

BRIEFING NOTE FOR CABINET SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTION, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, AND CULTURE

Members debate “Supporting the people of Afghanistan”

Thursday 2 September 2021

Key Message	The Scottish Government stands by to support the people of Afghanistan following the takeover of the Taliban and the departure of coalition forces.
Who	MSPs
What	Scottish Parliament debate.
Why	Opportunity for MSPs to debate the situation in Afghanistan and Scotland’s response.
Where	Scottish Parliament
When	14:55, Thursday 2 September
Dress code	Business attire.
Officials supporting	[REDACTED] International Relations, [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; John Primrose [REDACTED], Robert Marshall [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Media Handling	Pro-active statement and social media.
Annexes	Annex A: Speaking note (attached separately) Annex B: Parliamentary motion Annex C: Background to the conflict Annex D: Scotland Lines Annex E: Refugee Resettlement Annex F: Asylum and Refugee Integration Annex G: Nationality and Borders Bill Annex H: Aid from UK and Scotland Annex I: Links to Aid organisations in Afghanistan Annex J: Engagement with the Afghan community in Scotland Annex K: Veterans issues/ Supporting Service personnel Annex L: Students from Afghanistan in Scotland

SPEAKING NOTE (attached separately)

PARLIAMENTARY MOTION

Motion

That the Parliament records alarm at the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Afghanistan following the return of the Taliban; further records its deep concern about the threat to life, liberty, equality, and human rights to all in Afghanistan and in particular for women and girls and minority communities; commends the armed forces, service personnel, and humanitarian agencies involved in supporting people during the evacuation; notes the UK's long history of involvement with, and intervention in, Afghanistan and, in consequence, the obligation which the UK has to assist and support all those who are at risk of persecution or mistreatment as a result of the current crisis; recognises the lead role internationally that the UK Government must play in ensuring that aid continues to reach those who need it most and condemns the reduction in international aid by UK Ministers from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%; urges the UK Government to ensure that those Afghans who have worked to provide critical aid assistance, uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan can be allowed to settle in the UK alongside those who are at risk of violence and persecution as outlined in the UN Refugee Convention; recognises Scotland has a duty to play a full role in assisting the resettlement and relocation of Afghans at risk and providing humanitarian assistance and that anyone settling in Scotland will be welcome members in our community.

Background to the conflict - Afghanistan – recent history

Afghanistan has a bloody history of conflict and invasion, with the last two hundred years seeing a number of invasions which have in the end been repelled. During the 19th Century, Britain attempted to annex Afghanistan leading to a series of British-Afghan wars (1838-42, 1878-80, 1919-21). This was successfully withstood, and in 1926 Amanullah declared Afghanistan a Monarchy. From 1953 to 1979 Afghanistan had close ties with USSR until the invasion on December 24th. This brutal war resulted in roughly 2.8 million Afghans fleeing to Pakistan with another 1.5 million fleeing to Iran. By 1986 the Mujahedeen were receiving arms from Britain, the US, and China via Pakistan with the aim of defeating the USSR. This was achieved in 1992. The following period in Afghanistan was beset by significant civil war and humanitarian crisis. In 1995 a newly formed Islamic militia, the Taliban, rose to power with the promise of stabilizing the country. The Taliban, primarily Pashtun and from the South of the country, had one of the most reactionary regimes in the world at the time with a particularly extreme version of Sharia law: enforcing public executions and amputations, as well as a significant reduction in women's rights, including banning education for women and girls, as well as brutally targeting other ethnic groups and minorities

The Taliban also hosted Al Qaeda's terrorist training camps. From Afghanistan a range of attacks were either trained for or orchestrated including the bombing of two embassies in Africa in 1998, for which Afghanistan was subsequently bombed by the US. Following the 11 September 2001 attacks US officials insisted the Taliban give up Osama bin Laden. Upon refusal US and British forces began the offensive against Afghanistan effectively toppling the regime as well as destroying a number of Al Qaeda bases. By 22 December 2001 Taliban fighters had abandoned their strongholds and Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, was sworn in as leader of the interim government in Afghanistan, after years in exile in Pakistan.

Some gains were made over the forthcoming two decades. In January 2004 a new constitution was adopted with input from half a million Afghans. In October 2004 Karzai was elected with 55% of the vote. The international community invested billions in education and health assistance, ensuring millions of girls could begin to attend school again, and with significant improvements in health outcomes. However, Karzai struggled to retain significant control over the country with repeated attacks by the Taliban over the period of his government. In 2013 all military and security operations were taken over by the Afghan army and Ashraf Ghani became president in 2014.

In December of that year NATO ended its combat mission. US led NATO troops remained to train Afghan forces. In October 2015 President Obama abandoned plans to withdraw forces from Afghanistan. In August 2017 President Trump committed to continued military involvement. In February 2019 US and the Taliban signed a Peace Agreement. In November 2020 US announced plans to cut US troop size down to 2,500 by January 2021. In April 2021 President Biden announced the complete withdrawal of US troops by 11 September 2021, though without warning withdrew all troops from the main US military base in Bagram in July without telling the base's new Afghan commander. When the military left they also took away the civilian contractors who had helped administer a number of Afghan army assets leaving them effectively redundant.

The belief at the time was that the Taliban takeover was not inevitable (10th August), however 5 days later the Afghanistan government collapsed as the Taliban took over.

Scotland and UK Lines

Scotland Lines

- We strongly condemn the attacks on Kabul airport, and our thoughts are with the families of the US Soldiers and Afghan civilians who were killed or injured.
- The attacks highlight the need for coordinated international action to enable those most at risk to safely leave Afghanistan and protect the human rights of those who remain.
- While the announcement of a UK resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees is welcome in principle, the commitment to 20,000 in 'long term' and just 5000 this year is woefully inadequate. We call on UK Government to go further to meet its responsibilities.
- We believe a commitment to a substantial increase in numbers is required, and we continue to seek further details of how civilians – especially women, girls and others seeking refuge – will be protected.
- In particular the UK Government must provide further details of the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme as soon as possible.
- As we did with refugees from Syria, the Scottish Government is willing to play our full part and do all we can to help those in peril. We commend the work of Scottish local authorities who have already welcomed families and those preparing to do so, and work is underway to ensure people have the support and services they need.
- We will continue to work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives."

UK Lines (as of 26 August)

- The Government's top priority is to do all we can to deliver on our obligations to British nationals, and those who have helped us, and get them out as fast as we can.
- Through Op PITTING we have now evacuated more than 8400 (8458) people from Kabul since the mission began on Friday 13 August. This includes embassy staff, British Nationals, those eligible under the ARAP programme and a small number of nationals from our partner nations.
- We continue to bring out hundreds of British nationals, diplomats and Afghan interpreters a day but we are working in a complex and volatile environment at the airport in Kabul. This is a huge effort that will go on up until the last moment that it can.
- To ensure the safety of our people, we have deployed a force protection team to Afghanistan and moved the British Embassy. Our Ambassador remains in Kabul and UK Government staff continue to work to provide assistance to British nationals and Afghans eligible for relocation.
- As President of the G7, the Prime Minister chaired a meeting of G7 Leaders today to agree a joint approach to dealing with the evacuation and a road map for the way in which the G7 will engage with the Taliban including the condition that the Taliban must guarantee safe passage for those who want to leave Afghanistan through and beyond 31 August.
- The UK has a prominent role to play in how the international community approaches the challenge that we collectively face in Afghanistan. What we're trying to do is concert the likeminded around the world to make sure we protect the rights and advantages that all sectors of Afghan society have come to expect and value.

- We should be proud of the role our Armed Forces, diplomats, and development specialists have played in supporting Afghanistan over the past 20 years and reducing the threat from Al Qaeda. Our primary objective when we deployed to Afghanistan 20 years ago was to ensure that it wasn't used as a base for international terrorism. There has not been a successful international terrorist attack on the West mounted from Afghanistan since.
- We must lead the global humanitarian efforts to support a more stable, peaceful future for the people of Afghanistan. Total UK aid to Afghanistan this year is now £286 million and the UK's total aid to the country since 2001 is around £3.5 billion.
- We will never let Afghanistan be used as a base for terror, and we will hold the Taliban to account for the protection of the most essential human rights.

Refugee Resettlement

Background

The UK Government have criticised Scotland's support for refugees, including by conflating asylum dispersal with refugee resettlement and the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

- Scotland responded strongly to support refugee resettlement from Syria, with the first flights arriving to Glasgow in November 2015.
- Scottish local authorities welcomed over 3,500 refugees under the Syrian Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.
- All 32 local authorities have welcomed refugees to their areas.
- The ability to continue to support refugee resettlement is dependent on availability of suitable properties and essential services.
- Capacity for refugee resettlement has been impacted by the stepping up of the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) relocation programme as local authorities were urged to prioritise places for this by the Home Office in June.
- A hotel in Edinburgh is being procured by the Home Office to accommodate people who have arrived through the LES and have already completed quarantine in England before moving to Scotland.
- Hotels elsewhere in Scotland are also being explored by the Home Office.
- Glasgow is the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland, however it already supports Scotland's proportionate share of asylum seekers in the UK, with around 5,000 people accommodated in the city.
- Scotland is currently deciding whether to participate in the new UKGov national rota for National Transfer Scheme whereby regions across the UK will take it in turns to provide additional placements to unaccompanied asylum seeking children; it was estimated Scotland would receive up to 50 children a year.

Top Lines

- Scotland is committed to playing our part in welcoming and supporting people fleeing Afghanistan.
- We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.
- Scotland has a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere.

The Scottish Government commends local authorities welcoming people through the UK's Afghan locally employed staff relocation programme.

- The Scottish Government recognises the hugely important work that Locally Employed Staff undertook for the UK in Afghanistan and the risks they face as a result of that service.
- The Afghan locally employed staff scheme has been in operation since 2013. It provides a range of support to current and former Afghan staff who worked for British Forces or other UK Government institutions, including relocation to the UK.
- Scottish local authorities are among those to have welcomed Afghan locally employed staff and their families since 2013.
- In June 2021, the Home Office asked local authorities to prioritise provision of resettlement places for relocation of Afghan locally employed staff as they worked to increase relocations through this programme.

- Scotland is playing its part in supporting the people who worked for British institutions in Afghanistan.
- Work is underway to ensure that people have the support and services they need on arrival and as they settle into communities.

Use of hotels to accommodate people arriving through the locally employed staff relocation programme is taking place.

- This is a UK Government scheme, and the Home Office is responsible for the sourcing of hotels to accommodate people.
- While the Scottish Government is clear that our preference would be for people to move into housing as soon as possible, we recognise that the speed of evacuation now requires the use of other forms of accommodation in the short term.
- Living in a hotel during a crisis is a measure to ensure people can be accommodated and supported in a place of safety, until they can move to permanent housing. It is not a luxury.
- Work is underway to ensure people have the support and services they need while they are living in hotels.

Welcome the announcement of a UK resettlement programme for Afghan refugees.

- While the announcement of a UK resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees is welcome in principle, the commitment to 20,000 in the 'long term' and just 5,000 in the first year is inadequate and we call on the UK Government to go further.
- We believe a substantial increase in numbers being committed to is required if the UK Government is to meet its responsibilities.
- The First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August seeking further detail on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programme.
- The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible to enable local authorities to assess their ability to participate and plan support.
- On 17 August the UK Government announced the new dedicated resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Priority will be given to women, girls and minority groups.

As we did with the Syrian resettlement programme, Scotland is willing to play our part and do all we can to help those in peril.

- Scottish local authorities led the way in welcoming refugees fleeing the horror of the conflict in Syria.
- Alongside our local authorities, third sector, faith and community organisations have welcomed people and provided the safety and security the need to rebuild their lives in their new homes.
- Scotland is proud to have received over 3,500 refugees under the Syrian Resettlement and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes. All 32 Scottish local authorities have welcomed refugees into their communities.

Decisions about the operation of refugee resettlement programmes are reserved to the UK Government.

- The UK Government had been due to start a new global resettlement programme in April 2020 to resettle 5,000 people in its first year.
- The global resettlement programme was delayed due to Covid-19 but restarted gradually in late 2020.

- Scottish local authorities have reiterated their commitment to support UK refugee resettlement programmes.
- It is right that the new Afghan resettlement scheme will be in addition to the UK's existing global refugee resettlement commitment.

Scottish local authorities have consistently shown their willingness to assist vulnerable young asylum seekers who arrive in the country alone.

- Scotland has provided over 20 placements to unaccompanied asylum seeking children through the National Transfer Scheme over the past year, despite the funding and capacity challenges which have been compounded by the pandemic.
- This is in addition to the UASC currently cared for by local authorities throughout Scotland, which is estimated to be over 400 young people.
- The small change to funding arrangements by the Home Office which now ensures the higher UASC daily rate of £143 applies to all children transferred through the National Transfer Scheme was greatly needed.
- However, the majority of Scottish local authorities are not eligible to apply for the higher daily rate for the unaccompanied asylum seeking children currently in their care and the Home Office's Care Leavers' funding for older unaccompanied asylum seeking children fails to take into account Scotland's statutory duty to provide after care support up until the age of 26.
- This shortfall in funding urgently needs to be addressed and we will continue to press the UK Government on this reserved issue.

The UK Government must consider asylum applications from Afghan nationals quickly and compassionately.

- The Prime Minister made a commitment during the Westminster debate on 18 August that the UK will not return Afghan nationals who have sought asylum in the UK.
- The Home Office should urgently review any cases which are in the asylum appeals process or where people have previously been refused asylum on the basis that Kabul is safe.

Asylum and Refugee Integration

Background

Scotland's approach to integration from day one for asylum seekers and refugees can be impacted by reserved UK Government policy.

- The UK asylum system is reserved and handled by the Home Office, including the operation of asylum dispersal, provision of asylum accommodation and support, and the consideration of asylum applications.
- Decisions relating to the design and operation of refugee resettlement programmes or other safe and legal routes for displaced people are also reserved.
- The UK Government restricts access to certain public funds as defined in UK Immigration Rules on the basis of people's status, this can result in destitution.
- There are no statistics on the total number of refugees living in Scotland. The vast majority of refugees living in Scotland will have been granted status through the asylum system.
- There are over 5,000 asylum seekers living in Glasgow.

On 10 January 2018, the second New Scots refugee integration strategy was launched led by Scottish Government, COSLA and Scottish Refugee Council.

Top Lines

- Scotland has a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere.
- We are committed to supporting their integration into our communities and should be confident that Scotland will benefit from their presence.

Scotland is committed to supporting refugees, asylum seekers and our communities through the pioneering and collaborative approach of the New Scots refugee integration strategy.

- New Scots is a partnership strategy, developed and led by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council.
- The key principle of New Scots distinctive approach is to support refugees and asylum seekers from 'day one' of arrival in Scotland.
- The strategy has been endorsed by UNHCR, who commended the involvement of refugees and asylum seekers in its development.
- The Scottish Government is providing nearly £1 million from the Connected Communities budget in 2021-22 to a range of third sector organisations for projects supporting refugee integration.

In August we announced the award of £2.8 million funding to refugee projects which support New Scots.

- In total 56 projects are receiving funding to deliver initiatives designed to help New Scots settle in their new communities by promoting employability, education, health, and social and cultural connections.
- These projects will support the aims of the New Scots strategy and help support cohesive, connected communities where everyone can access the services they need and be supported into employment and education.
- The grant scheme is part funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

- It is part of the New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project, led by the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council and the UNESCO Chair at the University of Glasgow.

Over successive generations, refugees have helped make Scotland the strong, successful and diverse country it is today.

- We recognise the contribution that refugees make. They are assets to our communities: sharing their culture, building businesses, working in our public services, volunteering their skills and making friendships.
- Employability is a theme of the New Scots strategy. Access to work is a key marker of integration for refugees but there can be significant barriers which prevent refugees entering employment or lead to them being underemployed.
- We are committed to supporting refugees to build their skills and enable them to use their knowledge and experience in Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of education and the positive contribution which students from across the world make to our society, culture and economy.

- The cost of tuition fees can be a barrier for refugees and asylum seekers.
- The eligibility criteria for access to student support in Scotland is determined with reference to an applicant's residence, rather than their nationality.
- The specific conditions for access to tuition fee and living cost support in Scotland are set out in legislation.
- There are exceptions to general residency rules which may apply to people granted refugee status and current regulations also provide for Afghan nationals who are being relocated to the UK under the locally employed staff scheme.
- This support also extends to the spouse, civil partner or child of the person granted the relevant leave.
- Information about tuition fee and student support is available from SAAS.

Asylum is a matter reserved to the UK Parliament and handled by the Home Office.

