

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120401\\_afghans.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120401_afghans.shtml)

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### **Translation of the text underneath the Video:**

In Esfahan, officials of the Committee responsible for managing Nawruz tours and activities, have banned Afghans (residing in Iran) from entering “Suffa Kohistani Park” on Sezda Badar (13<sup>th</sup> day of the New Year according to Solar Calendar; the day is widely celebrated by Afghans and many other communities). Iranian officials state that the ban was introduced with a view to ensuring “security and welfare of the visitors”.

### **Video:**

Esfahan: the Iranian city that hosts thousands of tourists every Nawruz (the New Year Day according to Solar calendar); its art and culture has earned it the plaudits of all these visitors. [0:15] And this is the view of Suffa Park from a Chairlift passing over it. It is the same park that was declared off limits for the Afghans as per the order of Committee responsible for Nawruz Travel Facilities related to Sezda Badar. The order restrains Afghan residents of the city from entering Suffa Park on Sezda Badar. This place has been subject of much talk since last night. In particular, internet sites are rife with a lot of heated discussions on the matter, so much so that the news item related to the issue has been deleted from the IMNA-website operated by Esfahan Municipality. Many have termed the ban to be a clear manifestation of racial discrimination. The Committee responsible for facilitating and managing the tours to the city has stated that “The Afghans are being prevented from entering the park for the purpose of ensuring security and welfare of the visitors”. Not only has this argument not satisfied the (original) critics of the ban, it has outraged many others as well. According to Stockholm-based Sociologist Mehr Dad Darweshpur, [01:00] “When a society does not even allow the Afghans their civil rights, it gets difficult to expect it to collate proper information and statistics for controlling any (relevant) crimes. In my view, our discrimination towards and precipitous stereotyping of the weaker sections of the society emanates from a culture of racial prejudices and bigotry.

To escape the unrest and internal conflicts in their homeland, Afghans have been coming into Iran for a few decades now. There is a lot of evidence of the mistreatment these immigrants are having to face. [Video at point 1:35 → Iranian Soldier, laughing “Raise your hands, now hit those in front of you; hit them hard.”]. This video shows the ill-treatment that a group of Afghan refugees received at the hands of some Iranian policemen. The video outraged many Iranians [There were several reactions to the video] Some said that the video only showed the attitude of the soldiers involved and should not be seen as being reflective of how the Iranians in general treat the Afghans. But there certainly are those who maintain that even among the educated people in Iranian society, there is a sense of complacency and indifference about the discriminatory attitude towards the Afghans.

[2:03] According to Sociologist Hussain Qaziyan, “On the whole, it seems that this problem isn’t engaging enough to merit the attention of the media. This is because people are not too keen about this issue. They (the media) are not too bothered about the discrimination against the Afghans, be it in the shape of discriminatory laws or in the way we treat the Afghans—which I think is a matter of disgrace for the whole nation (country). Media are not interested in discussing this issue or turning it into a broader public discourse.

Many Afghans who immigrated to Iran 30 years ago, have had to turn to menial jobs just to keep both ends meet. Even today many of them, especially those who failed to enter Iran legally, are engaged solely in hard and low paid jobs. The Iranian-born children of these immigrants have to face a lot of problems for obtaining Iranian Identity Card, even when their mothers are Iranian citizens. The second generation of Afghans who consider themselves to be Iranians, do not enjoy equal rights of access to education in their host country.

There is no specific provision in the Iranian law to prevent discriminatory treatment of any particular community. The only available law for the protection of the Afghan Immigrants is the United Nations Convention prohibiting racial discrimination to which Iran is a signatory. According to Iranian officials, only three percent of the refugees that enter Iran live in the Refugee camps. As a result no accurate statistics are available to depict the proper picture of the plight of refugees in Iran. Iranian government has, for many years, been taking measures to deport Afghan refugees even though many such immigrants would prefer to stay in Iran than go back to Afghanistan.

Saeeda Hashimi, BBC.