



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

19<sup>th</sup> August 2021

*See Confidential*

**RE: SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN - REFUGEE EVACUATION**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of the developing situation in Afghanistan. I really do appreciate you having taken the time to write and for setting out your sincere concerns.

It is fair to say that we are all desperately saddened and immensely troubled by the pictures we are seeing on our television screens and are worried for British citizens and those of our allies still in Afghanistan, as well as many Afghans who supported coalition troops in their work on the ground over the past twenty years. It was important that Parliament was recalled yesterday to debate it and we heard many moving speeches - the concern about what we are seeing was deeply felt across the whole House, as it is across the entire country.

Understandably, many of my constituents have been in contact with me over the last few days raising various points of serious concern and I have been doing my best to ensure that those concerns raised with me have been heard urgently by Ministers as part of their deliberations about the response. I know we are also all reflecting on what a dreadfully difficult time this is for those who served in Afghanistan, those who lost loved ones, and those who were injured. All of our thoughts are with them and we also think of those who tragically lost their lives - their sacrifices must never be forgotten, nor were they in vain.

The huge logistical operation continues to ensure that British citizens, our allies, and those Afghans we worked with on the ground, are evacuated as quickly as possible - and it is very welcome that dedicated refugee routes have been established to provide safety and sanctuary - the issue you predominantly raise in your correspondence.

With that in mind, I wanted to share copies of two 'Dear Colleague' letters with you - one from the Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon Priti Patel MP, on the 'Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme' specifically, and the other from the Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt. Hon Ben Wallace MP, detailing the military drawdown plans, as well as providing more information about the 'Afghan Relocations & Assistance Policy'; a separate relocation pathway for current or former locally employed staff, reflecting the Government's strong commitment to fulfilling our moral obligation to those whose lives are at risk for having supported the UK's mission in Afghanistan.

I trust that these will be of interest to you by way of an immediate update.

More broadly, the entire international community has acknowledged that the world has been surprised by the speed at which the situation has deteriorated in Afghanistan. I commend the Prime Minister and the Government for their swift and decisive response to events, fast-moving as they are, and indeed to this new reality.





As you would expect, the safety of British Nationals, deployed military personnel, and Afghans who risked their lives working alongside the UK, is the Government's immediate priority at this time. In recent days, the UK Government has implemented its contingency plans for evacuating British nationals and former staff in Afghanistan. 900 military personnel have been deployed to Kabul, together with the Foreign Office's Rapid Deployment Team - all of whom are working to support consular personnel and facilitate the safe passage of these people out of Afghanistan. I commend these efforts and all involved in delivering them.

The Prime Minister has been very clear that any international recognition of a new government in Afghanistan must happen on a coordinated basis. As G7 President, the UK will work to unite the international community behind a clear plan for dealing with this regime in a unified and concerted way. The legitimacy of any government must also be subject to the upholding of internationally agreed standards on human rights and inclusivity. I am assured that the UK will continue to use its G7 Presidency, as well as membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and NATO, and strong relations with like-minded regional partners, to ensure this is the case.

The Prime Minister has spoken with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, UN Secretary General António Guterres, and with President Biden, President Macron, Chancellor Merkel and Prime Minister Khan, to this end. Likewise, the Foreign Secretary has been leading the efforts of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office throughout, speaking to a wide range of counterparts, including those from Pakistan, Qatar and the US.

At the UNSC on the 16<sup>th</sup> August, the UK called on the Taliban to do three things immediately:

1. Cease all hostilities and military action, to ensure the protection of civilians and to allow the safe and orderly departure of foreign nationals and others who wish to leave;
2. Commit unequivocally not to harbour or give safe haven to terrorists groups which endanger other countries;
3. Honour their promises to protect and uphold human rights, including those of women, girls and minorities.

If the Taliban continue to abuse basic human rights, they cannot expect to enjoy any legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people or the international community. The Foreign Secretary has been clear that everyone has an interest in ensuring that Afghanistan must not again become a safe-haven for terrorists. The Taliban have to understand that they will be accountable for that, and for any abuses that take place on their watch. I am assured by the Prime Minister that our Government, using every political and diplomatic means at its disposal, is now urgently engaged upon the tasks at hand, and to holding the Taliban to account.

I also know that at this time of heightened concern, the legacy of the UK and our allies' intervention in Afghanistan is a source of reflection and debate, and I think it is important to say something on this.

We must never forget that, twenty years ago, in 2001, the United States suffered the most catastrophic attack on its people since the Second World War, in which 67 British citizens also lost their lives, at the hands of murderous terrorist groups incubated in Afghanistan. In response, NATO invoked Article V of its Treaty, for the first and only time in its history, and the UK, amongst others, joined the US in going into Afghanistan in order to destroy Al Qaeda's presence there. As the Prime Minister said in the House yesterday, the UK succeeded in that core mission.