- This includes policy on asylum, the provision of asylum support and accommodation, and decisions relating to the operation of refugee resettlement programmes.
- However, many of the services which are essential to supporting refugees and asylum seekers are devolved and are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities, including health, education and legal services.

There is a role for everyone in supporting integration.

- Organisations and communities across Scotland are contributing by being welcoming to refugees, asylum seekers and indeed anyone who is new to their local area.
- Finding out more about refugees and offering them our understanding.
- Volunteering with organisations and groups which support refugees, in Scotland or abroad.
- If people want to make donations, please engage with organisations to find out what is needed.
- Many support organisations have direct links to suppliers and can most effectively use monetary donations rather than clothes or goods which need to be sorted, stored and transported.
- Cash donations also enable dignified access to food and essentials, as people can choose what they need.

Nationality and Borders Bill

Background

Planned protest outside the Scottish Parliament calling for the Scottish Government to vocally oppose the Nationality and Borders Bill.

- Two grassroots campaign groups (No Evictions Network and the Equal Society Movement) have publicised plans for a demonstration on 2 September.
- [Redacted] wrote to the First Minister on behalf of the groups seeking her support for a planned demonstration on 5 August.
- Official reply issued [redacted] on 17 August setting out SG position and commitment to continue raising concerns and opposition to measures contained in the Bill with the UK Government.
- Anne McLaughlin MP is on the Bill Committee which will scrutinise the Bill and will speak at the demonstration.
- The First Minister wrote to the Home Secretary on 26 July raising the Scottish Government's deep concerns about measures in the Bill.
- Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) have raised concerns that the UK Government will consider Afghanistan as an exceptional crisis response and an opportunity to increase rhetoric on 'good refugees' vs 'illegal migrants'.
- SRC want to ensure that measures of concern in the UK Government's New Plan for Immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill are not overlooked because of focus on Afghanistan response.
- The Home Office consider the Nationality and Borders Bill to be entirely reserved.
- SGLD advice is that no LCMs are required for the Bill as introduced
- We will review six 'placeholder' clauses in the draft Bill and any amendments for LCM requirement, as the Bill progresses.

Top Lines

- The UK has moral and international legal obligations to uphold the 1951 UN Refugee Convention to which the UK was a founding signatory.
- The UK Government's New Plan for Immigration and their Nationality and Borders Bill are placing our reputation as a country of welcome and refuge at serious risk.
- The First Minister wrote to the Home Secretary on 26 July to raise her deep concerns about the measures set out in the Nationality and Borders Bill.
- These are significant and disturbing changes, which will impact people living in communities across the UK.
- We do not believe they will achieve the change that is desperately needed.
- Scotland is a country that lives up to its global responsibilities as a place of welcome and sanctuary.
- The Scottish Government will continue to make the case for immigration and asylum systems that reflect and support our commitment.

The UK asylum and immigration systems are not delivering for Scotland.

- Wholesale reform is needed.
- However, the measures contained in the UK Government's *New Plan for Immigration* and the Nationality and Borders Bill will not achieve the change that is needed.
- The UK needs an asylum system that is effective, efficient and delivers for people who may be highly vulnerable.

- The UK Government plans will add unnecessary complexity to systems which are already extremely challenging to navigate and will put people at risk.

The Scottish Government recognises the need to deter and prevent abuse of our immigration and asylum systems.

- But we are clear that people who come here to live, work, study, seek sanctuary or have been trafficked, should be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- Extremely vulnerable people, such as those who have been trafficked, should find a system which enables access to support rather than one which erects barriers.

The Nationality and Borders Bill risks criminalising people who should be protected.

- The UK Government want to differentiate between people based on how they entered the country, not the protection they need.
- If implemented, people who are in need of sanctuary will be denied it.
- People will be placed in danger or left facing years in limbo, when they could be getting on with rebuilding their lives and contributing to our communities.

The creation of safe and legal routes to the UK is critical to opening up opportunities for managed migration and reducing the number of people forced to make perilous journeys.

- The Scottish Government has pressed the UK Government to introduce a fairer, more flexible immigration system which meets Scotland's specific needs.
- As an economy, we need the inward flow of people not just to support the growth of our businesses and services, but to provide diversity and vibrancy to our communities.
- Any move which limits migration, whether from within or beyond the EU, has the potential to seriously harm Scotland's economy, our public services and our communities.

The UK Government chose to publish the New Plan for Immigration the day before the pre-election period for the Scottish Parliament election.

- The public consultation on the New Plan for Immigration entirely aligned with the pre-election period for the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Senedd, English local government and mayoral elections.
- The UK Government claims that the results of the consultation were carefully considered before relevant policy decisions were finalised ahead of the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Bill on 6 July.
- The UK Government response to the consultation notes that around three quarters of responses opposed many of the policies set out in the New Plan for Immigration.
- QUOTE: "Having considered the findings from the consultation, the Government recognises that building a system that is fair but firm will require tough decisions, some of which may be unpopular with certain individuals and/or groups." [UK Government response on consultation on the New Plan for Immigration, July 2021]
- The UK Government introduced the Nationality and Borders Bill on 6 July and rushed its second reading through before Westminster entered recess, despite the Bill having six placeholder clauses.
- The second reading debate had to take place over two days and lasted over nine hours.
- The Bill will go to Committee in the coming weeks.

Aid from UK and Scotland

UK Government position

- On 18 August, the Prime Minister announced that UK humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan would be doubled to £286 million with immediate effect.
- According to FCDO, this will provide urgent life-saving assistance to millions of people suffering from the conflict, drought and COVID-19.
- This newly-announced funding brings the UK's total aid contribution to Afghanistan since 2001 to around £3.5 billion.
- However, the UK Government's previous decision to cut the aid budget from 0.7% of GDP to 0.5% of GDP means that this increase in effect just reverses previous cuts.
- UK aid to Afghanistan in 2019 (the last year for which full information is available) was £292 million, higher than the newly announced commitment for 2021.

Scottish Government position

- The Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF), established in April 2017, exists to provide effective assistance to reduce the threat to life and wellbeing of a large number of a population faced with a humanitarian emergency.
- The HEF is delivered through an expert Panel of eight leading humanitarian aid organisations in Scotland, who activate the Fund and advise the Scottish Government.
- We have been in regular contact with the Panel to understand the situation in Afghanistan, which is being kept under close review.
- Scottish Government officials are working urgently with the HEF Panel to establish how best to deliver assistance to Afghanistan.
- The Scottish Government has approved an early release of £250k of HEF funding

Lines

- While the announcement by the UK Government that aid to Afghanistan will be doubled is a step in the right direction, this ultimately amounts to nothing more than a reversal of previous major cuts on aid to Afghanistan.
- The UK Government's commitment of £286 million in aid this year is actually less than the figure for 2019, while the needs of people in Afghanistan have increased significantly over that time.
- With the World Food Programme's warning of "humanitarian catastrophe", the UK Government must do more to help the people of Afghanistan at their time of greatest need.

Links to Aid organisations in Afghanistan

- Officials have reached out to our humanitarian partners through the HEF: Tearfund, SCIAF, Red Cross, Mercy Corps, Oxfam and Islamic Relief as well as organisations the Halo Trust and Linda Norgrove Foundation – to reassure them that the Scottish Government stands ready to support any of their Afghan employees who may wish to relocate to Scotland if they manage to flee Afghanistan.
- The Halo Trust has 2,500 Afghan employees but having operated under the Taliban previously, they have an established protocol for working under such a regime. Only two of their staff have applied to leave for the UK.
- The Linda Norgrove Foundation has mentored 20 female Afghan medical students and is looking to place these individuals in Scottish Universities.

Engagement with the Afghan community in Scotland

Background

A roundtable meeting has been organised for the 31st August – where key stakeholders will meet with Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture - Angus Robertson; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government – Shona Robison; and the Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development Jenny Gilruth to discuss the concerns of the Afghan Community – with particular regards to the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers coming in from Afghanistan.

Afghan Human Rights Foundation (AHRF)

- Afghan Human Rights Foundation (AHRF) is an independent, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organization working to promote human rights and democracy through engaging a variety of arts, and culture-based programs; creating space for dialogue at all levels of society, peace-building, social justice, societal transformation and public participation.
- AHRF was established in 2013 by Mohammad Asif, Human rights campaigner, activist and founder of Scottish Afghan Society and Co-founder of Glasgow refugees Action Group.
- The aim is to assist Afghan refugees with their integration into Scottish society. As a centre point for the Afghan community, we provides a wide range of practical support, help and advice.
- Since its' inception, the AHRF has assisted many refugees who have successfully integrated and are making positive contribution to their adopted country.
- They provide range of services for the Afghan refugee, migrant communities and asylum seekers. Providing Advice and support on Health, Education, Social services, Welfare benefits and immigration. Offer help with job applications, vocational and careers guidance. Assisting and providing advice on housing to destitute asylum seekers and refugees.
- They work closely with all major agencies including government and non-government organisations and NGOs for the betterment of our members so they can live free from discrimination and the fear of racial harassment and violence.

Glasgow Afghan United

- Glasgow Afghan United has been in operation since 2004, and performs excellent work to support the full participation of New Scots in all aspects of civil society. In particular, they provide education and training to refugees, asylum seekers and other Afghan and ethnic minority people about their rights and responsibilities in Scotland and they promote awareness to the wider community about Afghan and ethnic minority culture and tradition, with a special focus on teaching these values to young ethnic minority people.
- Specific examples of their work include, a 'Women Empowerment Project', designed to help Ethnic Minority women integrate fully into society here in Scotland, through a range of means, including teaching English, involvement in health and fitness activities, volunteering and money management training; an annual Refugee Festival Football Tournament, with over 50 nationalities competing; and the hosting of an array of cultural events.
- The aforementioned work does much to engage a variety of human rights, including rights to education, health, freedom from discrimination, and rights to take part in economic, social, and cultural pursuits. The work Glasgow Afghan

United takes part in alone is enough of a reason to recommend engagement with this event in order to recognise the effort they give to integrate and support Afghan and other Ethnic Minority groups within Glasgow, and the efforts they deliver to enable these groups to engage with their human rights.

[Redacted] Scottish Refugee Council

- The Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) is an independent charity dedicated to supporting people in need of refugee protection.
- SRC coordinates the New Scots Connect network of refugee assisting organisations and groups across Scotland. To prepare for refugees arriving through resettlement, SRC are in the process of identifying support and services third sector and community organisations can provide and plan to create an Afghan Support Network. As further details about Afghan Citizens resettlement emerge, they intend to share appropriate individual offers of support with local authorities and organisations in the Afghan Support Network. A form to register offers of help is being developed.
- SRC direct services provide practical support and advice to people, including those seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees. SRC also works with communities and community groups to raise awareness about refugee and asylum issues. SRC campaigns for improvements to the UK asylum system and positive policy changes that will make a difference for refugees and people seeking asylum.
- SRC coordinate the Scottish Refugee Festival which is held in June each year.
- SRC are a lead partner in the New Scots refugee integration strategy, alongside COSLA and the Scottish Government.
- SRC receives Scottish Government funding as an intermediary partner.
- [Redacted]

COSLA

- The Scottish Government works closely with COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team to support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- COSLA is a lead partner in the New Scots refugee integration strategy, along with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Refugee Council.
- COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team are also the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) for Scotland. In this role they coordinate the participation of local authorities in asylum dispersal and refugee resettlement schemes, and engage with the Home Office on related issues.
- The Scottish Government provides funding to support work by COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team on asylum and refugee integration.

Top Lines

- Ministers held a roundtable with key stakeholders such as COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow Afghan United, Afghan Human Rights Foundation and BEMS to discuss the concerns of the community as this distressing time.
- The roundtable discussed the resettlement of new Scots and how best we support new refugees giving them a warm welcome to Scotland.
- We are in touch with our stakeholders on a daily basis to ensure the needs of Afghan Scots are being met and are actively exploring options to address emotional distress and financial hardship.

- We are working with and encouraging stakeholders to join the welcoming efforts for the refugees that will be resettled here.
- The Scottish Refugee Council is currently calling on stakeholders to get involved in designing and shaping resources and support for refugees.

Veterans issues/ Supporting Service personnel Background

- V1P provides a pathway for Veterans and their families to access services and treatment, no matter their need.
- Each V1P centre is different in its capacity however, every centre has an NHS employed psychotherapist and peer workers with experience of the armed forces. Where Veterans are unable to be treated by V1P they are referred to mainstream NHS services, providing a gateway for Veterans to access the services they need.

Combat Stress. Background

- In 2018 the Scottish Government agreed a 3-year funding arrangement with NHS Ayrshire and Arran to continue the provision of specialised mental health services by Combat Stress for veteran's resident in Scotland totalling £4.272 million to 2020/21.
- The award of £1,424,090 was agreed for the year 2021/22 to continue the work of Combat Stress and support veterans through the pandemic.
- The future funding of veteran mental health services in Scotland will be determined by the recommendations arising from the Scottish Veteran Mental Health Action Plan, due to be published in late 2021.

The National Veterans Care Network Background

- The Scottish Veterans Care Network ("the Network") will be managed within the National Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland. The Network will sit under the National Strategic Networks portfolio within NHS National Services Division.
- In Scotland today, there are approximately 237,000 Veterans, however there is no accurate picture of how many veterans are in receipt of the healthcare they require. It is likely that there are veterans who require care but who have chosen not to receive it, are unable to declare themselves to be a veteran, or who have not linked their current health needs to their former service in the Armed Forces.
- The Scottish Veterans Care Network aims to address a number of current issues:
 - Better understanding of the care needs of the veterans' population, including its scope and characteristics;
 - Understanding the barriers to achieving the right access to care, and transition of services; and
 - Inequalities of services due to geographical landscape of Scotland.
- The proposed objectives of the Network will include, but are not limited to:
 - Analytical review of data and a formal mapping exercise of health services currently available to Veterans;
 - Reviewing current funding model for specialist veterans' services, ensuring geographical inequalities are taken into account;

- Regular engagement with veterans, 3rd sector organisations/charities and stakeholders;
 - Leading on improving awareness, knowledge and understanding of veterans' needs and characteristics through the development of educational tools, as well as providing a national platform to existing tools and information; and
 - Aiming to improve quality and standards for veterans healthcare
- It is the mandate of the Network to deliver on these objectives which will lead to parity in the level of care for veterans, no matter where they are located in Scotland.
 - The knowledge and experience of clinicians, charities and veterans will be central to the development and improvement in the care of our veterans. The Network have created a number of forums within its governance structure to capture this collective knowledge, and ensure that delivering the objectives of the Network are co-produced with these forums and subsequent working groups. This collaboration will support positive outcomes, will ensure regular stakeholder engagement and lead to the success in the Network. The Network will advise, influence and monitor developments of the aims and objectives, share best practice and improve overall outcomes for the veteran population of Scotland.
 - The Network has started collaborative work with Public Health Scotland (PHS) and MoD and produced some preliminary data on Veterans in Scotland, in terms of numbers with different physical and mental health conditions. This has included some data on geographical regions where there may be more veterans located. A working group within the Network on data and information is in the development stages and this group is intended to drive forward more work on this.

Lines

The recent events in Afghanistan will have an impact on our veterans particularly those that served in Afghanistan and the families and friends of those who were injured or sadly lost their lives there.

- Veterans may currently be experiencing increased mental health and emotional difficulties in light of the events of recent weeks. It is crucial that they have access to the right support and help when they need it.
- Mental health support can be accessed through our specialist veterans' support organisations Veterans First Point and Combat Stress. Veterans and their families can also access more general mental health services such as the NHS24 Mental Health Hub and the Breathing Space telephone support service.
- On 20 August we issued a series of tweets from @scotgovhealth highlighting support available, both veteran specific and general, for veterans' mental health, recognising the impact of recent events on those that served in Afghanistan. This included a quote from the Minister for Mental Wellbeing encouraging veterans to use the services if they need them.

We are strongly committed to supporting the mental health of our veterans and work closely with councils, the NHS, charities and other organisations to reach out to veterans to offer the right support at the right time.

- Veterans have access to a full range of community, hospital and specialist NHS mental health services.
- A range of evidence based treatments are available, including for PTSD, determined by individually assessed needs.
- Individuals with PTSD can have other mental or physical health needs, and the NHS provides a holistic approach to care and treatment.
- Everyone in Scotland has the right to safe, compassionate care which meets their needs and respects their rights.

We aim to ensure that Veterans and their families have access to mental health services as they transition from service.

- Many of the key themes and commitments in the Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 will impact positively on veterans and their families, which has improving access to services and supporting earlier intervention at its core.
- The Strategy highlights the Scottish Government's support for the ethos of the Armed Forces Covenant and, as set out in Renewing Our Commitments, that no one should suffer disadvantage as a result of military service.
- In supporting efforts to meet the needs of veterans and their families, the Strategy encourages local partnerships to consider how best to provide services locally for them.

