

## Azam's Story

My name is Azam Khan and I was born in 1971 in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. In 1979 the Russians attacked my home and my family had to flee. The flight to Pakistan was very stressful. We were a group of 25 people and after two days on the road we were starving, there was hardly anything to eat. The Russians withdrew, plundering the country, the weather tired us, the sun beat down on us and at night it was freezing. Once the Russian army stopped us to check us. They beat us and harassed the women and girls. During our flight two children and an elderly person died. We buried them in a place unknown to us.



As we crossed the border, the Pakistani security forces took us to the Jalojai camp. (NB The UN refugee camp in Jalojai was built in the 1980's. In 2007, it housed over 100,000 people). Our whole family was assigned a small tent. But here, the times were not much better. We had barely enough food and clean drinking water was a rare commodity. After a while we left the camp and moved to Swabi, a small town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There, my family began to herd goats and sheep. That is still our job. In 2006, I received our official recognition as Afghan citizens in Pakistan. This means that I can now officially apply for national and international aid.

In Pakistan, I felt welcome. The majority of the population supported us and was respectful. Nevertheless, after 30 years I still feel like a fugitive here. I have no house, only a rented one. I have a great longing to return to my country. But then I look at the situation in Afghanistan and the situation seems to be even worse than when we fled. That's why I would prefer to stay until the situation is eventually normal again.