The UK can be extremely proud of what has been achieved in Afghanistan over the last twenty years and we owe an immense debt of gratitude to the 150,000 British personnel who fought in the country - in particular the 457 who sadly lost their lives, as well as those who sustained life-changing injuries, in the service of this mission. These men and women saved lives, denying terrorists a safe haven to launch attacks against the UK and our allies. Because of their actions, the UK has conferred benefits that are lasting and ineradicable on millions of people in one of the poorest countries on earth and provided vital protection for two decades to this country and the world.

Their service and sacrifice enabled development that has improved millions of lives and transformed Afghan society. Twenty years ago in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, for instance, no girls attended school and women were excluded from all governance. Today, millions of girls have been in school this year alone and women hold more than a quarter of the seats in Afghanistan's Parliament and prominent positions in the Afghan media and civil society.

We should not lose sight of these gains. At the same time, at this uncertain juncture in Afghanistan's history, we must ensure that these gains are not lost; that Afghanistan does not once again become a breeding ground for terror, and that the hard-won rights of Afghans are not taken away. I am assured by the Prime Minister that the UK Government, using every political and diplomatic means at its disposal, is urgently engaged upon this task.

I will of course continue to monitor progress closely, as well as ensure that the issues and concerns my constituents raise about this developing situation are heard clearly and urgently on an ongoing basis by those shaping the response.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*  
*Tom*

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**  
**CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**





Home Office

Home Secretary

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18 August 2021

To: All MPs and Peers

Dear Colleague,

### AFGHAN CITIZENS' RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Today, the Prime Minister set out the Government's plans to support the resettlement of thousands of Afghans via the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). As a result of this action, thousands of Afghan women, children and others most in need will be welcomed to the UK under one of the most generous resettlement schemes in our country's history. Those who have been forced to flee their home or face threats of persecution from the Taliban will be offered a route to set up home in the UK permanently.

The UK Government's ambition is for the resettlement of up to 5,000 Afghan nationals who are at risk due to the current crisis, in its first year. Priority will be given to women and girls, and religious and other minorities, who are most at risk of human rights abuses and dehumanising treatment by the Taliban.

This resettlement scheme will be kept under further review for future years, with up to a total of 20,000 in the long-term. The ambition to provide protection to thousands of people fleeing Afghanistan and the complex picture on the ground means there will be significant challenges delivering the scheme, but the Government is working at speed to address these obstacles.

The Government will work with stakeholders, including devolved administrations and local councils, to ensure that Afghans who will be rebuilding their lives in the UK have the support they need.

This new route is modelled on the successful Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, which resettled 20,000 Syrian refugees over a seven-year period from 2014 to 2021. The UK is working with international partners to develop a system to identify those most at risk and resettle them, ensuring help goes to those that need it.


The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK. So far under this programme, 2,052 people have already been relocated to the UK, with a further 2,000 Afghan applications completed and many more being processed.

The Government is clear that the new route will not compromise on national security and any person arriving on the route will have to pass the same strict security checks as those resettled through other schemes.

The speed and flexibility of delivering the new route demonstrates the Government's New Plan for Immigration in action, which seeks to make the system fairer by protecting and supporting those in genuine need of asylum.

The Government has also already provided thousands of Afghans with asylum in the UK, and many Afghan nationals have come to the UK to work and study under the Points-Based Immigration system.

Further detail about when and how to access the ACRS, including eligibility criteria, will be available on the Home Office website in due course. The Defence Secretary is writing separately with more details on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, and the Foreign Secretary has already written on the Consular Support for British Nationals.

With our good wishes  


**Rt Hon Priti Patel MP**  
**Home Secretary**





Ministry  
of Defence

SECRETARY OF STATE  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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18 August 2021

**TO: ALL MPS AND PEERS**

Dear Colleagues,

**Next steps for Military drawdown in Afghanistan**

Given today's debate, I wanted to update you on our drawdown and the important work the Government is doing to evacuate those who supported the UK's mission in Afghanistan by working for and alongside the UK Armed Forces and other Government Departments over the past 20 years.

**Drawdown plans**

Last Thursday I authorised the deployment of approximately 600 additional troops, as part of the next phase of the Afghanistan drawdown known as Operation Pitting. These personnel have augmented approximately 200 military personnel already in country and wider Government personnel. This is to enable the safe evacuation of such large numbers of people: our entitled personnel, and those who have served alongside the UK over the last 20 years to whom we owe such a commitment. Initial elements of military personnel arrived over the weekend and include logistics experts, medical support staff, and air movement specialists, with force protection provided by 16 Air Assault Brigade and the HQ elements from our Joint Forces Headquarters.