We have continued to support Veterans First Point and Combat Stress who have adapted their services and continued to deliver support to veterans throughout the COVID-19 period.

Veterans First Point

- The Scottish Government and six local health boards continue to jointly fund the Veterans First Point Network which offers an one-stop-shop for Veterans no matter their need.
- The current Scottish Government funding supports 50% of the total running costs of six Veteran First Point Centres with the other 50% provided by local NHS Health Boards.
- The Scottish Government have provided nearly £3.7 million to support the network of Veterans' First Point Services since 2017-18, including £664,383 in the 2021-22 financial year.

We launched the Scottish Veterans Care Network in November 2020, responding to recommendations from the Scottish Veterans' Commissioner, highlighting veteran's mental health as the first priority.

- The Network will ensure that the Veteran's Mental Health Action Plan complements Scotland's 10-year Mental Health Strategy.
- The Veteran's Mental Health Action Plan will be completed by the end of 2021, with preliminary findings available in September 2021.

- The Network will facilitate the sharing of good practice and expertise across Scotland, as well as adding to the resilience of existing services.
- The Network will address vital issues for veterans such as access to specialist and mainstream services, and awareness of veterans' needs among health professionals.

Students from Afghanistan

1. Summary

To provide information:

- On the number of Afghanistan students offered a place within Scottish FE/HE
- Provide context with historical data, including information on gender split.
- Provide an update on the Chevening scholarship uptake in Scotland.
- Provide an update on Scottish Government activity.
- Annex A and B provide additional data supplementing the narrative.

[REDACTED Exemption 38(1)(b) and Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

From: [REDACTED]

Directorate for External Affairs
16th August 2021

First Minister
Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

UPDATE ON AFGHANISTAN

Purpose

1. To update the First Minister on the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

Priority

2. Routine

Background

Afghanistan

3. The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist group that ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001. The regime was toppled by a US led invasion in 2001 after the 9/11 attacks. The Taliban subsequently regrouped and has since led an insurgency against the international security forces, and the Afghanistan government. In 2020 the Taliban signed a peace agreement with the United States, and began negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan about power sharing.
4. Following UK and US military forces from Afghanistan in July, the Taliban has gone from controlling 90 of Afghanistan's 398 districts to controlling 345 districts. The Taliban entered the capital on Sunday 15th August after President Ghani left, reportedly for Uzbekistan. The Taliban have taken control of the presidential palace in Kabul. Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told the BBC they want a 'peaceful transfer of power'.

International Response

5. [REDACTED exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK response

6. [REDACTED exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Humanitarian

7. UNHCR have reported that a quarter of a million Afghans have been displaced since May with 80% of them being women and children. Even before the most recent crisis 18.4 Million people were in need of humanitarian assistance with the UN Humanitarian response plan of 1.3 Billion USD only 38% financed.
8. While many ex-patriates will have been advised by diplomatic missions to leave, some aid workers will choose to stay to ensure continued support to Afghans in need, however it is also likely a number of both international and national aid agency staff will seek to leave Afghanistan which will further weaken the aid delivery
9. Scottish Government officials have made contact with the major Scottish relief agencies through our “Humanitarian Emergency Framework” to establish their plans for continued presence in Afghanistan, whether there is any intention to relocate, and also any additional financing requirements. The Disaster Emergency Committee, which SG finances, is considering whether to mobilise a new appeal for Afghanistan tomorrow. We will update.

Afghan LE staff scheme

10. The Afghan LE staff scheme has been in operation since 2013 and provides a range of support to current and former LES who have worked for British Forces or other British Government institutions (and who meet the criteria), including to relocate to the UK with their dependants. This policy recognises both their work for the UK in Afghanistan and the threat to those who exposed to public recognition. Five Scottish local authorities, including Glasgow, took part in the scheme prior to June 2021 and welcomed 134 families (383 individuals, including children).
11. The scheme operates in a similar way to refugee resettlement, although those arriving do not have refugee status (they are given five years leave to remain). The Home Office funding package for local authorities is being extended to twelve months, including £10,500 per person. LES will have the right to work and to access welfare benefits.
12. The relocation was stepped of LE staff was stepped up in June 2021 in the light of the planned withdrawal of troops by September. From June up to 13 August, nearly [REDACTED]people arrived in the UK. By the end of last week, [REDACTED] families had completed their quarantine (which takes place in England) and arrived at host local authorities in Scotland. [REDACTED] Some local authorities are awaiting a decision from their political leadership on return from the summer break.
13. Sourcing sufficient accommodation quickly is the biggest issue, particularly as some of the families are large. [REDACTED]
14. [REDACTED]

Refugees and asylum seekers

15. The impact of the current situation on displacement will be felt firstly within Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. It is likely that relatively few people from Afghanistan will have the means to travel quickly to Europe or the UK to seek asylum. However, over time without any improvement in the political situation, there is likely to be an increase in the number of Afghans seeking refuge and potentially attempting dangerous journeys to do so.
16. The UK Government operates a refugee resettlement programme which supports the most vulnerable refugees to come to the UK (on a similar basis to the programme for Syrian refugees). To be considered for resettlement, people must be outside their country of nationality and be registered with UNHCR.

[REDACTED]
Directorate for External Affairs
[REDACTED]

Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Afghanistan

19 August 2021

The people of Afghanistan need our support now more than ever. Our organizations are committed to helping and protecting them. We will stay in Afghanistan and we will deliver.

At the start of 2021, half the population of Afghanistan – including more than 4 million women and nearly 10 million children – already needed humanitarian assistance. One third of the population was facing crisis and emergency levels of acute food insecurity and more than half of all children under 5 years of age were malnourished.

Those needs have risen sharply because of conflict, drought and COVID-19. Since the end of May, the number of people internally displaced because of conflict and in need of immediate humanitarian aid more than doubled, reaching 550,000.

We echo the UN Secretary-General's call for all parties (including the Taliban) to cease all violence and comply with international humanitarian law and human rights. They must allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian workers – both male and female staff – so they can deliver aid to civilians in need wherever they are.

The humanitarian operation will also depend on funding, movement within, to and from Afghanistan, and access to health facilities. The critical role of front-line humanitarian organizations must be supported.

All parties must protect civilians and respect the rights and freedoms of all. Today we reiterate our commitment to promoting the rights of everyone in Afghanistan, including women and girls. Important gains made in recent years – including on gender equality and girls' access to a quality education – must be preserved. And much more needs to be done to realize the rights of women and girls. We will continue to engage to make sure this happens. Civilians must also be allowed to seek safety and protection, including the right to seek asylum.

We call on Governments to keep borders open to receive Afghan refugees fleeing from violence and persecution and refrain from deportations. This is not the time to abandon the Afghan people. Member States must provide all possible support to Afghan nationals at risk, including a moratorium on repatriations. We urge neighbouring countries to ensure the protection of Afghans displaced across their borders.

We call on donors to remain steadfast in their support for humanitarian operations in Afghanistan and to support resilient livelihoods. The humanitarian community reached almost 8 million people in the first half of 2021 with aid. Timely funding saves lives, protects livelihoods, eases suffering and prevents further displacement. A total of US\$1.3 billion is required to reach almost 16 million people with

humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan; only 37 per cent of required funds have been received, leaving a shortfall of almost \$800 million.

The international community has spent decades working with the people of Afghanistan to make progress. Now the international community must continue to support the people of Afghanistan if those gains are not to be reversed. Humanitarian funding must be sustained.

Now, as always, we remain committed to the people of Afghanistan and will do everything possible to stay and provide assistance, especially to the most vulnerable.

Signatories

- Mr. Sean Callahan, President and the Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Relief Services (**CRS**)
- Mr. Dominic MacSorley, Chief Executive Officer, **ConcernWorldwide**
- Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**)
- Mr. Ignacio Packer, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (**ICVA**)
- Mr. Samuel Worthington, Chief Executive Officer, **InterAction**
- Mr. António Vitorino, Director General, International Organization for Migration (**IOM**)
- Mr. Martin Griffiths, Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**)
- Ms. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**)
- Ms. Abby Maxman, Chair, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), and President and CEO, **Oxfam America**
- Ms. Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, **Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons**
- Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (**UNDP**)
- Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (**UNFPA**)
- Mr. Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**)
- Ms. Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (**UNICEF**)
- Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director, World Food Programme (**WFP**)
- Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (**WHO**)

UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO AFGHANISTAN

August 2021

Introduction

1. In the wake of the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan, there has been a rapid deterioration in the security and human rights situation in large parts of the country.¹ The Taliban has taken control of a rapidly increasing number of districts, with their advance accelerating in August 2021, to capture 26 out of 34 of Afghanistan's provincial capitals in the space of ten days, ultimately taking control of the presidential palace in Kabul.² The upsurge of violence has a serious impact on civilians, including women and children.³ UNHCR is concerned about the risk of human rights violations against civilians, including against women and girls and against Afghans who are perceived by the Taliban to have a current or past association with the Afghan government or with the international military forces in Afghanistan or with international organizations in the country.⁴

¹ CNN, *Intelligence Assessments Warn Afghan Capital Could Be Cut Off and Collapse in Coming Months*, 12 August 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/11/politics/afghanistan-intelligence-assessments-kabul-taliban/index.html>; New York Times, *Could the Taliban Take Over Afghanistan? Here's What We Know.*, 11 August 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/08/11/world/asia/taliban-afghanistan-troops-explainer.html; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths Statement on Afghanistan*, 9 August 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator>.

² AP, *Taliban Sweep into Afghan Capital after Government Collapses*, 16 August 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-kabul-bagram-e1ed33fe0c665ee67ba132c51b8e32a5>; Aljazeera, *Taliban Says Afghanistan War Over as President Flees: Live*, 16 August 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/16/taliban-says-afghanistan-war-over-as-president-diplomats-leave; Aljazeera, *Afghanistan: Mapping the Advance of the Taliban*, 15 August 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/15/afghanistan-mapping-the-advance-of-the-taliban-interactive; CNN, *Taliban Takes Control of Kabul's Presidential Palace*, 15 August 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/world/live-news/afghanistan-taliban-us-troops-intl-08-15-21/index.html>; Aljazeera, *Afghanistan: Mapping the Advance of the Taliban*, 15 August 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/15/afghanistan-mapping-the-advance-of-the-taliban-interactive; Reuters, *Timeline: The Taliban's Rapid Advance across Afghanistan*, 16 August 2021, www.reuters.com/world/timeline-talibans-rapid-advance-across-afghanistan-2021-08-15/.

³ UNHCR, *UNHCR Warns Afghanistan's Conflict Taking the Heaviest Toll on Displaced Women and Children*, 13 August 2021, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/8/611617c55/unhcr-warns-afghanistans-conflict-taking-heaviest-toll-displaced-women.html; BBC, *Afghanistan War: At Least 27 Children Killed in Three Days, UN Says*, 10 August 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58142983; UNICEF, *At Least 27 Children Killed and 136 Injured in Past 72 Hours as Violence Escalates in Afghanistan*, 9 August 2021, www.unicef.org/press-releases/least-27-children-killed-and-136-injured-past-72-hours-violence-escalates. Between 1 January and 30 June 2021, UNAMA documented 5,183 civilian casualties (1,659 killed and 3,524 injured), representing an increase of 47 per cent compared with the first half of 2020. UNAMA reported a steep increase in the number of civilian casualties toward to end of this period: between 1 May and 30 June 2021, UNAMA recorded 2,392 civilian casualties, nearly as many as were documented in the entire four preceding months. UNAMA, *Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict - Midyear Update: 1 January to 30 June 2021*, July 2021, https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_poc_midyear_report_2021_26_july.pdf.

⁴ See for example, Sky News, *Afghanistan: 'They Are in Grave Danger' - Fears for Influential Women Who 'Spearheaded Change' in Country*, 16 August 2021, <https://news.sky.com/story/afghanistan-they-are-in-grave-danger-fears-for-influential-women-who-spearheaded-change-in-country-12382778>; NBC, *Afghan Women Fear 'Dark' Future, Loss of Rights as Taliban Gain Ground*, 15 August 2021, www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-women-fear-dark-future-loss-rights-taliban-gains-ground-n1276636; National Geographic, *As the Taliban Return, Afghanistan's Past Threatens its Future*, 15 August 2021, www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/as-the-taliban-rise-again-afghanistans-past-threatens-its-present; ABC, *Taliban Fighters Executing Surrendering Troops, Which Could Amount to War Crimes, U.S. Officials Say*, 12 August 2021, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-warn-taliban-fighters-committing-atrocities-amount-war/story?id=79424000>; Wall Street

2. It is estimated that since the beginning of 2021 over 550,000 Afghans have been internally displaced by conflict within the country, including 126,000 new IDPs between 7 July 2021 and 9 August 2021.⁵ While there are as yet no precise figures about the number of Afghans who have fled the country due to the hostilities and human rights violations, sources indicate that tens of thousands of Afghans have crossed international borders in recent weeks.⁶

Access to the Territory and International Protection

3. As the situation in Afghanistan remains fluid and uncertain, UNHCR calls on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Afghanistan access to their territories and to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement at all times. UNHCR notes the imperative to ensure that the right to seek asylum is not compromised, that borders are kept open and that people in need of international protection are not consigned to areas inside their country of origin that could potentially be dangerous. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that states have obligations, including under customary international law, to preserve cross-border access for civilians fleeing conflict and not to return forcibly refugees. The principle of non-refoulement includes non-rejection at the frontier.
4. All claims of nationals and former habitual residents of Afghanistan seeking international protection should be processed in fair and efficient procedures in accordance with international and regional refugee law. UNHCR is concerned that recent developments in Afghanistan are giving rise to an increase in international protection needs for people fleeing Afghanistan, whether as refugees under the 1951 Convention or regional refugee instruments, or as beneficiaries of other forms of international protection.⁷ The same applies to those who were already in countries of asylum before the recent escalation of violence in Afghanistan. In light of the volatile situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR welcomes steps taken by some countries of asylum to suspend decision-making on international protection needs of nationals and former habitual residents of Afghanistan, until such time as the situation in the country has stabilized and reliable information about the security and human rights situation is available to

Journal, *Afghans Tell of Executions, Forced 'Marriages' in Taliban-Held Areas*, 12 August 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/afghans-tell-of-executions-forced-marriages-in-taliban-held-areas-11628780820; USA Today, *'No Possible Life' Under Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Fear Murder, Oppression after US Withdrawal*, 5 August 2021, <https://eu.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/world/2021/08/05/afghanistan-withdrawal-taliban-takeover-leaves-women-constant-risk/7426022002/>; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Afghanistan: Advancing Taliban Execute Detainees*, 3 August 2021, www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/03/afghanistan-advancing-taliban-execute-detainees; HRW, *Afghanistan: Threats of Taliban Atrocities in Kandahar*, 23 July 2021, www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/23/afghanistan-threats-taliban-atrocities-kandahar; ABC News, *Afghanistan's Embassy Says Videos Show Afghan Civilians Being Tortured, Murdered by Taliban*, 16 July 2021, www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-16/taliban-militants-afghanistan-civilian-torture/100300730; Wall Street Journal, *A Generation of Afghan Professionals Flees Ahead of Taliban Advance*, 7 July 2021, www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-afghan-youth-afghanistan-american-troops-pullout-taliban-biden-11625667435.

⁵ OCHA, *Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements*, accessed 16 August 2021, www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps. See also, UNHCR, *Afghan Refugees Reach Iran as Violence Escalates*, 9 August 2021, www.unhcr.org/news/press/2021/8/611141ec4/afghan-refugees-reach-iran-violence-escalates.

⁶ The Independent, *Iran Sets Up Refugee Camps along Border as Afghans Flee Taliban Rule*, 16 August 2021, www.independent.co.uk/asia/south-asia/iran-afghanistan-refugee-camps-taliban-b1902953.html; Sky News, *Afghanistan: Chaos as Crowds Descend on Pakistan Border after Fleeing Taliban*, 13 August 2021, <https://news.sky.com/video/afghanistan-chaos-as-crowds-descend-on-pakistan-border-after-fleeing-taliban-12380717>; New York Times, *As Fears Grip Afghanistan, Hundreds of Thousands Flee*, 31 July 2021 (updated 9 August 2021, www.nytimes.com/2021/07/31/world/asia/afghanistan-migration-taliban.html); Gandhara, *'We Don't Have A Choice': Thousands Of Afghans Fleeing Abroad Daily As Taliban Violence Soars*, 26 July 2021, <https://gandhara.ferl.org/afghan-refugees-taliban-violence/31378092.html>. "The irregular entry of Afghans into Iran is currently estimated by the Government of Iran at approximately 5,000 per day, or up to three times the previously estimated daily average of 1,400-2,500." UNHCR, *Afghanistan Situation: Emergency Preparedness and Response in Iran*, 20 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3IWZaG0>.

