

17th August 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

We write, as a cross-party group of parliamentarians, to express our deep concern for the people of Afghanistan. Respect for human rights and providing sanctuary to those facing peril are fundamental values that we hold in common. We urge you to ensure that the UK plays its full part in providing a compassionate and responsible response to those seeking safety.

It is vital that the UK helps to ensure that as many as possible of those seeking a safe passage out of Afghanistan are able to find one; that the UK plays its part in providing sanctuary to Afghan refugees; and that Afghan asylum seekers already in the UK are not left in indefinite limbo - unable to return but unable to establish a life in the UK.

We would like to see:

1. An increase in safe routes out of Afghanistan

- All British nationals and their families - including dual nationals - should be given a safe and rapid route out of Afghanistan.
- Each Afghan who assisted British forces (directly employed or subcontracted) should be brought to safety in the UK, with their family. Due to the rapidly deteriorating situation, those who have applied for the ARAP relocation scheme should be moved to a place of safety before the application is accepted.
- The urgent introduction of a resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees already in, or now reaching, neighbouring countries, which builds on the success of the Syrian VPRS scheme, alongside emergency corridors for those most at risk inside Afghanistan. We would expect the “enormous” scheme promised by you and the Prime Minister to at least match the Canadians in their ambition to support 20,000 people and to prioritise those most vulnerable because of the civic leadership roles that they have been playing, particularly women.

2. Support for Afghans who have already left the country to seek safety in the UK

- No return to the forcible return of Afghans from the UK to Afghanistan under this current regime.
- An urgent review of live Afghan asylum cases, those in detention and those who are liable for removal in light of their not being able to return safely to Afghanistan to ensure that people are not left living in limbo for extended periods.
- An urgent expediting of outstanding Refugee Family Reunion applications for families in Afghanistan.

We hope to hear an urgent update on all of these matters in Parliament on Wednesday and will continue to take a close interest in all of these aspects of the response as the situation in Afghanistan develops. We must ensure that those at most direct risk from the Taliban, particularly women and girls, are not forgotten.