

Dear Exeter Ahlul-Bayt Community,

Thank you for contacting me about the situation in Afghanistan. I'm very sorry to hear of your urgent concerns for the safety of these families in Afghanistan.

MPs have been given very few details of the support the UK intends to provide, other than what has been announced through the media

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ bespoke-resettlement-route-for-afghan-refugees-announced>

I remain very concerned that access to evacuation continues to be available only to people who fall into their strict priority categories and that many thousands of family members of Afghans living in the UK will have no access to the current schemes. The Government itself admits that even some of those eligible for evacuation will not be able to reach the airport and get a flight before the 31st August deadline.

I have passed the details you have provided to the contacts MPs have been given at the Home Office and Foreign Office. I have asked for their support and advice but please be aware that as MPs are receiving a high volume of urgent and worried correspondence from constituents, the Foreign Office is likely to be receiving hundreds of requests for support and I have been given no timescale or guarantee of a response.

If you are aware of any individuals stuck in Afghanistan who are British citizens or fall into one of the priority groups listed in the information copied below, please let me know so that I can ensure their details are passed to the appropriate Government team.

If or when individuals or families make any visa or asylum application to the Home Office, I will be happy to write in support of this and to ask for their urgent consideration of it if you or they can provide the application reference.

The Foreign Office's current advice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/afghanistan>

The Afghanistan Resettlement Scheme has not opened yet, but details can be found here. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

A fact sheet has been provided at <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/19/factsheet-resettlement-routes-for-afghan-nationals/>

Please note the list of prioritised groups which can be found together with other important information at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-british-and-non-british-nationals-in-afghanistan>

Key contacts

British nationals

+44 (0)1908 516666 and select the option “Consular services for British nationals” or email help@fco.gov.uk

Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

Afghan nationals who have not worked directly for the UK but have supported UK objectives in Afghanistan and make be at risk as a result

+44 (0)2475 389980

Vulnerable non-British nationals in need of Assistance

+44 (0)2475 389980

I am aware that these lines are incredibly busy, so you are asked to persist and try at different times of day.

As you know, the House of Commons was recalled on Wednesday 18th August under exceptional circumstances to debate the evacuation of military personnel and civilians.

The situation in Afghanistan is a shocking, unfolding tragedy. There has been a major miscalculation of the resilience of the Afghan forces and staggering complacency from the British Government about the Taliban threat. We now face the tragic rollback of the gains that UK soldiers, diplomats and NGO workers, and their coalition and Afghan partners, worked so hard for.

The priority now must be for the British Government to accelerate efforts to get UK nationals and eligible Afghans out of the country. I strongly support the deployment of troops to Kabul to provide security and capacity to do this. We also need to urgently provide sanctuary to those Afghans who have served alongside and supported the British presence in Afghanistan.

The Taliban’s return is likely to lead to a refugee crisis. As you will have heard, the Government has announced a new Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). This will we resettle Afghan nationals who have been forced to flee their home or face threats of persecution from the Taliban. However, the Government has said that this will take a total of 20,000 Afghan nationals “in the long term”, with 5,000 expected to be resettled within a year. This simply does not meet the scale of the challenge.

For those who desperately need our help now, there is no long term.

The resettlement scheme must be generous and welcoming. If it is not, we know the consequences: violent reprisals in Afghanistan; people fleeing into the arms of human traffickers; and more people risking and losing their lives on unsafe journeys including across the English Channel.

Global leaders must now agree a coordinated humanitarian response, collective help for refugees and work to guarantee the safety of humanitarian workers and diplomats remaining in Afghanistan, while doing all possible to support the human rights of the people of Afghanistan.

The Government should also consult with our allies in NATO and key countries in the region about the implications of the collapse of the Afghan Government. There needs to be a coordinated approach from the international community to the changing situation on the ground, and a strategy to protect the gains made in the last 20 years on human rights, girls' education and counter-terrorism.