⁷ Applicable frameworks include that of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol; the EU Qualification Directive [European Union, *Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on Standards for the Qualification of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Beneficiaries of International Protection, for a Uniform Status for Refugees or for Persons Eligible for Subsidiary Protection, and for the Content of the Protection Granted (recast)* ("Qualification Directive"), 13 December 2011, www.refworld.org/docid/4f06fa5e2.html]; or other applicable regional frameworks, including the 1969 OAU Convention and the Cartagena Declaration [Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, *Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama*, 22 November 1984, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36ec.html].

assess the international protection needs of individual applicants. In view of the volatility of the situation in Afghanistan, UNHCR does not consider it appropriate to deny international protection to Afghans and former habitual residents of Afghanistan on the basis of an internal flight or relocation alternative.

5. For individuals whose claim had been rejected prior to recent events, the current situation in Afghanistan may give rise to changed circumstances, which need to be considered if a new asylum claim is submitted.
6. There may be individuals who have been associated with acts that bring them within the scope of the exclusion clauses contained in Article 1F of the 1951 Convention.⁸ In such cases, it will be necessary to examine carefully any issues of individual responsibility for crimes which may give rise to exclusion from international refugee protection. In addition, to preserve the civilian character of asylum, States would need to assess the situation of arrivals carefully so as to identify armed elements and separate them from the civilian refugee population.⁹

Non-Return Advisory

7. As the situation in Afghanistan is volatile and may remain uncertain for some time to come, coupled with an unfolding humanitarian emergency in the country,¹⁰ UNHCR calls on States to suspend the forcible return of nationals and former habitual residents of Afghanistan, including those who have had their asylum claims rejected. A moratorium on forced returns to Afghanistan would need to stay in place until the situation in the country has stabilized, pending an assessment of when the changed situation in the country would permit return in safety and dignity. The bar on forcible return serves as a minimum standard and needs to remain in place until such time as the security, rule of law, and human rights situation in Afghanistan has significantly improved to permit a safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.
8. In line with the commitment by UN Member States under the Global Refugee Forum to the equitable sharing of responsibility for international refugee protection, UNHCR also considers that it would not be appropriate to forcibly return nationals or former habitual residents of Afghanistan to countries in the region, in view of the fact that countries such as Iran and Pakistan have for decades generously hosted the vast majority of the total global number of Afghan refugees.¹¹
9. UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation in Afghanistan with a view to assessing the international protection needs arising out of the current situation.

UNHCR
August 2021

⁸ UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, CR/GIP/03/05, www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html.

⁹ See UNHCR, *Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum*, September 2006, www.refworld.org/docid/452b9bca2.html.

¹⁰ UNHCR, UNHCR Warns of Imminent Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan, 13 July 2021, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60ed3ba34/unhcr-warns-imminent-humanitarian-crisis-afghanistan.html.

¹¹ By the end of 2020, there were 2,215,445 registered Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan. UNHCR, *Data Portal: Afghanistan Situation*, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan> (accessed 12 August 2021).



- Council of the EU Statements and remarks 31 August 2021 18:10

Statement on the situation in Afghanistan

1. The EU Ministers of Home Affairs met today for an extraordinary Council meeting to discuss developments in Afghanistan, more specifically in relation to potential implications in the areas of international protection, migration and security. The seriousness of the evolving situation requires a determined and concerted response to its many dimensions by the EU and the international community.
2. The evacuation of our citizens and to the extent possible of Afghan nationals who have cooperated with the EU and its Member States and their families, has been conducted as a matter of priority and will be continued. In this regard, intensive work is underway to identify targeted solutions for the remaining specific cases of persons at risk in Afghanistan.
3. As an immediate priority, the EU will continue to coordinate with international partners, in particular the UN and its agencies, on the stabilization of the region and to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the vulnerable populations, in particular women and children, in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries. To this end, the EU and its Member States will step up financial support to relevant international organisations.
4. The EU will engage and strengthen its support to third countries, in particular the neighbouring and transit countries, hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees, to reinforce their capacities to provide protection, dignified and safe reception conditions and sustainable livelihood for refugees and host communities. The EU will also cooperate with those countries to prevent illegal migration from the region, reinforce border management capacity and prevent smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. To this effect, the mandates of EU agencies should be used to their full extent. In particular, the European Asylum Support Office should step up its external operations for asylum capacity building. Furthermore, as part of global efforts, support could be provided in the form of resettlement on a voluntary basis, prioritising vulnerable persons, such as women and children.
5. The Action Plan on Afghanistan should be prioritised and revised in light of this statement and changed circumstances to make it more operational. A Team Europe approach is needed to work with Afghanistan's neighbours to address the impact of displacement in the region. The Council urges the Commission to assess all options for the necessary financial assistance under the Multiannual Financial Framework, in particular NDICI and asylum, migration and border management instruments.
6. Based on lessons learned, the EU and its Member States stand determined to act jointly to prevent the recurrence of uncontrolled large-scale illegal migration movements faced in the past, by preparing a coordinated and orderly response. Incentives to illegal migration should be avoided. The EU should also strengthen the support to the countries in Afghanistan's immediate neighbourhood to ensure that those in need receive adequate protection primarily in the region. The need for unified and coordinated external but also internal communication is key. Targeted information campaigns should be launched to combat the narratives used by smugglers, including in the on-line environment, which encourage people to embark on dangerous and illegal journeys towards Europe.

7. The EU and its Member States will do their utmost to ensure that the situation in Afghanistan does not lead to new security threats for EU citizens. All efforts must be pursued to ensure that the Taliban regime ceases all ties and practices with international terrorism and that Afghanistan does not become once again a sanctuary for terrorists and organised crime groups. The EU will use all its available tools to closely monitor and respond to developments on the ground that might impact its security, in particular in the area of organised crime and terrorism, including its financing. Europol will provide an analysis of the criminal risks linked to the situation in Afghanistan. Exchange of information and intelligence, in line with national competences, also with third countries, and the sharing of regular threat assessments, are of utmost importance. The timely performance of security checks of persons being evacuated from Afghanistan remains crucial.
8. The EU and its Member States, with the support of Frontex, remain determined to effectively protect the EU external borders and prevent unauthorized entries, and assist the most affected Member States. Appropriate security checks should be carried out, including through the full use of relevant EU databases, as well as registration in Eurodac. Furthermore, as part of our comprehensive approach to external cooperation on migration, third-country national clauses in the readmission agreements between the EU and certain transit countries should be used where the legal requirements are met. The Council recognizes the need to support and provide adequate protection to those in need, in line with EU law and our international obligations, and to bring closer Member States' practices in the reception and processing of Afghan asylum seekers.
9. The Council will closely follow the developments in the area of international protection, migration and security. It will respond to attempts to instrumentalise illegal migration for political purposes and other hybrid threats, including by developing new tools. The Council will also monitor closely the implementation of the actions mentioned above and ensure regular stocktaking in order to further improve the EU's crisis management capacity, building upon the tools already developed. Coordination of all dimensions of this situation (humanitarian, development, international protection, migration, security, foreign policy) is crucial.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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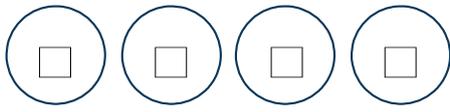
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31st Special Session of the Human Rights Council

The serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan

Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

24 August 2021

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Colleagues and friends,

At this critical moment, the people of Afghanistan look to the Human Rights Council to defend and protect their rights. The need to prevent the commission of human rights abuses of even greater magnitude and scope make this an essential meeting.

The rapid seizure of much of the country, including the capital, by the Taliban has raised grave fears of a return to past patterns of human rights violations, and stoked desperation among many Afghans.

In recent weeks, my Office has received harrowing and credible reports of the impact on civilians of violations of international humanitarian law, as well as violations and abuses of human rights, by the parties to the conflict.

UNAMA's [Protection of Civilians](#) report from 1 January to 30 June this year already indicated an increase in civilian casualties of nearly 50 percent compared to the same period in 2020. Unquestionably, that toll further increased over the months of July and August.

In particular, we have also received credible reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law, and human rights abuses, taking place in many areas under effective Taliban control. They include, among others, summary executions of civilians and *hors de combat* members of the Afghan national security forces; restrictions on the rights of women – including their right to move around freely and girls' right to attend schools; recruitment of child soldiers; and repression of peaceful protest and expression of dissent.

Many people now fear reprisals by the Taliban against those working with the Government or the international community; people who have worked to advance human rights and justice; or those whose lifestyles and opinions are simply perceived to be opposed to the Taliban ideology.

There are grave fears for women, for journalists and for the new generation of civil society leaders who have emerged in the past years. Afghanistan's diverse ethnic and religious minorities are also at risk of violence and repression, given previous patterns of serious violations under Taliban rule and reports of killings and targeted attacks in recent months.

The harrowing humanitarian situation – aggravated by sustained drought, the COVID-19 pandemic, and significant shortfalls in enabling economic, social and cultural rights – has further deepened with recent events.

A month ago SRSG Deborah Lyons indicated that 18 million Afghans were facing a dire humanitarian situation. This was double the number in July 2020, amounting to one half the people in the country – and it is set to increase.

UNHCR has [estimated](#) that an additional 270,000 people have been forced to leave their homes and livelihoods since January 2021, bringing the total displaced population to more than 3.5 million. We can expect that significant numbers of people will seek refuge in neighbouring countries or outside the region.

The United Nations is committed to stay and deliver aid to those in greatest need, to support efforts to restore peace and stability and to promote the rights and dignity of all Afghans. With fundamental human rights in the balance, my Office will be working urgently to reinstate arrangements for monitoring human rights violations.

Madam President,

In statements over the recent weeks, the Taliban has pledged to respect and protect human rights.

Taliban spokespeople have made specific commitments to respect women's right to work and girls' right to attend school, within the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law. They have also said they

would respect the rights of members of ethnic and religious minorities, and refrain from reprisals against those who have worked with the Government or the international community.

The onus is now fully on the Taliban to translate these commitments into reality. In seizing effective control of much of the country, they must ensure, in those areas, ongoing respect for the international human rights commitments made by the State – as well as ensuring ongoing, and indeed heightened, provision of essential public services, without discrimination, to all.

International human rights law is immutable. Enjoyment of human rights is not subject to changes in control of territory or *de facto* authority.

Moreover, significant advances in human rights over the past two decades have given the people of Afghanistan a strong stake in a society that values and defends human rights.

Civil society organisations have flourished across the country. Women have assumed public roles and leadership positions in the media and across society. In 2021, 27 percent of members of parliament and one fifth of civil servants were women. Some 3.5 million girls were attending schools – compared to 1999, when no girls could attend secondary school and only 9,000 were enrolled in primary education.

Human rights defenders have contributed to the economic, political and social development of their communities across the country. A courageous and independent national human rights institution has played a front line role. A plurality of voices has been reflected in a flourishing and diverse media. Youth movements across the country have empowered young women and men from diverse ethnic and religious communities. A generation of young people has grown up with hope for a better future, and the knowledge of free, individual choice, while also being deeply attached to Afghanistan's cultural and religious traditions.

These significant advances in human rights have altered mindsets and changed realities. They will not easily be erased.

They are also essential to Afghanistan's future trajectory. For the development and prosperity of any country to be sustainable, people need to live without fear, without discrimination, without repression and with full respect of their human rights.

Moreover, human rights violations undermine the legitimacy of the perpetrators – both vis à vis the people, and also with respect to regional and international institutions and other States.

I strongly urge the Taliban to adopt norms of responsive governance and human rights, and to work to re-establish social cohesion and reconciliation – including through respect for the rights of all who have suffered during the decades of conflict.

A fundamental red line will be the Taliban's treatment of women and girls, and respect for their rights to liberty, freedom of movement, education, self expression and employment, guided by international human rights norms. In particular, ensuring access to quality secondary education for girls will be an essential indicator of commitment to human rights.

Government must remain inclusive – with meaningful participation of women, and representation of Afghanistan's diverse communities – to help in beginning to build confidence, and ensure a future in which all have an equal stake.

There should be genuine, inclusive dialogue, including women, and including members of Afghanistan's diverse ethnic and religious communities, in order to address the underlying problems that the country faces, the root causes of discrimination, and the enduring legacies of decades of conflict.

There should be no reprisals and no sanctions against the thousands of human rights defenders who have contributed to their people's well-being and rights. The mandate, operations and independence of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission should be respected.

I also urge open access for humanitarian assistance, and the protection of all humanitarian personnel.

Madam President,

I call on all States to create safe pathways for Afghan refugees and migrants, broaden asylum and resettlement programs and immediately halt the deportation of Afghans who seek protection. Neighbouring countries will need additional financial and logistical resources to assist refugees – and all States must be mindful of their obligation to give protection and assistance to those fleeing danger.

I also ask States to use their influence with the Taliban to encourage respect for all human rights, for all. Islamic-majority countries in particular could share their successful experiences of implementing international human rights norms in their cultural and religious contexts.

I urge this Council to take bold and vigorous action, commensurate with the gravity of this crisis, by establishing a dedicated mechanism to closely monitor the evolving human rights situation in Afghanistan, including – in particular – the Taliban's implementation of its promises, with a focus on prevention.

I further note that given the urgency of this situation, an update by my Office at the coming September session may be necessary. I am also willing to update the Council intersessionally, on an urgent basis, in the coming months.

United and unequivocal action by Member States will be an important signal to the Taliban that a return to past practices will not find acceptance in the international community – neither now, nor in the future. The Afghan people have come too far for such an outcome to ever be tolerable.

Thank you, Madam President.

AFGHANISTAN

ISSUE: The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan following US withdrawal has raised the following issues in the Scottish media:

- *The Scotsman*, 17 August: **'Why?' asks mother of Scot killed by Taliban.** Scottish veterans who served in Afghanistan and the families of their fallen comrades have questioned the legacy of Britain's two decade-long engagement in the country.
- The Press and Journal, 17 August: **Britons flee Afghanistan amid fears of refugee crisis.** A further 200 UK troops are to be sent to Kabul to evacuate British citizens and local allies from Afghanistan.
- Daily Record, 17 August: **SNP calls on BoJo to take in refugees.** Boris Johnson has been urged by the SNP to offer refuge to Afghans desperately trying to flee from The Taliban. SNP Westminster leader Ian Blackford last night insisted Scotland "stands ready to play its full part" in resettling refugees who have fled from the crisis-torn country. Blackford said the UK Government should lead in "opening our doors" and has called for a four-nation summit on how many refugees could be
- The Guardian, 17 August: **Refugees UK urged to set up settlement scheme for more Afghans** Boris Johnson is under pressure from his own MPs to urgently set up a new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees.
- The Scotsman, 17 August: Greens call for use of humanitarian fund. Money from the Scottish Government's **Humanitarian Emergency Fund** should be used to help people fleeing the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The **operation of refugee resettlement programmes** is a matter reserved to the UK Government. Home Office statistics published in May 2021 show that up to 31 March 2021, over 3,500 refugees were received into all 32 Scottish local authorities under the Syrian and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes.. In June 2021, the Home Office asked local authorities to prioritise provision of resettlement places for relocation of Afghan Locally Engaged staff. Media reports on 16 August suggest the UK Government will establish a dedicated Afghan refugee resettlement scheme focusing on women at risk.

The **Afghan Locally Employed staff (LES) scheme** provides support, including relocation, to people who worked for British institutions in Afghanistan. Relocation was stepped up in June 2021 in the light of the planned withdrawal of US troops by September and the rapidly deteriorating situation. Nearly [REDACTED] people had arrived in the UK from June up to 13 August 2021, with [REDACTED] families having completed their quarantine and arrived at host local authorities in Scotland. [These figures are sensitive and should not be disclosed.] Sourcing housing quickly is the biggest issue, and the Home Office plans to use hotels, where it has not been possible to secure local authority properties. [REDACTED]

AFGHANISTAN

Top Lines

- We call on all involved to ensure humanitarian access for those in need in Afghanistan, and to avoid further violence. We are deeply concerned about the risks posed to civilian lives.
- We urgently call on the UK Government and international community to consider urgently how civilians - especially women, girls and those seeking refuge - can be protected. We are in discussions with our humanitarian partners about what more can be done to support those in need.
- As we did with refugees from Syria, the Scottish Government is willing to play our full part and do all we can to help those in peril.
- **QUOTE:** “*We cannot and must not abandon the people of Afghanistan,*” UN Security General Antonio Guterres, to the UN Security Council 16 August

Refugee resettlement

- Scotland stands by to play a full role in the refugee resettlement programme from Afghanistan
- Scotland has a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere.
- We are committed to supporting their integration into our communities and should be confident that Scotland will benefit from their presence.
- We are clear that Scotland must play its part in welcoming and supporting refugees from Afghanistan.
- We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.

Scottish local authorities led the way in welcoming refugees fleeing the horror of the conflict in Syria.

- Along with third sector, faith and community organisations, they are providing the safety and security people need to rebuild their lives in their new homes.
- Scotland is proud to have received over 3,500 refugees under the Syrian Resettlement and Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Schemes.
- All 32 Scottish local authorities have now received refugees in their areas.

The Scottish Government recognises the hugely important work that Locally Employed staff undertook for the UK in Afghanistan and the risks they face as a result of that service.

- Over the past seven years, Scottish local authorities have provided new homes and support to people who worked for the UK in Afghanistan and continue to do so.
- We stand by to provide safe homes for those who need them.

Humanitarian Emergency Fund

AFGHANISTAN

- Our £1 million Humanitarian Emergency Fund is delivered through an expert panel of eight leading humanitarian aid organisations in Scotland, who activate the Fund and advise the Scottish Government.
- We are currently in contact with the panel to understand the situation in Afghanistan, which is being kept under close review.
- The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), which SG finances, is considering whether to mobilise a new appeal for Afghanistan on 17 August **[to be updated once known]**. A DEC appeal would trigger a contribution from the HEF.
- Quote: “*I am particularly concerned by accounts of mounting human rights violations against the women and girls of Afghanistan, who fear a return to the darkest days. It is essential that the hard-won rights of Afghan women and girls are protected. They are looking to the international community for support — the same international community that assured them that opportunities would be expanded, education would be guaranteed, freedoms would spread and rights would be secured.*” UN Security General Antonio Guterres, to the UN Security Council 16 August

Update on Chevening Scholarship and Students from Afghanistan

Officials have reached out to Universities Scotland and have received confirmation that 10 Higher Education Institutions responded to their commission. There are a total of [REDACTED] Afghan national students expected to come to Scotland for study, [REDACTED] of which are returning and [REDACTED] new students. There are [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] others who are applying to enter through a third country.

As yet, there is no information on Chevening Scholarships for academic year 2021/22 for Afghan Nationals. Please see below information about existing Chevening Scholars (those not expected to join this year):

[REDACTED Exemption 38(1)(b) and Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

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Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Affairs
King Charles Street
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19 August 2021

Human Rights and Afghanistan

I am writing to outline a number of concerns in Scotland regarding the current crisis in Afghanistan following the take over of the country by the Taliban.

As you know, the return of the Taliban to power raises particular human rights concerns in relation to women and girls and for members of minority communities. It is essential that UK policy responds directly to the threats to human rights which arise as a result of the collapse of the UK-backed government in Afghanistan.

This includes by ensuring that the UK fulfils its international obligation to provide asylum to individuals who are at risk as a result of their work to promote key human rights, including on issues such as the right of women and girls to access education and to live without fear of violence and discrimination.

The Scottish Government remains committed to playing our full part in providing refuge for Afghans who are at risk of persecution. Scotland has an important contribution to make in supporting refugees, welcoming those fleeing conflict, persecution and human rights violations, and in upholding their internationally-recognised right to asylum.

Whilst we welcome in principle the UK Government's commitment to an Afghan resettlement programme our strong belief is that it doesn't go nearly far enough. The commitment for this year is only 5,000 under the scheme and given the scale of the crisis unfolding in Afghanistan, and the responsibility of the UK and other countries have for the situation there, we call on the UK to do far more.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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As we did with refugees from Syria, the Scottish Government is willing to play our full part. We are committed to supporting the integration of Afghan refugees into our communities and enabling them to rebuild their lives here.

It is also important that the UK further increases the aid provision for Afghanistan. Whilst the doubling announced during the debate on 18 August is welcome, it comes on the back of drastic cuts to aid for Afghanistan made earlier this year meaning that it will still be less than the aid package for Afghanistan in 2020. The UK must set the bar high for other countries to follow and play a key role in ensuring that aid in Afghanistan reaches those who need it most.

We welcome many of the statements made by the UN and world leaders about protecting human rights for all. We now call on the UK Government to play a full role in turning the rhetoric into reality, whilst realising the scale of the challenge created by the return to Taliban rule.

In my role as Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for human rights I also want to underline the requirement for urgent UK assistance to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and in particular the provision of visas and relocation support for those members of its staff who have been identified as being at particular risk as a result of recent developments.

The UK's three UN-accredited National Human Rights Institutions (the Scottish Human Rights Commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission) wrote to you jointly on 17 August drawing attention to the grave risks now facing the AIHRC and its staff. In their letter, the three UK NHRIs requested that the UK provides urgent assistance to 90 individuals and, specifically, that the UK make available visas and support to enable members of staff who are at particular risk to relocate to the UK. I understand that the AIHRC has already made a formal request for assistance to the UK Ambassador in Kabul.

The Scottish Government accordingly asks that your officials extend every possible form of support and assistance to the AIHRC, in line with the requests received from the AIHRC and the UK's own NHRIs.

I would like also to take this opportunity to highlight the situation of Afghan human rights defenders more generally, together with concerns in relation to members of the legal profession in Afghanistan, including in particular female members of the judiciary. I would urge you to take particular account of the need to provide protection to these and other groups, including where necessary by facilitating their relocation to the UK, as part of the UK's overall response to this crisis.

We are of course all aware that many others will also require support in coming days and I know the UK Government, and your department, is already working with a variety of partners and agencies to identify specific needs. The Scottish Government will continue to liaise closely with your officials to share details when cases are raised with us.

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I and my colleagues in the Scottish Government stand ready to offer every assistance in these grave times and urge you to ensure that the UK takes all necessary action to assist the AHRC and others who now require our urgent practical support.

SHONA ROBISON

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Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men - new investigation

Killings occurred after Taliban took control of Ghazni province last month

One man was strangled with scarf and had arm muscles sliced off

Another man so heavily shot in the chest he was buried in pieces

'The cold-blooded brutality of these killings is... a horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring' - Agnès Callamard

Taliban fighters massacred nine ethnic Hazara men after taking control of Afghanistan's Ghazni province last month, Amnesty International said today.

On-the-ground researchers spoke to eyewitnesses who gave harrowing accounts of the killings, which took place between 4-6 July in the village of Mundarakht, Malistan district. Six of the men were shot and three were tortured to death, including one man who was strangled with his own scarf and had his arm muscles sliced off.

The brutal killings likely represent a tiny fraction of the total death toll inflicted by the Taliban to date, as the group have cut mobile phone service in many of the areas they have recently captured, controlling which photographs and videos are then shared from these regions.

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, said:

"The cold-blooded brutality of these killings is a reminder of the Taliban's past record, and a horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring," said

"These targeted killings are proof that ethnic and religious minorities remain at particular risk under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

"We urge the UN Security Council to adopt an emergency resolution demanding that the Taliban respect international human rights law and ensure the safety of all Afghans regardless of their ethnic background or religious beliefs.

"The UN Human Rights Council must launch a robust investigative mechanism to document, collect and preserve evidence of ongoing crimes and human rights abuses across Afghanistan. That will prove critical to ensure informed decision-making by the international community, and combat the impunity which continues to fuel grave crimes in the country."

Torture and murder in the context of an armed conflict are violations of the Geneva Conventions, and constitute war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which is already considering crimes committed in relation to the conflict in Afghanistan.

Tortured and murdered

Amnesty interviewed eyewitnesses and reviewed photographic evidence in the aftermath of the killings in the village of Mundarakht last month.

On 3 July, fighting intensified in Ghazni province between Afghan government forces and the Taliban. Villagers told Amnesty that they fled into the mountains to traditional *iloks*, their summer grazing land, where they have basic shelters.

There was little food for the 30 families that fled. The next morning (4 July) five men and four women returned to the village to gather supplies. On their return, they found that their homes had been looted, and that Taliban fighters were lying in wait for them.

One man, 45-year-old Wahed Qaraman, was taken from his home by Taliban fighters who broke his legs and arms, shot him in the right leg, pulled his hair out, and beat his face with a blunt object.

Another man, 63-year-old Jaffar Rahimi, was severely beaten and accused of working for the Afghan government, after cash was found in his pocket. The Taliban strangled him to death with his own scarf. Three people involved in the burial of Rahimi said that his body was covered in bruises, and that the muscles of his arms had been carved off.

Sayed Abdul Hakim, 40, was taken from his home, beaten with sticks and rifle butts, had his arms bound, and was shot twice in the leg and twice in the chest. His body was then dumped next to a nearby creek.

One eyewitness, who assisted with the burials, told Amnesty: “We asked the Taliban why they did this, and they told us, ‘When it is the time of conflict, everyone dies, it doesn’t matter if you have guns or not. It is the time of war.’”

Killing spree

During the two-day killing spree, three other men – Ali Jan Tata, aged 65; Za Faqeer Shah, 23; and Ghulam Rasool Reza, 53 – were ambushed and executed as they left the *iloks*, and attempted to pass through Mundarakht to reach their homes in the nearby hamlet of Wuli.

In Mundarakht, they were stopped at a Taliban checkpoint, where they were executed. Ali Jan Tata was shot in the chest, and Rasool was shot in the neck. According to witnesses, Za Faqeer Shah’s chest was so riddled with bullets that he was buried in pieces. The men’s bodies were thrown into the creek alongside Sayed Abdul Hakim.

Three more men were also killed in their home village. Eyewitnesses told Amnesty that Sayeed Ahmad, 75, insisted the Taliban would not harm him as he was an elderly man, and that he intended to return to feed his cattle. He was executed with two bullets to the chest and another in his side.

Zia Marefat, 28, suffered from depression and rarely left his home in Mundarakht. He refused to leave after the Taliban took control of the village on 3 July, but eventually

did so after being urged by his mother and others to flee for his own safety. However, as he walked alone to the *ilok*, he was captured by the Taliban, who killed him with a shot to the temple.

Karim Bakhsh Karimi, 45, who had an undiagnosed mental health condition which caused him to act erratically, did not flee with the rest of the villagers. He was also shot, execution-style, in the head.

Protection urgently needed

The Taliban have seized power in Afghanistan following the collapse of the government in recent days. Amnesty [has called for the protection](#) of thousands of Afghans at serious risk of Taliban reprisals, from academics and journalists to activists and women human rights defenders.

Dominic Raab Statement

Our immediate priority is ensuring the safety of our nationals & those who supported our work over the last 20 years.

FCDO Lines (As of 16th August)

- [REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UN Security Council Press Release

The world is following events in Afghanistan with a heavy heart and deep disquiet about what lies ahead. All of us have seen the images in real time. Chaos. Unrest. Uncertainty. And fear.

Much lies in the balance. The progress. The hope. The dreams of a generation of young Afghan women and girls, boys and men. At this grave hour, I urge all parties, especially the Taliban, to exercise utmost restraint to protect lives and to ensure that humanitarian needs can be met.

Conflict has forced hundreds of thousands from their homes. The capital city has seen a huge influx of internally displaced persons from provinces around the country where they felt insecure or fled during fighting.

I remind all parties of their obligation to protect civilians. I call on all parties to provide humanitarians with unimpeded access to deliver timely and life-saving services and aid. And I also urge all countries to be willing to receive Afghan refugees and refrain from any deportations.

Now is the time to stand as one. The international community must be united and utilize all available instruments to ensure the following:

First, we must speak with one voice to uphold human rights in Afghanistan. I call upon the Taliban and all parties to respect and protect international humanitarian law and the rights and freedoms of all persons. We are receiving chilling reports of severe restrictions on human rights throughout the country.

I am particularly concerned by accounts of mounting human rights violations against the women and girls of Afghanistan, who fear a return to the darkest days. It is essential that the hard-won rights of Afghan women and girls are protected. They are looking to the international community for support — the same international community that assured them that opportunities would be expanded, education would be guaranteed, freedoms would spread and rights would be secured.

Second, the international community must unite to make sure that Afghanistan is never again used as a platform or safe haven for terrorist organizations. I appeal to

the Security Council — and the international community as a whole — to stand together, to work together and act together — and use all tools at its disposal to suppress the global terrorist threat in Afghanistan and to guarantee that basic human rights will be respected. Regardless of who holds power, these two fundamental principles — in which our world has such a deep and abiding interest — must be upheld.

The United Nations is committed to supporting Afghans. We continue to have staff and offices in areas that have come under Taliban control. I am relieved to report that in large measure, our personnel and premises have been respected. We urge the Taliban to continue to do so and to honour the integrity and inviolability of diplomatic envoys and premises.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan affects 18 million people — fully half of the country's population. It is vital that basic services continue to be provided. In a statement issued yesterday, the Taliban said that they would work with existing institutions. It is crucial that civil servant salaries continue to be paid, infrastructure is maintained, airports are reopened and health and education services continue.

The United Nations presence will adapt to the security situation. But above all, we will stay and deliver in support of the Afghan people in their hour of need. Looking ahead, I call for an immediate end to violence, for the rights of all Afghans to be respected and for Afghanistan to comply with all international agreements to which it is a party.

Afghans are a proud people with a rich cultural heritage. They have known generations of war and hardship. They deserve our full support. The following days will be pivotal. The world is watching. We cannot and must not abandon the people of Afghanistan.

Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan

Issued in Brussels, 20 August 2021

1. We, the Foreign Ministers of NATO, met today to discuss the difficult situation in Afghanistan.
2. We are united in our deep concern about the grave events in Afghanistan and call for an immediate end to the violence. We also express deep concerns about reports of serious human rights violations and abuses across Afghanistan. We affirm our commitment to the statement by the UN Security Council on 16 August, and we call for adherence to international norms and standards on human rights and international humanitarian law in all circumstances.
3. Our immediate task now is to meet our commitments to continue the safe evacuation of our citizens, partner country nationals, and at-risk Afghans, in particular those who have assisted our efforts. We call on those in positions of authority in Afghanistan to respect and facilitate their safe and orderly departure, including through Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. As long as evacuation operations continue, we will maintain our close operational coordination through Allied military means at Hamid Karzai International Airport.
4. The Afghan people deserve to live in safety, security and dignity, and to build on the important political, economic and social achievements they have made over the last twenty years. We stand by civil society actors who must be able to continue to safely play their meaningful role in Afghan society. We call on all parties in Afghanistan to work in good faith to establish an inclusive and representative government, including with the meaningful participation of women and minority groups. Under the current circumstances, NATO has suspended all support to the Afghan authorities. Any future Afghan government must adhere to Afghanistan's international obligations; safeguard the human rights of all Afghans, particularly women, children, and minorities; uphold the rule of law; allow unhindered humanitarian access; and ensure that Afghanistan never again serves as a safe haven for terrorists.
5. For the last twenty years, we have successfully denied terrorists a safe haven in Afghanistan from which to instigate attacks. We will not allow any terrorists to threaten us. We remain committed to fighting terrorism with determination, resolve, and in solidarity.
6. We honour the service and sacrifice of all who have worked tirelessly over the last twenty years to realise a better future for Afghanistan. Together, we will fully reflect on our engagement in Afghanistan and draw the necessary lessons. We will continue to promote the stable, prosperous Afghanistan that the Afghan people deserve and address the critical questions facing Afghanistan and the region, in the immediate future and beyond, including through our cooperation with regional and international partners, such as the European Union and United Nations.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 31 August 2021 16:22

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot> [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot> [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email update to FM - 31st August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan.

31 August 2021 email update to

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- The final US troops left Kabul on a flight shortly before midnight local time on Monday, meeting the US commitment to withdraw ahead of the deadline. The Taliban has since proclaimed “full independence” for Afghanistan.
- The new regime in Afghanistan faces pressure to respect human rights and provide safe passage for those who wish to escape its rule following the passage of a UN security council resolution.
- The Taliban celebrated in the early hours of Tuesday morning, firing guns into the air across Kabul. Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid declared, “At 12 o’clock tonight, the last American troops left Kabul airport, on which account Afghanistan was completely liberated and independent”.
- Responding to repeated questions about civilian casualties from a drone strike on Kabul on Sunday, the Pentagon spokesman, John Kirby, said: “We are not in a position to dispute it right now, and ... we’re assessing, and we’re investigating.”
- Eight Taliban fighters were killed and a similar number were wounded in fighting in Panjshir valley, an opposition group has claimed. The area north of Kabul is the only place in Afghanistan to remain outside of Taliban control, after its

fighters swept across the country in August. A spokesperson for the National Resistance Forces (NRF) said the Taliban had attacked their western positions on Monday night but had been repulsed. The NRF forces are loyal to Ahmad Massoud, whose father was a anti-Soviet mujahideen commander killed by al-Qaeda.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government Response

[REDACTED Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs, and Culture held a roundtable on Tuesday 31 August with key stakeholders such as COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow Afghan United, Afghan Human Rights Foundation and BEMIS (the third sector Minority Ethnic charities representative body) and discussed the concerns of the community and how support to the new Afghan community can be most effective:
 - Scotland has a strong Afghan community with skills and expertise supporting community integration and helping people to access the services they need which will be invaluable.
 - Scotland also has expertise from our strong Syrian response and there is appetite to build on the model which supported Syrian resettlement in Scotland and adapt it to support Afghan refugees and locally employed staff, learning lessons from the Syrian programme.
 - Coordination of support in Scotland will have challenges but there is commitment to work in partnership and to continue discussions like this meeting to support response.
 - [REDACTED Exemption Section 30(b)(i) the free and frank provision of advice]
- Scottish Parliament will debate how to support the people of Afghanistan on Thursday 2 September.

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 30 August 2021 17:40

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Afghanistan - Email Update to the FM - 27th August 2021

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

Good Afternoon

With thanks to [REDACTED], please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to the situation in Afghanistan:

- Up to five rockets were fired at Kabul airport from a car in a northern suburb of the city, but were intercepted by a US anti-missile shield. Shrapnel landed in the neighbourhood of Salim Karwan. There have, as yet, been no reports of injuries. The White House has said there was no interruption to its evacuations, which have entered their last 48 hours (to end a 20-year war).
- The Islamic State Khorasan Province – known as IS-K – has claimed responsibility for the rocket attack, saying on its social media channels that the attack was “successful”, but officials said the five rockets were intercepted.
- Zamir Kabulov, the Kremlin’s envoy to Afghanistan told reporters that: “*If our Western colleagues are actually worried about the fate of the Afghan people, then we must not create additional problems for them by freezing gold and foreign exchange reserves,*” calling on the US to release Afghan central bank reserves.

International Response

- **UN** - The UN envoys of permanent members of Security Council are holding an emergency meeting on the situation in Afghanistan today (30 August).
- **UN** - UNICEF has predicted that if the current trend continues, one million under-fives in Afghanistan will face severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition.

Mr. Laryea-Adjei said more than four million children, including 2.2 million girls, are out of school. Around 300,000 youngsters have been forced to flee their homes, some of whom were in bed sleeping, “and too many of them have witnessed scenes that no child should ever see... children and adolescents are struggling with anxieties and fears, in desperate need of mental health support”.

- **UNICEF**, which has been in Afghanistan for more than six decades, continues to maintain a field presence across the country, and is engaging with interlocutors to scale up response. The agency is currently supporting mobile health and nutrition teams at camps for displaced people, and setting up child-friendly spaces, nutrition hubs and vaccination sites, while also prepositioning additional lifesaving supplies and supporting thousands of students in community-based education classes. However, Mr. Laryea-Adjei stressed that more resources are direly needed. UNICEF recently launched a \$192 million appeal to address the escalating humanitarian crisis, and urged donors to step up support.
- **France** – President Emmanuel Macron has said that France and Britain will submit a resolution to the emergency United Nations meeting due today on Afghanistan proposing a safe zone in Kabul to protect people trying to leave the country.
- **US** - A US drone strike on a vehicle in a Kabul neighbourhood has killed nine people, including, allegedly, an unconfirmed number of children, according to local reports. The death toll has not been confirmed. US Central Command has said it is assessing the possibility of civilian casualties. It reported the vehicle was carrying explosives and suicide bombers who were set to target Kabul airport imminently.
- **US** - Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, said the US would continue working with the Taliban to ensure safe passage for those wishing to leave Afghanistan beyond the 31 August deadline. Nearly 100 countries have issued a joint statement saying foreign nationals, Afghans who worked alongside coalition forces, and vulnerable people, would be allowed to leave the country.
- **US** - President Joe Biden travelled to Dover Airbase for the return to home soil of the bodies of 11 of the 13 American service members killed in the Kabul attack last week which also killed 169 Afghans.
- **US** will host a virtual meeting of foreign ministers from several countries on Monday to discuss "an aligned approach for the days and weeks ahead". Representatives from the United Kingdom, European Union, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Japan, Turkey, Qatar, and NATO will attend the meeting.
- **Germany** - German foreign minister, Heiko Maas, started a four-day visit to countries bordering Afghanistan to secure their agreement to house refugees temporarily, or to use the country as a transit point pending processing. So far Qatar has acted as the transit point for more than 40% of the 100,000-plus refugees airlifted out of the country. Maas is due to visit Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Pakistan.
- **Russia** - Reuters reports that the Russian embassy in Kabul has said it is accepting applications from those seeking to leave Afghanistan on additional evacuation flights, after Moscow evacuated about 360 people from the country last week. The embassy said in a series of tweets that the flights would be open to Russian citizens and residents as well as nationals of countries that are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a Moscow-led post-Soviet security bloc.
- **The Taliban** has confirmed its supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, who has never made a public appearance and whose whereabouts have largely remained unknown, is in Afghanistan.

UK Government Response

- Stephen Kinnock accused the British government of an “unforgivable” failure to evacuate thousands of eligible Afghans. Speaking to BBC Radio 4’s today program the Shadow Foreign Office Minister said: “*Government ministers have had 18 months*

to prepare for this. The French government started evacuating its people in May so it is utterly unforgivable that we have left so many behind,”

- Foreign office minister James Cleverly told Sky News that the UK would have to work with the Taliban to help ensure the safe passage of Afghans out of the country. “We will judge the Taliban by their actions. They have made certain commitments about not taking out reprisals on individuals, about facilitating exit,”
- James Cleverly told BBC that emails from Afghans desperate to leave the country may not have been read, and said it was impossible to say how many people were left in Afghanistan who were eligible to come to the UK. said it was impossible to say how many people were left in Afghanistan who were eligible to come to the UK.
- UK Government released a joint statement on Sunday with the US and more than 90 other countries confirming that the Taliban has said anyone who wished to leave the country could do so.

Scottish Government Response

- Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs, and Culture is holding a roundtable on Tuesday 31 August with key stakeholders such as COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council, Glasgow Afghan United, Afghan Human Rights Foundation and BEMIS to discuss the concerns of the community at this distressing time.
- Scottish Parliament to debate how to support the people of Afghanistan on Thursday 2 September.

Humanitarian

- SG is in discussions with the HEF panel to agree the language for an announcement in the parliamentary debate to be held on Thursday 2 September on the £250k offer.

With best wishes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Government International Division
2-H South, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 25 August 2021 16:43

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross)

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Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>;

[REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>;

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(Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED]

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Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>;

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H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John)

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<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott)

<Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email update to FM - 25th August 2021

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan.

25 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- A group of 200 workers who guarded World Bank projects in Afghanistan for the last 10 years until they lose their jobs last week have sent a desperate plea to the British government to rescue them urgently.
- Two thousand Afghan interpreters and others who worked for the British government are still to be airlifted out of Kabul by the RAF.
- Evacuations from Kabul airport in Afghanistan pick up pace, with the total number leaving since the Taliban takeover reaching 82,300
- Shabana Basij-Rasikh, co-founder of Afghanistan's only boarding school for girls escaped Kabul with 250 students and staff and has temporarily relocated to Rwanda. A video of her burning class records to avoid Taliban recriminations was widely shared on social media.
- 250 protesters gathered outside a reception centre at an army camp in Harskamp, a village east of Utrecht in the Netherlands on Tuesday 24 August to protest against the arrival of Afghan evacuees. The protest was peaceful at first but tensions mounted after a group of young men ignored repeated calls to leave – singing nationalist songs, and displaying hostile banners.

- The Afghan ambassador to the UN has urged the international community to continue monitoring how the Taliban rule before offering any concessions to the group.
- The World Bank has halted funding for projects in Afghanistan after the Taliban seized control of the country, citing concerns over how the Taliban's takeover would impact "the country's development prospects, especially for women".
- According to UNICEF in the first week following the Taliban conquest of Kabul, Covid-19 vaccinations in Afghanistan have dropped by 80%.
- The Taliban have captured more than 100 Russian-made helicopters in various states of operability, however they are reported to be of limited use owing to little access to maintenance crews and spare parts.

International Response

- **UN** – According to figures released by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Afghanistan, more than 400,000 people have been registered as newly displaced since the start of May. In total, almost 550,000 Afghans have been displaced so far this year, almost 60% of Afghans who have been forced to leave their homes this year are children.
- **US** - Two members of the US Congress have faced criticism after making an unannounced trip to Kabul. Seth Moulton, a Democrat, and Peter Meijer, a Republican, spent several hours at the city's airport on Tuesday amid the continuing evacuation effort. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that while it was "understandable" that members of Congress would want to visit the region, "the Departments of Defence and State have requested that Members not travel to Afghanistan and the region during this time of danger...would unnecessarily divert needed resources from the priority mission of safely and expeditiously evacuating Americans and Afghans at risk from Afghanistan".
- **US** - The Biden administration has frozen the assets of Afghanistan's central bank that are held in the US.
- **Canada** – following the G7 virtual meeting, Canada has come out in a more nuanced position than the US. Trudeau took a break from the campaign trail to attend the Virtual Summit. Speaking to reporters afterwards PM Trudeau said: 'if possible, Canada is willing to stay in Afghanistan past the 31 August'. PM Trudeau was asked (by Globe and Mail) if 'he regretted calling the election on the day Kabul fell to the Taliban?' He responded by saying 'the election campaign is not interfering with the government's ability to manage a crisis in Afghanistan and orchestrate rescue operations'.
- **Germany** – Angela Merkel has told conservative lawmakers that Germany will keep evacuating people from Afghanistan as long as it is responsible to do so, however it is only possible with the United States.
- **Spain** - Defence Minister Margarita Robles has said that Spain will not be able to rescue all Afghans who served alongside its troops in Afghanistan due to the Taliban checkpoints and violence making it difficult for people to reach Kabul airport to catch one of Spain's daily military flights out of Afghanistan.
- **France** - France is set to end its evacuations from Kabul airport from Thursday after the US refused to extend the 31 August deadline. In total, at least 1,720 Afghans and 100 French people have been evacuated by France since the beginning of the operation last week.
- **Poland** - Poland has ended its involvement in airlift evacuations.
- **Italy** – Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi has urged G7 leaders to redirect funds destined for Afghan military forces towards humanitarian aid.
- **The Netherlands** – 800 refugees from Afghanistan will be accommodated at the Harskamp army camp. The first evacuees arrived on Tuesday afternoon.
- **Hungary** – According to Hungary's foreign minister Peter Szijjarto evacuation efforts from Afghanistan are nearing an end after 500 people were airlifted from Kabul.

- **South Korea** - 380 Afghans who worked for the South Korean government are being airlifted from Kabul in three military planes and are due to arrive at the main airport near Seoul in the next 24 hours.
- **Australia** –Glenn Kolomeitz, and Australian migration lawyer, and former army officer who served in Afghanistan, represents hundreds of Afghans entitled to protection in Australia. He has said warned that people on the ground are being turned away after perilous trips to Kabul's airport because they do not have hard copy visas. Mr Kolomeitz said the mission was entering a critical juncture and urged Defence chief Angus Campbell to order soldiers to let more people through.
- **Russia** –Vladimir Putin told Angela Merkel on Friday 20 August that the priority in Afghanistan should be to prevent terrorists travelling into neighbouring countries and that the UNSC should play a coordinating role (whilst pointing out the follies of Western intervention). Merkel pushed Putin to use any contact with the Taliban to support the evacuation of citizens and humanitarian assistance.

UK Government response

- The UK has evacuated more than 9,000 people from Afghanistan since 15 August, including 2,000 people in the last 24 hours.
- Following an emergency virtual meeting of G7 leaders on 24 August, Prime Minister said the UK would continue evacuating people from the country until the last moment but the Taliban must guarantee a safe passage for those who want to leave after 31 August.
- Defence Secretary Ben Wallace says if Paul "Pen" Farthing arrives at Kabul airport with the animals from his sanctuary, officials will "seek a slot for his plane". Vet Dr Iain McGill told the BBC that a private flight funded by donations is on standby to rescue the group after the mission was "green-lit" by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
- Foreign Secretary spoke with BBC Radio 4 on 24 August, saying he was focused on the situation in Afghanistan, despite being away, and that "the whole world, including the Taliban, was caught unaware by the scale and the pace of the fall of Kabul".
- The DfE held two urgent meetings last week with all 4 nations to discuss UK government plans for a scholarship to support Afghanistan Students, this is in direct response to the emerging situation in Afghanistan. Any UKG initiative would be separate to existing scholarships including Chevening. At present there is no further information from DfE and they will contact the 4 nations for a follow up call once they know more.
- The UK Foreign Secretary has been urged to help evacuate two Afghan aid workers employed by a Scottish charity set up in the memory of the kidnapped aid worker Linda Norgrove.

Scottish Government Response

- SG Veterans, Mental Health and NHS officials will join a round table event, convened by The Office of Veterans Affairs at the request of SoS Defence, today to bring together stakeholders from across UK Government, Devolved Administrations, academia and the Service charity sector to explore the impact the recent events in Afghanistan are having on the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their families; the current support options; and to discuss next steps in addressing any emerging challenges now facing the mental health and wellbeing of our Armed Forces community.
- Prior to the Department for Education meeting last week a sub was sent to Mr Hepburn advising of the number of prospective students from Afghanistan for this year. Mr Hepburn has also been alerted to the potential initiative discussed by DfE.
- Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture to meet with Afghan community representatives in Scotland on 31 August.

- Scottish Parliament debate on Afghanistan to be held on 2 September, with Mr Robertson to open and Ms Robison to close.

Resettlement

- SG has met with Edinburgh City HSCP regarding their preparations so far. Extensive work has been done over last few weeks in preparation, but this has been mainly led through Cosla and LAPerspective.
- There has been work with all LAs to identify suitable areas for permanent settlement and lessons learned and shared from Syrian resettlement programme. The team in Edinburgh are currently waiting for confirmation of the [REDACTED] people arriving end of this week or beginning of next.
- The impression they are under is rather than one cohort, they should plan for [REDACTED] places where, as people are moved elsewhere to more permanent offer, these vacant spaces will be utilised by further refugees. This may give Edinburgh the challenge of providing both ongoing temporary and potentially permanent solutions.
- SG was reassured by many of the plans being developed however the gap seems to be with the health provision. Discussions seem to be sitting with LA and only now including other organisations. There has been no discussion regarding Primary Care or the need for other acute care. No preparation regarding potential demand on mental health and trauma services. SG have had helpful discussions regarding the pop up primary care service offered by Edinburgh during festival and New Year, potentially with learning from Covid hubs where the transition between PC and acute, which seemed to work well. This model would need further developed but hopefully would remove the need for discussions with a number of practices and temporary registration processes. They could also focus what translator provision is available within single resource.
- Another meeting will take place on Thursday 26th August, it is hoped by then, accommodation in [REDACTED] will have been signed off and they will have arrival dates confirmed.

Humanitarian

- The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) met again on Tuesday 24 August but are still trying to assess situation on the ground re: safety and ability to deliver. We are in constant touch with them to make the approved funding available as soon as they are able to deliver.
- Humanitarian Emergency Fund Non-Government Organisations are closely monitoring developments on the ground, and are worried about their ability to deliver, given the fluctuating situation. Some are still operating through local partners on the ground, some are in hiding, and all international staff have been evacuated.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 20 August 2021 16:41

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email update to FM - 20th August 2021

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. Please see attached an Update on the Chevening Scholarship & Students from Afghanistan (Annex A), and a release from Amnesty International on massacre of Hazara Men. (Annex B). Next update will be on Monday 23rd August.

20 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- Afghanistan's former vice president, Amrullah Saleh, has put forward a bid to be considered the lawful president of Afghanistan in absence of Ashraf Ghani.
- Continued chaos at the Airport in Kabul – Australians report being hit with weapons and whipped by Taliban militants when they presented their documents. Taliban forces blocking the gates to the airport – many unable to reach the airport.
- A German civilian was shot while travelling to Kabul airport but his life is not in danger, it has emerged. He has now been evacuated from the country, a German government spokesperson confirmed.
- Taliban declares country 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan'. Eyewitnesses claim several killed amid Taliban shooting at a crowd of people waving the Afghan flag at an Independence Day rally in Asadabad on Thursday.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- Latest press line: We are clear that Scotland must play its part in supporting refugees from Afghanistan and welcome the UK Government's announcement of the new Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme. The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible to enable planning to begin for arrivals. We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.
- SG drafting letter to FS on Human Rights concerns in Afghanistan.