Over the weekend, the security situation deteriorated further. In response, we have deployed a force protection team to Afghanistan and moved the British Embassy to ensure the safety of our people. The Government's top priority remains to deliver on our obligations to British nationals, and those who have helped us, and get them out as fast as we can. Whilst we have reduced our diplomatic presence, UK Government staff continue to work from Kabul Airport to provide assistance to British nationals and Afghans eligible for relocation.

The task is large. We envisage there could be around 5,000 personnel, made up of Afghans, British Passport holders and HM government workers to evacuate. We have a finite window of time with our assets in place and we will do everything we can to maximise this opportunity. With the Taliban now in Kabul, plans have been accelerated, but thanks to the excellent work of our Armed Forces, we have a mature plan in place. I will of course keep the security situation under constant review and if needs be, take further steps.

You have all seen the heart wrenching scenes from Kabul International Airport. The UK Armed Forces are ensuring the safety and security of our personnel at



the Airport who are conducting critical work to evacuate the vulnerable in such challenging circumstances. We are working alongside our partners to ensure the safe operation of military flights and as you would expect, contingency plans remain in place.

### **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was developed last autumn, approved by the National Security Council in the New Year and came into effect on 1 April. It subsumed the two previous schemes, under which we had relocated almost 1,400 people since 2014.

ARAP is the **relocation pathway for current or former Locally Employed Staff**, reflecting the Government's strong commitment to fulfilling our moral obligation to those whose lives are at risk for having supported the UK's mission in Afghanistan. Among other things, the scheme provides:

- Automatic relocation to all current and former directly employed Locally Employed Staff who served in "exposed meaningful enabling roles" – important work that directly supported operations and exposed them to public recognition and hence risk of reprisals, such as patrol interpreters.
- Approval, under Ministerial authority, for special cases to be relocated, particularly Afghan partners with whom we worked operationally in high risk roles and to whom we gave specialist training.
- The scheme originally excluded those dismissed from service, but with cross Government support I directed in May that it should include those dismissed for less serious offences. I am personally reviewing all decisions made by officials to confirm that we are only excluding those who committed criminal offences or serious security or disciplinary issues that placed our forces at risk.
- We have also expanded the offer to include relocation to contracted interpreters who supported military operations. Contracted interpreters for the British Embassy in Kabul are now also included.
- The Home Secretary is also changing the Immigration Rules to enable ARAP eligible people who have already left Afghanistan to apply to relocate to the UK from a third country, and has published updated guidance on how additional cohorts of family members can come to the UK alongside the principal applicant.

So far, 2052 ARAP eligible persons have been flown from Afghanistan on MOD-chartered commercial flights, with a further 2,000 Afghan applications completed and many more being processed.



But we must and are doing more. We are committed to relocating many more eligible people as soon as possible. Reflecting the threat, this weekend the Home Secretary has allowed applicants who have been biometrically screened to return with the remainder of case work to be completed in the UK, and to remove the need for applicants to have an Afghan passport.

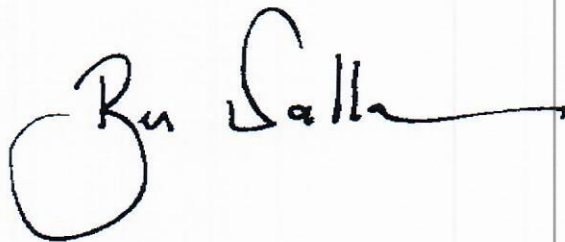
Across Government we have improved processes and greatly expanded our capacity to process enquiries about eligibility, conduct biometric enrolment, and run security checks quickly. These checks are vital to ensure we keep the people of the UK safe. Eligible ARAP will are being boarded on to military flights for evacuation. The UK side of the pipeline is on standby to receive arrivals.

***Further guidance on the ARAP eligibility criteria can be found [here](#) and colleagues should direct ARAP entitled personnel with enquiries to [REDACTED]. The Foreign Secretary has written to colleagues with contact points for British Nationals and people eligible under other relocation schemes and the Home Secretary is writing with details on the longer-term Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.***

When people are relocated under the ARAP reach the UK they are taken to a quarantine hotel, where they are provided with medical, welfare and other support, and offered COVID vaccinations. Under normal circumstances they would then be taken to their permanent home by local authority caseworkers and given help to access public services and integrate into the local community. Most of those relocated so far have been matched in this way, but the volume and pace of the process means that many are being taken to hotel accommodation where they will be supported until permanent homes become available. The Government is exceptionally grateful for the support being provided by local authorities, but we need more homes, especially larger ones, as quickly as they can be made available, and other help to allow them quickly to build new lives in the UK. Any support you can find in your own local authorities would be greatly received.

The Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary and I are sincerely grateful to our Parliamentary colleagues and officials across Government for what they are doing to support the unprecedented scale and pace of this activity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Wallace', with a large circular flourish at the start.

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP