Pakistan’s dual roles as chair of the UN Security Council’s Taliban Sanctions Committee and enforcer of a controversial Afghan refugee expulsion policy have sparked scrutiny over its credibility in upholding international human rights norms. This article examines the tensions between these positions, drawing on documented evidence of Pakistan’s policies and their humanitarian consequences.

Pakistan’s Leadership Role in Taliban Sanctions

Pakistan was elected recently in June 2025 to chair the UNSC’s 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee, tasked with enforcing measures such as asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes against Taliban-linked entities threatening Afghan stability. The committee also reviews exemptions for humanitarian purposes and oversees sanctions compliance.

Simultaneously, Pakistan serves as vice-chair of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee, positioning it as a key player in global counterterrorism efforts.

However, this appointment contrasts sharply with Pakistan’s domestic policies toward Afghan refugees. Since late 2023, Pakistan has forcibly repatriated over 844,499 Afghans, including registered refugees and asylum seekers, under its “Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan”. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International document widespread abuses during these expulsions, including arbitrary detention, property seizure, and destruction of identification documents.

The Refugee Crisis: Violations of International Law

Pakistan's expulsion drive targets Afghans who fled Taliban persecution, including:

- 1.3 million registered refugees holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards.
- 800,000 Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, who face deportation despite temporary residency claims.
- 210,000 post-2021 arrivals escaping Taliban rule.

Rights groups, such as Amnesty International, emphasize that these actions violate the principle of non-refoulement—a cornerstone of international law prohibiting forced returns to persecution. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) notes that many deportees, particularly women, journalists, and former government officials, face "well-founded fear of persecution" under Taliban rule. Pakistan's Supreme Court has repeatedly intervened to halt harassment of PoR holders, but enforcement remains inconsistent.

Contradictions in Policy and Practice

Three key contradictions undermine Pakistan's moral authority as sanctions enforcer:

1. Sanctions vs. Refugee Expulsions
   The Taliban Sanctions Committee aims to "support a peaceful, stable Afghanistan", yet Pakistan's deportations exacerbate instability by returning vulnerable populations to Taliban-controlled territories. Over 80,000 Afghans were expelled in April 2025 alone, with many reporting coercion and violence during raids.
2. Counterterrorism Rhetoric vs. Reality
   Pakistani officials justify expulsions by linking Afghan refugees to terrorism, but the UN's

2024 report identifies the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—not refugees—as the primary security threat. The TTP operates from Afghan soil with tacit Taliban support, a concern the sanctions committee is mandated to address.

3. Diplomatic Engagement vs. Coercion
   While Pakistan pressures the Taliban to curb TTP activities, its expulsion policy undermines diplomatic leverage. Afghanistan's Taliban government has condemned the deportations as "forced", complicating bilateral relations critical to regional security.

International Reactions and Legal Challenges

Critics argue Pakistan's actions erode its credibility:

- The U.S., EU, and UN have repeatedly urged Pakistan to halt deportations, citing violations of the 1951 Refugee Convention (which Pakistan has not ratified).
- India has labeled Pakistan's UNSC roles a "foreign policy collapse," citing its acceptance of international loans amid rights abuses.
- Pakistani courts have ruled that deporting ACC holders without due process violates constitutional protections, yet enforcement persists.

Implications for Global Governance

Pakistan's dual roles highlight systemic challenges in UNSC governance:

- Non-permanent members like Pakistan can chair committees despite contentious domestic policies.
- The lack of binding mechanisms to hold member states accountable for rights violations weakens sanctions regimes' legitimacy.

As Pakistan oversees Taliban sanctions, its refugee policies risk normalizing non-

refoulement violations and undermining the UN's humanitarian mandates. Without accountability, the credibility of international institutions—and the protection of Afghan civilians—remains in jeopardy.

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