Refugee resettlement

[REDACTED Exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Humanitarian

- SG Officials are working urgently with the HEF Panel to establish how best to deliver assistance to Afghanistan. The SG has approved to the HEF early release of 250k, as per Minister Gilruth's approval - if the logistical barriers to delivering much needed help to Afghans in these unstable circumstances can be overcome
- [REDACTED Exemption 30(b)(i)]

Lines to Take On the LES scheme and hotels

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

"Scotland is playing its part in supporting the people who worked for British institutions in Afghanistan.

"We commend the work of Scottish local authorities who have already welcomed families and those preparing to do so, and work is underway to ensure people have the support and services they need."

Background

This is a UK Government scheme, and the Home Office is responsible for the sourcing of accommodation. Asylum and immigration are matters reserved to the UK Government and handled by the Home Office.

If pressed on hotel accommodation

“While the Scottish Government is clear that our preference would be for people to move into housing as soon as possible, we recognise that the speed of evacuation now requires the use of other forms of accommodation in the short term.”

2. If asked about the wider scheme to bring other refugees here, we should redirect media to the Home Office and if pressed -**A Scottish Government spokesperson said:**

“Asylum and immigration are matters reserved to the UK Government and handled by the Home Office. However, we are clear that Scotland must play our part in welcoming and supporting people from Afghanistan.

“We are working with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.”

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 17 August 2021 16:08

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: FM Afghanistan Update - 17th August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. Please see attached the proposed FMQ lines (Annex A), and Dominic Raab Statement, FCDO Lines, and the UN Security Council Press Release (Annex B).

17 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

1. Westminster Parliament has been recalled for a debate on Afghanistan tomorrow.

Scottish Government Response

2. Ahead of the recall of the Westminster Parliament tomorrow for a debate on Afghanistan, the SNP in Westminster is calling for a summit of the four UK nations to discuss the resettlement of refugees from the country. The party also wants the UK Government to reverse its cut to international aid.
3. The Scottish Green Party has called for the Scottish Government's Humanitarian Emergency Fund to be used to help people fleeing the Taliban in Afghanistan.
4. Connected Communities and COSLA meeting today to discuss Asylum and Refugee situation and get idea on capacity to accommodate Afghans who were employed by the UK government or military overseas.
5. Connected Communities are also meeting with Muslim Faith leaders in Scotland this week to discuss the crisis.
6. Officials are speaking with Universities in Scotland to understand whether any are expecting students from Afghanistan, and if any are Chevening Scholars.

[REDACTED]

Directorate for External Affairs

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 01 September 2021 16:38

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email update to FM - 1st September 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. The EU Home Affairs Ministers statement on the situation in Afghanistan is attached in Annex A.

1 September 2021 email update to

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- A former English language teacher who is stranded in Kabul has spoken to the BBC and said he regretted working with the UK mission because he now fears for his life. "Why did I work for people who left me and fled and left me alone here?... They are looking for me because I've got pictures in billboards advertised for classes." He said he tried to escape Afghanistan shortly before the militants took control but received "no reply" to his application for resettlement, adding that he had been unable to sleep ever since. When asked what he thought would happen to him if he could not leave and the Taliban found him, he added: "My fate will be the same, like others, like the people who work in military, in the media... they will kill me too."
- Taliban supporters hold mock funeral for Western countries. Coffins draped in the flags of the US and NATO allies were a part of a mock funeral carried out by Taliban supporters in the eastern city of Khost in Afghanistan to celebrate

the end of western presence in the region. Videos shared on social media on Tuesday showed supporters also used British and French flags to drape the coffins, while some showed off their guns at the mock funeral.

- A British citizen who is stranded in Afghanistan after travelling to the country to help his family flee is pleading with the government for help. The taxi driver, who the BBC is calling Ahmed to protect his identity, flew from Liverpool as the Taliban seized control of the country. He is currently in hiding with his wife and children after fleeing from the Afghan capital Kabul.
- Amnesty International has called on the UK government to extend its approach to resettling Afghan refugees to others fleeing persecution. While former Afghan staff and family members will be granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK under the government's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (Arap), the charity says that they're "imposing prolonged uncertainty" on other refugees.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- Parliamentary debate to be held tomorrow with Cabinet Secretary Angus Robertson opening.
- SG to setup more roundtables following the meeting between Cabinet Secretary Angus Robertson and leaders of the Afghan Community.
- Ms. Robison has sent letter to the Home Secretary regarding the Scottish Government's deep concerns about the Nationality and Borders Bill.
- SG to write to home office about humanitarian protection as well as express concern about those living in Scotland waiting to hear about their asylum status.
- SG committed during the roundtable to ensuring childcare is available to enable afghan women to take part in esol learning and attend classes/courses, to explore funding arrangements for the empowering women's project run by Glasgow afghan united, ensure that we have a human rights based approach to the resettlement and integration, and explore existing cultural programmes and funding to ensure new Afghan communities feel welcome and an equal part of society.

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 26 August 2021 16:56

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email Update to the FM - 26th August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan.

26 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- Two explosions at the airport only hours after western intelligence agencies warned of an imminent terrorist threat. The blasts were followed by gunfire and came as several western countries announced the end of their evacuation flights citing an acute threat of an attack possibly within hours.
- A Taliban security source has said at least 13 people, including foreigners and children, have been killed, and Taliban guards wounded, in the explosion. An emergency hospital in Kabul has said around 60 wounded people have arrived so far from the airport explosions.
- The Pentagon press secretary John Kirby has tweeted: We can confirm that the explosion at the Abbey Gate was the result of a complex attack that resulted in a number of US & civilian casualties. We can also confirm at least one other explosion at or near the Baron Hotel, a short distance from Abbey Gate. We will continue to update.

- UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson will chair an emergency Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) meeting, following an explosion at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport.
- One of the UK's largest home care providers has pledged to train and employ 500 refugees from Afghanistan as carers. Over the next five years Cera aims to recruit, train and employ 500 refugees who come to the UK as part of its resettlement programme.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Humanitarian

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | 📞 [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 02 September 2021 17:56

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email update to FM - 2nd September 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan.

2 September 2021 email update to

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- The Taliban are still in talks about forming an “inclusive” government of Afghanistan, although it is reported today that former president Hamid Karzai will not be a part.
- The UK Foreign Secretary, speaking at a press conference in Doha, Qatar, has said that evacuation flights could resume from Afghanistan “in the near future”.
- The Afghan television anchor Beheshta Arghand, who interviewed a Taliban official live on air after the fall of Kabul, has since fled to Qatar and told how the militants are pushing women out of journalism. Arghand has told how the Taliban ordered her employer, Tolo News, to make all women wear a hijab – closely covering their heads but leaving the face uncovered a week after the interview. The Taliban also suspended female anchors in other stations.
- Players of Afghanistan’s women’s cricket team who are hiding in Kabul fear Taliban rule. One player told the BBC she has barely stepped outside her

home since the Taliban entered Kabul in mid-August and has locked her cricket kit away. She spoke of how one of her team-mates was targeted in the city.

- A senior Taliban official has been asked if women and ethnic minorities will have a place in the new Afghan government. In an interview with BBC Pashto's Inayatulhaq Yasini, the deputy head of the Taliban political office in Qatar said women could continue in their work but in the top posts or cabinet there "may not" be a woman.
- The Taliban are expected to form a new government in the coming days but questions remain about what their rule will look like and mean for Afghanistan.
- The National Resistant Front of Afghanistan (NRF) continues to fight against the Taliban from its stronghold in the northern Panjshir valley. In recent days, the Taliban has launched offensives on three fronts there but the hard-line Islamist group suffered "heavy casualties" and all its attacks were repelled, a NRF spokesperson told the BBC.
- Al Jazeera reports that food prices in Afghanistan have increased by about 50 percent, and petrol by as much as 75 percent, in recent days.
- On Wednesday, the group paraded in Kandahar some of the military hardware, including armoured vehicles, they captured during their takeover. At least one Black Hawk helicopter has also been reported flying over Kandahar recently, suggesting someone from the former Afghan army was at the controls as the Taliban lacks pilots.
- In an interview with Al Jazeera, Abdul Ghafoor, director of Afghanistan Migrants Advice and Support Organization, said at least 14 Hazaras had been killed after surrendering to the Taliban in Daykundi province.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- Parliamentary debate held today where all ministers agreed that Scotland stands willing and ready to play a full role in the resettlement and support for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Key themes of the debate were Women, Girls, the chaos in Kabul, UK Aid cuts, and not leaving the vulnerable behind.
- Ministers raised particular concerns over the situation facing women and young girls, the humanitarian crisis, as well as the human rights violation and many criticised the UK Governments failure to do more to help – committing Scotland to do all that it can.
- Cabinet Secretary Angus Robertson announced the £250k support for the Humanitarian Emergency Fund – this was welcomed by all.
- MSP Jackson Carlaw was critical of the US-led withdrawal as well as the previous and current administration's foreign policy position.

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith,
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 24 August 2021 17:16

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross)

<Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture

<CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>;

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>;

[REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>;

[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily)

<Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C

(Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>;

[REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet

H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John)

<John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel)

<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott)

<Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan- Email Update to FM - 24th August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. Please see attached the OHCHR Statement (Annex A).

24 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- At least 20 people have been killed in shootings and stampedes at the airport in Kabul since last week.
- Haji Mohammad Idris has been appointed as the new governor of Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), according to spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.
- An anti-Taliban resistance group in Afghanistan says it has thousands of people ready to fight. Ali Nazary, head of foreign relations for the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), told the BBC they want to pursue peaceful negotiations.
- Hundreds of Afghan refugees living in Indonesia, mostly members of the Hazara ethnic minority, held a rally on Tuesday outside UN refugee agency's office in Jakarta calling for resettlement in third countries. Indonesia is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol, and doesn't allow asylum seekers to work or have access to public services.

- According to the World Health Organisation more than 500 tonnes of medical supplies, including surgical equipment and severe malnutrition kits, due to be delivered to Afghanistan this week, are stuck because of the Kabul Airport restrictions.
- A spokesperson for the European Commission has told journalists in Brussels that 'all staff who needed to be evacuated have been evacuated. We still have a core presence at the airport in order to manage what needs to be managed, but the staff of the EU delegation and their families have all been evacuated.'

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- Ms Robison wrote to Dominic Raab on 20 August to lend support to the request for assistance made to the UK by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and by the UK's three national human rights institutions.
- FM wrote to the PM today (24 August) to ask that the UK increase the numbers supported through the resettlement offer. Press release to issue later on 24 August.
- Latest press line: We are clear that Scotland must play its part in supporting refugees from Afghanistan and welcome the UK Government's announcement of the new Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme. The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible to enable planning to begin for arrivals. We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.
- SG Veterans, Mental Health and NHS officials will join a round table event, convened by The Office of Veterans Affairs at the request of SoS Defence, on Wednesday 25 August to bring together stakeholders from across UK Government, Devolved Administrations, academia and the Service charity sector to explore the impact the recent events in Afghanistan are having on the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their families; the current support options; and to discuss next steps in addressing any emerging challenges now facing the mental health and wellbeing of our Armed Forces community.

Humanitarian

- Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) still trying to assess situation on the ground re: safety and ability to deliver. Meeting on today to see how they can spend the 250K SG agreed to give them, though SG has so far not announced the commitment to spend 250K, the detail of this is under discussion with the Humanitarian Emergency Fund. This may form part of an announcement at the Parliamentary debate.
- Likely that DEC will ask Islamic Relief, Tearfund and Red Cross to implement as they are still operating in Afghanistan through local partners.
- Update to follow after DEC meeting.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith,
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 27 August 2021 16:39

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED][REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email Update to the FM - 27th August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. Please find attached in Annex A the letter from the President of Law Society Scotland to FS Dominic Raab.

Please note the next update will be Monday 30th August.

27 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Deputy First Minister

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

- The death toll from Thursday's blasts in Kabul has reportedly increased to more than 90 people killed, with more than 150 wounded. An official has told the AP that at least 95 Afghans were killed.
- Reports of 13 US troops killed in the bombing, 12 US troops confirmed dead by the Pentagon.
- President Joe Biden has vowed to seek revenge on the attackers, saying he will "hunt them down"
- The Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), a regional affiliate of the group, has claimed responsibility for the attack
- The DUP leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson is seeking urgent clarification from the UK government about people from Northern Ireland who remain in Afghanistan.
- According to UNHCR up to half a million Afghans could flee the crisis.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is trying to establish an air bridge into the city of Mazar-i-Sharif in Northern Afghanistan in the coming days, with the help of Pakistan authorities.

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government response

- FM Tweet: “The dreadful attacks at Kabul airport today compound the horror unfolding in Afghanistan. My thoughts are with those bereaved and injured. We owe such a debt to our armed forces and others working against the clock to evacuate as many people as possible from this grim situation.”
- Cabinet Secretary Angus Robertson is meeting with members of the Afghan Community in Scotland on 31 August.

Humanitarian

- President of the Law Society of Scotland has written to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to request support for ARAP assistance for [REDACTED] – which was set up with UK Support. [Annex A]
- Planes entering Kabul for the evacuation of people have been carrying food packets and water for aid into the country.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 19 August 2021 16:32

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Cameron R (Ross) <Ross.Cameron@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED][REDACTED] Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan - Email Update to FM - 19th August 2021

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please see below for a short update on International, UK Government, and Scottish Government responses to Afghanistan. Please see attached an Update on the Chevening Scholarship & Students from Afghanistan (Annex A), and Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Afghanistan. (Annex B).

19 August 2021 email update to

First Minister,

Cabinet Secretary for Constitutional, Culture and External Affairs

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

International Response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3 (2)(a)(ii)]

UK Government response

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3 (2)(a)(ii)]

Scottish Government Response

- FM quote from 18 August "I welcome in principle, the UK Governments commitment to an Afghan resettlement programme, that is really important. In terms of the detail, I think it is woefully inadequate and it doesn't go nearly far

enough. The commitment to 20,000 Afghan refugees being welcomed to the UK over the long term, and we don't know what the long term means, is inadequate, but the commitment for this year is only 5,000 and given the scale of the horror unfolding in Afghanistan, given the responsibility that the UK bears with other countries for that, I think there is a humanitarian need for the UK to do much more, and I continue to call on the Prime Minister to do that.'

Refugee resettlement

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3 (2)(a)(ii)]

Afghan Locally Employed staff scheme

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3 (2)(a)(ii)]

Humanitarian

[REDACTED Exemption Section 30(b)(i)]

SG Education and Migration

[REDACTED Exemption Section 3 (2)(a)(ii)]

[REDACTED]

Directorate for External Affairs

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 August 2021 16:28

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot> [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] t>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

Subject: Afghanistan Briefing

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

Please find attached a factual briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan

If there is anything I can do to be of assistance please let me know.

Best Wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Directorate for External Affairs | 2H South, Victoria Quay, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ | ✉: [REDACTED] | ☎ [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 07 September 2021 14:53

To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot> [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Director for Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights <directorEIHR@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities - Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

PS/ Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government
PS/ Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

Please see attached minute of the meeting held yesterday for your approval

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

Afghanistan Resettlement | Connected Communities Unit

 [REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 06 September 2021 10:16

To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>;

[REDACTED][REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Mackintosh E (Emily)
<Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)
<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Nicolson S (Stuart)
(Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Sunderland RE (Rachel)
<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Director for Equality, Inclusion and
Human Rights <directorEIHR@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities -
Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

All

Please see short briefing note ahead of the call

Thanks

[REDACTED]
Afghanistan Resettlement | Connected Communities Unit
📱 [REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government

Sent: 04 September 2021 16:36

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>;
Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Communications Constitution & Culture
<CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>;
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Mackintosh E (Emily)
<Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)
<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Nicolson S (Stuart)
(Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Sunderland RE (Rachel)
<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Director for Equality, Inclusion and
Human Rights <directorEIHR@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities -
Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

Hi [REDACTED]

Ms Robison will attend, but has discussed with SPADs, and agreed that Mr Robertson or Ms Gilruth will also attend. Their offices are copied and will confirm soon.

Robert, I'd be grateful if you could provide light briefing by 10am on Monday.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary | Office of Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Email: CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot

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From: Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>

Sent: 04 September 2021 15:03

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>

Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Communications Constitution & Culture <CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mackintosh E (Emily) <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Director for Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights <directorEIHR@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities - Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

Thanks [REDACTED]

Just to confirm officials have picked this up and will support. It is for Ms Robison although others have an interest. We are coordinating the SG response.

