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House of Commons, London  
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Rt Hon Priti Patel MP

Secretary of State for the Home  
Department  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

18 August 2021

**Re: Securing adequate protection for Afghan nationals**

Dear Home Secretary,

The whole country has watched in horror the fall of Afghanistan to Taliban forces. The eyes of the world will now be watching how countries with a proud history of welcoming refugees respond, and particularly how they treat people forced to flee.

Reports confirm that extrajudicial killings have already begun. Those in particular danger include women and girls, ethnic minorities, LGBTIQ+ people and journalists. In addition, anyone seen to be supportive of the Afghan government or of international organisations is at risk of being targeted.

People currently at risk from the Taliban need to flee immediately and by whatever means necessary. For many, this will be via irregular journeys. A large-scale international resettlement effort is desperately needed to evacuate people from the country and the surrounding region. However, the deadly scramble for safety at Kabul Airport in recent days demonstrates why a resettlement-only approach to refugee protection, as proposed in the Nationality and Borders Bill currently before Parliament, cannot work.

As a matter of urgency, the Government must establish sustainable solutions for those who will seek our protection over the coming weeks and months, as well as Afghans already living in the UK, their families and loved ones.

To achieve this, the Government must urgently take the following steps:

1. Ensure no Afghan national faces removal to any third country under the inadmissibility rules, regardless of how they have travelled to seek protection in the UK. These individuals should instead be offered immediate and sustainable protection.
2. Introduce a simplified process to grant immediate protection to the some 3000 Afghan nationals currently awaiting a decision on their asylum application, and facilitate an expedited application process for those submitting a fresh or new claim going forwards.
3. Ensure no Afghan national is evicted from asylum accommodation while this procedure is being established.
4. Expedite family reunification applications for people from Afghanistan, and widen the criteria to include parents and siblings of applicants. Normal procedures requiring applications to take place through embassies must similarly be suspended.

**Constituency Office:**

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5. Immediately release all Afghan nationals currently held in immigration removal centres, given the impossibility of safely effecting removals.
6. Review and broaden Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation schemes to protect people working in all at-risk professions, for instance drivers and security staff who have worked with the UK.
7. Immediately publish new policy guidance reflecting the need for humanitarian protection, and the danger faced by numerous social groups including women and girls, LGBTIQ+ people, men and boys targeted by the Taliban, ethnic and religious minorities, and human rights defenders throughout the country, including Kabul.

As well as presenting an urgent protection challenge, this situation also calls into question the Government's current approach to refugee protection in general. When people are forced to flee in the middle of the night, there is no queue they can join for resettlement. People whose lives are at risk will be forced to flee by whatever means are available to them, including irregular means.

In light of this crisis, we urge the Government to drop its current inadmissibility rules, and its decision to criminalise refugee journeys that are not undertaken through regulated resettlement routes. Refugees reaching our shores must have their claims assessed based solely on need and never on their method of flight. The provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill currently before Parliament that would criminalise refugees based on their mode of travel, and introduce a two-tier system of refugee protection, must be withdrawn.

It is within the Government's gift to mount a world-leading, compassionate response to this crisis. We hereby call on the Government and the Ministers responsible to act urgently to deliver the compassionate response that is so sorely needed.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Brown MP	Daisy Cooper MP	Mohammad Yasin MP
Alison Thewliss MP	Dan Carden MP	Neale Hanvey MP
Alistair Carmichael MP	Deidre Brock MP	Owen Thompson MP
Allan Dorans MP	Diane Abbott MP	Patricia Gibson MP
Alyn Smith MP	Drew Hendry MP	Patrick Grady MP
Angela Crawley MP	Gavin Newlands MP	Richard Thomson MP
Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP	Hannah Bardell MP	Sarah Green MP
Ben Lake MP	Jeremy Corbyn MP	Sarah Olney MP
Brendan O'Hara MP	John McDonnell MP	Stephen Farry MP
Chris Law MP	Kenny MacAskill MP	Stuart McDonald MP
Christine Jardine MP	Kirsten Oswald MP	Tommy Sheppard MP
Claire Hanna MP	Layla Moran MP	Wendy Chamberlain MP
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