



**Alyn Smith MP**  
Member of Parliament for Stirling

House of Commons  
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Rt Hon Priti Patel  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
Direct Communications Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021

Dear Priti,

### **ARAP Scheme and the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme**

I write regarding concerns raised to me by members of the Afghan community in Scotland about the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme.

I welcome the work that Home Office staff have done to resettle more than 2,000 former Afghan staff and their families in the UK since the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2021. I also welcome the fact that the Home Office is working to resettle 20,000 Afghans in addition to the ARAP Scheme.

However, the nature of the chaotic withdrawal and rapid takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban means that many eligible Afghans were left in the country and face imminent danger. Moreover, given that in 2020 Pakistan hosted 1.45 million Afghan refugees, Iran 780,000, Germany 181,100 and Turkey 129,300, the 20,000 Afghans the UK aims to resettle over five years seems a paltry figure.

There have been a number of extremely worrying reports of Taliban reprisals against individuals and their families who assisted members of our armed forces and the Afghan Government. These reports include people being detained, executed, and constant searching for those that helped the UK and its allies during the 20-year period.

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It is also worrying that *The Times* reported last week that documentation was left in the UK Embassy that gave details of those working for and seeking to work for British forces. Whilst we hope that the Taliban will not be able to locate anyone who assisted British forces, there is the risk that they will succeed in locating individuals potentially due to intel and documents left behind by British personnel.

Despite promises of amnesty it is clear that Taliban reprisals are being carried out. With the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan now complete, anyone who was not able to secure passage out of the country before the 31<sup>st</sup> of August is now at serious risk of being targeted and killed. I have heard from a number of sources that border restrictions are being tightened and some closed and that visas are difficult to get which is making it increasingly difficult for those in danger to flee.

A number of key issues have been raised with me by Afghans in Scotland. One of the most important points is that family reunion should be extended to parents, siblings and children over the age of 18. Will the Government commit towards implementing this policy?

There are also many Afghan refugees already in the country - does the Government intend to grant them asylum? This would allow those, many who have been waiting years for an asylum decision, to become active members of their communities.

Further to that point, does the Government intend on suspending refugee removals to Afghanistan? Our allies Germany and Canada intend to re-assess all final negative decisions for Afghan asylum seekers still present in the countries - is this something that the Government is considering?

The Government has announced the continuation of the ARAP scheme and the new Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme. In addition to the above questions, I would be grateful if you could provide further clarity regarding these schemes by providing answers to the following:

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- Could you provide the UK Government's current estimate for the number of individuals eligible for each of these schemes?
- If you could clarify which individuals would be eligible for ARAP under the four category levels outlined on the Government website?
- How the Government intends to reunite family members eligible for ARAP?
- How the Government intends to help eligible Afghans leave Afghanistan now that there are no longer British forces on the ground?
- How the Government intends to assist Afghan refugees settle into our communities and get them into education, employment and volunteering?
- What discussions have been had with neighboring countries to help those eligible for ARAP and the Afghan resettlement scheme resettle in the UK?
- Whether the Government will consider introducing humanitarian visas to ensure that those seeking asylum in the UK can avoid staying in a country which is dangerous and life-threatening?
- How the Government came to the figure of 20,000 refugees, over what time period this will cover and when this resettlement scheme will begin?
- What support is being given to local authorities for education, housing and other necessities for Afghan refugees?

Any other information that you could give me regarding these matters would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Alyn Smith  
MP for Stirling