without worrying about repercussions. For many years in Kashmir, this right has been constrained, mostly during times of conflict. Many people meet challenges when they wish to talk about or report on government issues.

Reporters, writers and activists are often either arrested or threatened for expressing their own opinions. Sometimes, the authorities shut down news websites and tell newspapers which stories to write or not to write. So, people feel they can't speak out freely. In Kashmir, access to the internet is blocked on some occasions, like during protests or politics changes. Semones could not share news, connect with others or attend online classes without the internet. Social media is being actively monitored to see how their residents learn, do business and live their daily lives. A person could face charges or questioning by the police if they share criticism of the government or bring up human rights on social media. Each case adds to a growing climate of fear. Careful consideration is given to any speech or action on the Internet. In other places where conflict happens, speaking freely is valuable, but this right is usually blocked in Kashmir (Mohiuddin, 1997).

Residents in Kashmir Face Danger

For several years, civilians throughout Kashmir have faced the consequences of the constant conflict without involvement from either army or militant groups. Because they are near both the military and armed groups, they are often in danger all the time. When battles, raids or protests happen, not involved civilians can be wounded or killed. Living conditions have been made tough by the violence and by people having to stay inside at night. During such times, children and elderly individuals are most greatly affected. Many people feel concerned about being stopped or examined by the police without good reason during security operations. Thanks to this perpetual fear, refugees cannot travel, study or feel safe.

A further serious problem is police using pellet guns on protests, leading to injuries that have cost many young people their eyesight. It is frequently difficult for families to see justice done when a member goes missing or is killed because of violence. A lot of people experience fear, sadness and emotional suffering. A number of individuals have been forced out of their homes because of violence or the military. Regularly seeing checkpoints and soldiers on the streets and getting your home searched, makes daily living tough. Many women are exposed to harassment in these scenarios. People in Kashmir have to live each day with the threat of more violence. Most often, armed groups deny people their basic rights to safety, peace and freedom. Even calm periods do not make their fear of sudden conflict disappear.

For more than a quarter-century, ethnic war has torn Sri Lanka, a small island in South Asia. Most of the violence involved the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority. It all began because Tamils, who are mostly Hindus and use Tamil, were not being treated equally by the majority of Buddhist Sinhalese.

Once Sri Lanka won independence from Britain in 1948, the government put laws into place that mainly helped Sinhalese speakers. They declared Sinhala the only official language and brought in programs that made it difficult for Tamils to find work, go to school or enter government employment. Tamils believed they were excluded from major decisions being taken in the country.



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In the 1970s, lots of Tamils came together to advocate for equal rights. Still, their attempts failed and violence broke out in 1983. Organized as the Tamil Tigers (LTTE), a Tamil militant group sought the creation of an independent Tamil state called Eelam up north and east of the island. The civil war went on until it officially ended in 2009.

Both sides were hurt terribly by the war. Guerrilla tactics by the Tamil Tigers made the government use powerful military methods. Many people were killed and a lot more were forced out of their houses. The war's ending years, mainly in 2009, involved serious violations of human rights by everyone involved. People said the government of Sri Lanka committed war crimes against civilians, yet the LTTE was said to use people as human shields and engage in terrorism.

Despite the war ending in 2009, many Tamils are still struggling to get justice for all the hardship they faced (Biswas, *The challenges of conflict management: A case study of Sri Lanka*, 2006).

Problems Related to Human Rights in Sri Lanka

On both sides in the civil war, people suffered many human rights violations. Both the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE were blamed for serious acts of violence. Because military forces attacked civilians, countless people were wounded or killed. Delaying crime was another way the government acted and people taken by soldiers or groups were rarely seen alive again. Torture and unjust killings were alleged on both sides in the clashes.

The migration of people greatly added to the emergency. While the war lasted, many Tamils were forced to leave their houses to avoid violence. The last few years of the war forced more than 300,000 people to live in refugee camps with inadequate services. For many, returning home has not been possible even after the war ended five years ago. Many of the displaced people found themselves unable to get food, clean drinking water or medical attention.

Once the war was over, few people were held responsible for their actions. Lots of families who lost loved ones never learned what happened to them. Although the government said it would investigate, the victims did not receive justice. Both freedom of speech and the press were taken away and anyone who talked about war crimes or justice could be silenced or receive threats (Udagama D. , 2015).

Mass Killings in Sri Lanka

Loved ones of war victims are continuing to remember how both the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil Tigers were responsible for mass killings during the civil war. In those final years, mainly in 2009, many civilians were killed during massive attacks. Areas full of civilians were targeted in Sri Lankan army operations and many innocent people were hurt by the fighting. Huge numbers of civilians were killed because of airstrikes, bombing and artillery aimed at populated areas.

Meanwhile, the Tamil Tigers performed mass killings of their own. Suicide bombings and strikes on innocent civilians were their techniques to help win an independent Tamil state. Tigers would round up ordinary people, use them in their battles and sometimes protect their positions with civilians. Both countries experienced great loss during the war; tens of thousands were killed and most died were ordinary people (Rathugama, 2024).



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Reports of people going missing in Sri Lanka

A large number of persons in Sri Lanka just disappeared during the civil war. The government and the Tamil Tigers were found to recruit people by force and make them disappear from society. People were removed from their homes or from where they were walking, with no explanation given. No one ever saw them again and their families didn't learn what had happened to them.

The Sri Lankan army took part in grabbing and disappearing many people. During searches or after suspicion of supporting the Tamil Tigers, many people were held by the military. Many primitive methods, including torture, were practiced in military camps by the Nazis and conflict with the army often resulted in family members never seeing their loved ones again. Critics say the government has chosen not to investigate these disappearances thoroughly or admit them.

Tamil Tigers also took part in disappearances. They would either make people join their cause or use citizens as human shields. Sometimes people who tried not to fight or escape were killed or disappeared. Those who lost family in the fire waited for years to learn what had occurred. Lots of people are looking for missing family members and missing persons continue to be a major problem related to human rights in Sri Lanka (Biswas, *The challenges of conflict management: A case study of Sri Lanka*, 2006).

Missing accountability in Sri Lanka

A year after ending the civil war, the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers were mostly left unpunished for their war crimes and rights abuses. Even though so many were killed, tortured or disappeared, no one was ever held accountable. The government in Sri Lanka said it would examine war crimes, but failed to start any meaningful investigation. Several people and their families never received justice or explanations.

Because there is so little accountability, people in Sri Lanka are very frustrated. People whose relatives or friends were killed have asked for justice for years, even though they feel the government has ignored them. Only a small number of investigations have been undertaken and no action has been taken against anyone responsible. As a result, Tamil people are still angry and feel the problems they have faced have not been seriously considered by the state (Hearnden, 2024).

Sixty Years of War and Instability in Afghanistan

Conflict and war have been part of life in Afghanistan since the 1970s. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in order to help the struggling communist government fight Afghan fighters known as the Mujahideen. Those fighting in Afghanistan had backing from the United States, Pakistan and many other countries. Until 1989, when the Soviet Union left following strong opposition, this war continued. The result of the war was not peace, because soon afterward, civil war erupted.

In the early 1990s, Afghan leaders warred to gain control over the nation. Because of this, the country became very disordered and in 1996, the Taliban took over Kabul. Because of the rules the Taliban used from Islamic law, women and girls had very few freedoms. The Taliban ruled the country, but others tried to set up a different way of government.

After the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001, the U.S. military sent troops to Afghanistan to oust the Taliban, who were assisting Al-Qaeda, the group that performed the attacks. Rapidly, the U.S. and NATO troops defeated the Taliban government, but the nation did not stabilize. Taliban fighters organized again and fought back, starting a tough, drawn-out war in the process.



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Nearly 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan ended in 2021 when American and NATO soldiers withdrew from the country. The Afghan government fell once the Taliban moved swiftly to regain authority. At this point, unemployment, human rights problems and harsh violence became the harsh reality for ordinary Afghans (Nagdev, 2024).

Human Rights Issues in Afghanistan

Years of fighting in Afghanistan have caused serious violations of human rights. From 1996 to 2001, strict laws by the Taliban meant women and girls in Afghanistan were not able to do many of the things other people could. Women were prevented by law from joining the workforce, gaining an education or going outside unaccompanied by a relative. Boys went to school, but girls were not allowed to and people in the community faced public floggings and executions. Women and minorities had very few of their rights protected.

After the U.S. attack in 2001, women experienced improvements in a number of areas. Girls attended school and women found jobs in particular professions. But the country continued to see a lot of violence from groups such as the Taliban. Because of repeated bombing and fighting, many people were forced to flee and several civilians were killed. Both the Taliban and Afghan government were accused by human rights groups of torturing people, killing them and disappearing others.

