

Panel 11

Pakistan's Military Offensive, the IDP Crisis, and Prospects for Taming Militancy

The Pakistani military's operation in Swat forced over two million refugees to flee the area. Scores were relegated to live in abysmal conditions in special camps set up for these Internally Displaced People (IDP). While the military operation is winding down and the government has allowed residents to return, the challenge of providing relief and rehabilitation to these citizens has just begun. The Pakistani government concurs with this sentiment. It is therefore reaching out to friendly countries to assist Pakistan in normalizing the situation. Success in this regard is critical as locals are likely to treat this as a litmus test of the state's ability and willingness to support its citizens affected by the terrorist threat. Relief and rehabilitation performance in Swat will impact the propensity of the masses to support the state in future actions against the militants. Failure risks alienating large segments of directly and indirectly affected people and may even cause some to end up sympathizing with the anti-state elements.

The proposed panel will focus on the Swat IDPs as a case study of the broader relief and rehabilitation challenge faced by the Pakistani state. We hope to solicit views from the IDPs themselves, the local administration in the Swat region, the policy makers in Islamabad, the Pakistani military, and international actors who have pledged to assist the Pakistani state in its post-operation efforts. We seek to comprehend the key lessons learnt thus far and the policy levers required to redress the shortcomings in this round.

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