You can read the full speeches of Labour's leader, Keir Starmer, and Labour's shadow Foreign Secretary, Lisa Nandy, at the links below, in which they urge the Government to show leadership on refugees, act with generosity and decency, and work to protect the rights of women and girls.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-08-18/debates/A86142BD-A204-4BC8-BBC0-ACA7BAD7E9F0/Afghanistanhighlight=refugees#contribution-EC12E084-0DA8-4B04-9CD7-93E73245702A>

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-08-18/debates/A86142BD-A204-4BC8-BBC0-ACA7BAD7E9F0/Afghanistanhighlight=refugees#contribution-F96BF7F2-9921-4F14-AE3A-5CD655048C95>

My thoughts are with the Afghan people at this time. I can assure you that my Labour colleagues and I will continue to follow developments in Afghanistan, and the Government's response, closely.

The UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has stated that "it is with deep regret that not everyone has been able to be evacuated during this process" as a final 1000 people are evacuated on 27th August.

It was also announced by the Minister of Defence that processing facilities at the Baron Hotel, outside the airport in Kabul, have been closed. The US is withdrawing by the 31st August, and while an exact date for the withdrawal of the last British troops has not been revealed, Ben Wallace confirmed it will be prior to the US withdrawal. He has stated that the UK's withdrawal was not hastened by the attack on Thursday at the Kabul airport which resulted in the death of 90 people with a further 150 (at least) wounded. Since the 13th August, the Minister of Defence stated 13,146 people have been evacuated, including nearly 8,000 Afghans eligible under the UK's relocation scheme for UK government workers and other vulnerable people as well as 4,000 British passport holders.

The Government has stated that the UK's Afghan relocation scheme will remain open "indefinitely" and those eligible who can reach other countries will be able to be processed from there.

Please find below the update MPs have received from the Home Office (UK Visas and Immigration) which includes some helpful contact details and some further explanation about the information they will need about British and non-British nationals.

With very best wishes,

Ben Bradshaw MP

Dear Member of Parliament

**MP Account Management Service for UK visas and immigration queries:
Afghanistan further update**

Further to our note of 16 August we continue to do everything we can to repatriate British citizens and their family members, and to bring eligible Afghan nationals to the UK.

We are processing requests for assistance from the UK as quickly and efficiently as possible, and then passing eligible cases on to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence colleagues on the ground so that we can get as many people to safety as possible.

As we are focused on processing requests for assistance as quickly and efficiently as possible, we will be unable provide updates on individual cases to third parties at this time.

British nationals

British nationals in Afghanistan should contact the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. They can call +44 (0)1908 516666 and select the option “Consular services for British nationals”.

It is extremely important that this phone number is used for people to register their need for help, not to ask for updates, which we cannot currently provide.

This phone number is monitored 24/7 by consular officers. All those who register will be contacted by one of our consular staff and we will contact British nationals for whom we have details as soon as flights from Kabul are confirmed. Information for British nationals and their families is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) at: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/afghanistan.

Non-British nationals

ARAP

The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is for Afghans who have supported British efforts in Afghanistan, for example interpreters and other personnel. Further details on ARAP can be found [here](https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/16/factsheet-uk-support-to-resettle-afghan-nationals/) (<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/08/16/factsheet-uk-support-to-resettle-afghan-nationals/>.)

Other prioritised groups

As part of the evacuation effort, we are helping some non-British nationals facing serious danger in Afghanistan through our dedicated 24-hour helpline: **+44 (0)2475 389980**.

Please note that the helpline is available for you to provide details of these people, so we can look to arrange support. It is not for providing advice on eligibility for the full Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme and it is not to be used for registering interest in that scheme. Please continue to check [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for updates.

We are prioritising providing immediate support for people from the following groups:

- current or former Chevening Scholars;
- people with existing leave or an open application for student, work and family visas;
- journalists and those who worked for British news agencies;
- civil society groups for womens' rights;
- Afghan government officials;
- officials working in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics; and
- employees of charities, humanitarian organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Non-British nationals should call **+44 (0)2475 389980**. They should be prepared to provide as many details as possible including:

- their full name as printed on their travel document / identity card or passport
- their date of birth

They should also provide these details for any dependents or immediate family members they may have such as their spouse and children.

Call lines may be busy, but we will answer as soon as we can.

Please do not call this number to ask for updates.

Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme

The full Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme will begin as soon as possible.

Details on how it will work can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme)

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>).

Please do not phone or email for updates on when this scheme will begin.

Thank you