While the Taliban ruled again in 2021 and said women would be protected, they quickly took away many of the rights women had won. Women were once more denied the right to continue in school at a certain age, as well as being excluded from many public jobs. Individuals working with either the government or foreign troops faced dangers and many left the nation. Situations continue to be uncertain and many human rights violations are affecting millions, mostly women, children and minorities (Khan I. G., 2012).

Women's rights conditions in Afghanistan

Afghan women have come across many difficulties under Taliban era. At the time the Taliban regained power in 1996, adult women could not attend school, go to work or travel anywhere except with a male escort. Everything from their fingers to their heads had to be covered and they could not speak openly. Due to these exacting regulations, Afghan women and girls suffered and had few basic rights.

Between the year 2001 and 2021, when Taliban rule was lifted, women's freedom increased. After the war, various women decided to return to school, pursue jobs and exist as doctors, teachers and politicians. After the Taliban came to power again in 2021, much of these rights were once more denied. The schools for older girls were shuttered, while women were asked to stay indoors. Now, they are prevented from working in many roles and from traveling wherever they like. As a result, many women are suffering from fear, sadness and frustration because they just wish to learn, work and live with dignity (Rasekh, 1998).

The Numbers of Civilians Who Have Died in Afghanistan

For a long time, regular people in Afghanistan have faced the most hardship from the fighting. Residents, among them women and children, have been hurt in attacks by bombs, gunfire and violence. The people were killed as the Taliban and government forces clashed or as a result of airstrikes from foreign troops. Twice frequently, those outside the clashes were struck or forced to participate.

Choosing to kill civilians, the Taliban and many other insurgents carried out both suicide



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attacks and planted roadside bombs. Most of these attacks would take place in places people visited a lot such as markets, schools or government offices. Connecting these attacks with pressure on the government made people fear, yet all the victims were innocent.

After winning power in 2021, the Taliban did not end violence in all areas. In some regions, the military is accused of assassinations, assaults against minorities and confrontations with rebels. Family members have lost their loved ones and thousands are living in sorrow and distress. Those not involved in conflict are scared and still hope for peace to end the war (Mazhar, 2021).

The Right of Freedom of Expression in Afghanistan

People are allowed to express their views in speech, writing or over communication platforms. Since the Taliban came back to Afghanistan in 2021, people's freedom to speak up has mostly disappeared. Journalists and writers, as well as many activists, have been attacked, are routinely arrested or at times killed for telling the truth about the government or human rights issues. Broadcasting channels, radio stations and newspapers are closed and individuals now avoid saying anything on social media. For this reason, many people in Afghanistan are not able to talk freely and requests for changes are usually not allowed.

Those who have fled Afghanistan

As a consequence of decades of violence and unrest, several million people from Afghanistan are refugees. Someone who is called a refugee has to leave their home to avoid war, personal danger or oppression. Large numbers of Afghans have chosen to go to Pakistan, Iran or Turkey and some have hoped to settle in Europe or the United States. People affected by disasters travel only with few belongings, usually having to stay in refugee camps or poor places while hoping for something better.

When the Taliban came back to power in 2021, the pace of people fleeing the country picked up noticeably, mostly affecting women, journalists and those linked to the old government or foreign groups. A lot of refugees are without sufficient food, shelter or the ability to get jobs or go to school. Many of these people are rejected by their new homes and continue to worry about being forced to return to Afghanistan

Conclusion

Human rights abuses from Kashmir and Sri Lanka and Afghanistan war resulted in significant welfare deterioration affecting millions of South Asian citizens. The inhabitants of these war-torn regions faced hazardous violence during mass displacements followed by stringent restrictions on their basic rights. Military expansion operations in Kashmir currently lead to various human rights abuses distributed throughout the region. The Sri Lankan civil war triggered multiple large-scale crimes resulting in permanent ethnic segregation because of severe war violations. The years of war across Afghanistan resulted in severe restrictions of female rights in addition to deteriorating civilian safety. Attempts at establishing justice alongside peace through universal measures have failed to succeed thus far. The establishment of better human rights promises combined with settlement solutions and international collaborative programs needs immediate development. The region requires urgent solutions to resolve these problems in order to attain stabilizing results.

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