Robert

Robert Marshall
DD Connected Communities

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: Dow L (Lynne) <Lynne.Dow@gov.scot> on behalf of: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Date: Saturday, 04 Sep 2021, 2:19 pm
To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>
Cc: Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>; Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Communications Constitution & Culture
<CommunicationsConstitution&Culture@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>;
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid Recovery <DFMCSCR@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED] Ingebrigtsen R (Ross) <Ross.Ingebrigtsen@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Mackintosh E (Emily)
<Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)
<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Nicolson S (Stuart)
(Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; Nisbet H (Helen) <Helen.Nisbet@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]Sunderland RE (Rachel)
<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED]Wightman S (Scott)
<Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Director for Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights
<directorEIHR@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>;
[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities -
Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

Hi

The First Minister has received the request below and has asked for the Cabinet Secretary to undertake this call – I believe this may be for Ms Robison?

Grateful if you could confirm that the Cabinet Secretary can undertake this call and I will confirm with the Cabinet Office and ask them to make arrangements with you direct.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Deputy Private Secretary
Private Office to the First Minister
5th Floor| St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG



Office of the First Minister of Scotland
FirstMinister.gov.scot
Prìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba

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From: Minister for Safeguarding <MinisterforSafeguarding@homeoffice.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 September 2021 19:51

To: ps.ministers@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>;

PS.FirstMinister@gov.wales

Cc: PS.SoS@nio.gov.uk; secretaryofstate@ukgovscotland.gov.uk;

secretary.state@ukgovwales.gov.uk; PSMichaelGove@cabinetoffice.gov.uk; Lord Greenhalgh

(communities) <PSStephenGreenhalgh@communities.gov.uk>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject: Meeting with the Minister for Afghan Resettlement and Minister for Communities -

Monday, 12:45 - 13:30

Importance: High

All,

We would like to invite you to a meeting with Minister Atkins, the new Minister for Afghan Resettlement, and Lord Greenhalgh, Minister for Building Safety and Communities.

The meeting will be held on Monday 6th September from 12:45 – 13:30, and dial-in details will be shared with you once attendance is confirmed.

If you have any questions, or to confirm yours or a deputy's attendance, please respond to this email.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Assistant Private Secretary to Victoria Atkins MP

Minister for Safeguarding and Afghan Resettlement

Home Office | 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 01 September 2021 15:49

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

Hi [REDACTED],

We are liaising with Universities Scotland to get updated figures on returning and new Afghan students, and have asked for a gender split this year, although we are unsure if this will be provided due to GDPR.

In the meantime we have been alerted to the recent UK announcement - operation warm welcome 'Operation Warm Welcome' underway to support Afghan arrivals in the UK - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Officials have contacted DfE to find out if they have finalised plans in light of this announcement on FE/HE additional support for Afghan nationals. Officials will update Mr Hepburn once a reply is received.

Mr Hepburn is also asked to note the following guidance around eligibility for SAAS funding in Scotland, due to refugee status. This guidance was used to support Syrian refugees during the crisis at that time. This may go some way to supporting Afghan nationals in the immediate term.

Syrian refugees who arrived in the UK as part of a refugee resettlement programme have been able to pursue HE/FE as 'home students', provided they were resident in Scotland on the relevant date, because refugees are covered under SAAS rules. This is not specific for Syrian refugees, so any Afghan refugees arriving would also be able to pursue studies as a 'home student' provided they meet other associated eligibility. The SAAS rules also make specific provision for Afghans arriving under the Locally Employed Staff (LES) relocation programme.

The following information was provided by education for inclusion in the debate briefing on Afghanistan.

"The Scottish Government welcomes asylum seekers and refugees who wish to further their education in Scotland. We recognise the positive contribution which students from across the world make to our society, culture and economy.

The eligibility criteria for access to student support in Scotland is determined with reference to an applicant's residence, rather than nationality. The specific conditions for access to tuition fee and living cost support in Scotland are set out in legislation and generally require students to:

- Be ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date (the relevant date is the first day of the course; ordinary residence can be described as habitual or normal residence, by choice, over a period of time in one place and does not include residence solely for the purposes of education).
- Have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands for 3 years immediately prior to the relevant date.
- Be settled in the UK within the meaning of the Immigration Act 1971 (for example, be a UK national or otherwise have a right to stay in the UK without time restriction, for example, 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'). Or be:
 - (i) under 18 years old and have lived in the UK throughout the seven year period preceding the relevant date; or
 - (ii) aged 18 years old or above and, preceding the relevant date, has lived in the UK throughout either half his or her life or a period of twenty years.

There are exceptions to these general residency rules which may apply to Afghan nationals who are currently being relocated to the UK. Under the current regulations, students who have been granted refugee status or who have applied for refugee status and although not considered to qualify, have been granted another form of leave to remain such as Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave to Remain. Those who have been relocated under the Afghan Locally Employed Staff Ex Gratia Scheme are also provided for within the current regulations.

Students will be eligible under these categories if they have been ordinarily resident in the UK at all times since being granted this status and are ordinarily resident in Scotland on the first day of the course. This support also extends to the spouse, civil partner or child of the person granted the relevant leave as outlined above."

I hope this is helpful to Mr Hepburn.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] International Students
Advanced Learning and Science Directorate

Tel: [REDACTED]

E mail: [REDACTED]

My non working day is Friday and I work a short day on a Thursday.

From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

Sent: 01 September 2021 13:57

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna)

<Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

[REDACTED]

I wonder if you can help.

Mr Hepburn has asked where are we on understanding what the position is of Afghan students (either returning or those about to begin) and any necessary next steps?

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Private Secretary – Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - [REDACTED]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

Sent: 25 August 2021 12:31

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED];

[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

[REDACTED]

Thanks for this, Mr Hepburn has noted.

Rachael

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary–Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - [REDACTED]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 23 August 2021 19:56

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

Hi [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is off today and I am responding on her behalf.

We do not have the gender split for entrants for this year, although I am in contact with Universities Scotland to find out if we can get this information from the individual universities. I will update further once I have a response.

In the meantime, I have been in contact with our analysts and they have provided the gender split for Afghanistan Students (both domicile and nationality), from the last 2 years. This may be of some help in providing insight into typical gender split from the intake of Afghanistan Students.

[REDACTED exemption 38(1)(b)]

I hope this is helpful for Mr Hepburn.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] International Students
Advanced Learning and Science Directorate

Tel: [REDACTED]

E mail: [REDACTED]

My non working day is Friday and I work a short day on a Thursday.

From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

Sent: 23 August 2021 11:23

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

[REDACTED],

Mr Hepburn has asked if we know the gender of each of the prospective students from Afghanistan?

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary – Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - [REDACTED]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Sent: 20 August 2021 13:16

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

Hi [REDACTED]

Ms Somerville has notes. She has commented that officials should be encouraged to take a maximalist approach to see what can be done to support Afghan nationals in HE/FE. This can be beyond what is being offered by UKG.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 19 August 2021 16:48

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot[REDACTED]>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Lively D (David) <David.Lively@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy)

<Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science
<DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED];
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

To Ministers

Cc list for awareness and information

[REDACTED exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Yours,

[REDACTED]

Please note: I do not routinely work Tuesdays or Wednesdays

[REDACTED] / Policy Manager / International Higher Education / Advanced Learning & Science Directorate /
Scottish Government / 5 Atlantic Quay / 150 Broomielaw / Glasgow / G2 8LU / [REDACTED] / [REDACTED] /
www.scotlandisnow.com #scotlandisnow



From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development

Sent: 19 August 2021 14:45

To: [REDACTED] Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>;
Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for
Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D
(David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; Sunderland RE (Rachel)
<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] >; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>; Gibbs L (Lorna)
<Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development
<MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan)
<Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen)
(Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>;
Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

Good Afternoon [REDACTED],

Thanks for copying us into this.

Copying in Jeanette as well re Afghanistan.

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary to Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, Jenny Gilruth
The Scottish Government | St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 19 August 2021 11:39

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; Sunderland RE (Rachel) <Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] >; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Gibbs L (Lorna) <Lorna.Gibbs@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; Crawford E (Ewan) <Ewan.Crawford@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; Pathirana S (Stephen) (Dr) <Stephen.Pathirana@gov.scot>; Peskett K (Katherine) <Katherine.Peskett@gov.scot>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>

Subject: Chevening Scholarships/Afghan Nationals - Official Sensitive

PO HEFEYET

Update on Chevening Scholarship and Students from Afghanistan

Please find attached further information on the number of students due to attend Scottish Universities this academic year, for attention of the Minister. Please note this list is incomplete, we are still awaiting to hear back from some universities, and will update in due course. Also included is a list of students studying from the previous year, providing background information on the typical numbers we expect year on year.

Purpose: Further information was requested by Mr Hepburn on the number of Afghanistan students expected to attend Scotland in 2021. This is in response to the ongoing situation within Afghanistan and the UK government's response to the crisis: <https://www.google.co.uk/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/15/boris-johnson-promises-visas-to-afghan-students-amid-taliban-advance>

The copy list for this information has been extended at the request of Mr Hepburn. All Ministers asked to note attached information.

I draw attention to page three of the document, highlighted in red, which is official sensitive and not to be shared in the public domain as yet. Officials are attending below meeting at 2.30pm today:

[REDACTED exemption section 3(2)(a)(ii)]

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Government, Directorate for External Affairs | Population and Migration Division Atlantic Quay 5 | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU | [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

Sent: 17 August 2021 09:15

To: [REDACTED] Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; Sunderland RE (Rachel)

<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>;

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships

[REDACTED],

Thanks for this – Mr Hepburn has noted and asked I copy this to Ms Somerville, Mr Robertson and Ms Gilruth for their interests.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary – Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - [REDACTED]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 August 2021 17:12

To: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>;

Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; Sunderland RE (Rachel)

<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Chevening Scholarships

[REDACTED],

Thank you for this. We believe so far that eligibility for the Chevening Scholarship could only be at the University of Edinburgh.

By way of update, I have reached out to officials at the Home Office, and to Universities Scotland to try to understand how many individuals are affected. I've also contacted the Head of Global Operations, and the Regional Director of the Middle East at the University of Edinburgh.

[REDACTED] (copied), has reached out to the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office.

[REDACTED] (copied), has reached out to the University of Edinburgh's Head of External Affairs.

We have not been able to ascertain numbers as yet, though will continue to press for this. As soon as we have more data/information, I will be in touch.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Scottish Government, Directorate for External Affairs | Population and Migration Division Atlantic Quay 5 | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU | [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training

Sent: 16 August 2021 15:44

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Minister for HE, FE, Youth Employment and Training <MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >; Robertson C (Craig) <Craig.Robertson@gov.scot>; Livey D (David) <David.Livey@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Chevening Scholarships

[REDACTED]

Please see below from Mr Hepburn, grateful for an update when possible as [REDACTED] has let me know that you are already checking into this.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Private Secretary – Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth Employment and Training – Jamie Hepburn MSP

St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG - [REDACTED]

Email: MinisterHEFEYET@gov.scot

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

ISSUE: The UK Government have criticised Scotland's support for refugees, including by conflating asylum dispersal with refugee resettlement and the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

- Scotland responded strongly to support refugee resettlement from Syria, with the first flights arriving to Glasgow in November 2015.
- Home Office statistics published in May 2021 show that up to 31 March 2021, 3,328 refugees (16.4% of the UK total) were received by Scottish local authorities under the Syrian Resettlement Programme.
- Home Office statistics published in May 2021 show that up to 31 March 2021, 256 refugees (13.9% of the UK total) were received by Scottish local authorities under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme.
- The ability to continue to support refugee resettlement is dependent on availability of suitable properties and essential services.
- Capacity for refugee resettlement has been impacted by the stepping up of the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) relocation programme as local authorities were urged to prioritise places for this by the Home Office in June.
- A hotel in Edinburgh is being procured by the Home Office to accommodate people who have arrived through the LES and have already completed quarantine in England before moving to Scotland.
- Hotels elsewhere in Scotland are also being explored by the Home Office.
- Glasgow is the only asylum dispersal area in Scotland, however it already supports Scotland's proportionate share of asylum seekers in the UK, with around 5,000 people accommodated in the city.
- Scotland is currently deciding whether to participate in the new UK Gov national rota for National Transfer Scheme whereby regions across the UK will take it in turns to provide additional placements to unaccompanied asylum seeking children; it was estimated Scotland would receive up to 50 children a year.

Top Lines

- Scotland is committed to playing our part in welcoming and supporting people fleeing Afghanistan.
- We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.
- Scotland has a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere.

The Scottish Government commends local authorities welcoming people through the UK's Afghan locally employed staff relocation programme.

- The Scottish Government recognises the hugely important work that Locally Employed Staff undertook for the UK in Afghanistan and the risks they face as a result of that service.
- The Afghan locally employed staff scheme has been in operation since 2013. It provides a range of support to current and former Afghan staff who worked for British Forces or other UK Government institutions, including relocation to the UK.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

- Scottish local authorities are among those to have welcomed Afghan locally employed staff and their families since 2013.
- In June 2021, the Home Office asked local authorities to prioritise provision of resettlement places for relocation of Afghan locally employed staff as they worked to increase relocations through this programme.
- Scotland is playing its part in supporting the people who worked for British institutions in Afghanistan.
- Work is underway to ensure that people have the support and services they need on arrival and as they settle into communities.

Use of hotels to accommodate people arriving through the locally employed staff relocation programme is taking place.

- This is a UK Government scheme, and the Home Office is responsible for the sourcing of hotels to accommodate people.
- While the Scottish Government is clear that our preference would be for people to move into housing as soon as possible, we recognise that the speed of evacuation now requires the use of other forms of accommodation in the short term.
- Living in a hotel during a crisis is a measure to ensure people can be accommodated and supported in a place of safety, until they can move to permanent housing. It is not a luxury.
- No matter the quality of the hotel used, it is not ideal for people to arrive seeking safety and be placed in temporary accommodation rather than in a home in a community where they can begin to settle.
- Work is underway to ensure people have the support and services they need while they are living in hotels.

Welcome the announcement of a UK resettlement programme for Afghan refugees.

- While the announcement of a UK resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees is welcome in principle, the commitment to 20,000 in the 'long term' and just 5,000 in the first year is inadequate and we call on the UK Government to go further.
- We believe a substantial increase in numbers being committed to is required if the UK Government is to meet its responsibilities.
- The First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August seeking further detail on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programme.
- The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible to enable local authorities to assess their ability to participate and plan support.
- On 17 August the UK Government announced the new dedicated resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Priority will be given to women, girls and minority groups.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

As we did with the Syrian resettlement programme, Scotland is willing to play our part and do all we can to help those in peril.

- Scottish local authorities led the way in welcoming refugees fleeing the horror of the conflict in Syria.
- Alongside our local authorities, third sector, faith and community organisations have welcomed people and provided the safety and security the need to rebuild their lives in their new homes.
- Scotland is proud to have received over 3,500 refugees under the Syrian Resettlement and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes. All 32 Scottish local authorities have welcomed refugees into their communities.

Decisions about the operation of refugee resettlement programmes are reserved to the UK Government.

- The UK Government had been due to start a new global resettlement programme in April 2020 to resettle 5,000 people in its first year.
- The global resettlement programme was delayed due to Covid-19 but restarted gradually in late 2020.
- Scottish local authorities have reiterated their commitment to support UK refugee resettlement programmes.
- It is right that the new Afghan resettlement scheme will be in addition to the UK's existing global refugee resettlement commitment.

The UK Government must consider asylum applications from Afghan nationals quickly and compassionately.

- The Prime Minister made a commitment during the Westminster debate on 18 August that the UK will not return Afghan nationals who have sought asylum in the UK.
- The Home Office should urgently review any cases which are in the asylum appeals process or where people have previously been refused asylum on the basis that Kabul is safe.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 27 August 2021 09:11

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)

<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John)

<John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

[REDACTED]

Please find attached an FMQ style brief.

Key thing to flag is that there are three resettlement/relocation schemes:

- Afghan Citizens Refugee Resettlement Programme – we are awaiting detail on how this will operate so presume this will be the focus of the call.
- Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) relocation programme – also referred to as ARAP by UKG – this is already operating.
- Global Refugee Resettlement Programme – also already operating, first announced in 2019 to follow the Syrian resettlement programme however impacted by Covid-19 so only a small number of people will have arrived.

I will look to confirm official attendee asap.

Please let us know if there are any queries or you need anything further.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [Policy Manager](#)

[Connected Communities – Asylum and Refugee Integration](#)

From: [REDACTED] **Behalf Of** First Minister

Sent: 27 August 2021 09:02

To: [REDACTED] First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)

<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John)

<John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

[REDACTED], thanks.

I suspect there will be wider discussion on the overall situation in Afghanistan too, and it not being limited solely to resettlement, however I'll leave the selection of the most relevant official to you all. Grateful, however, if you could confirm that soon – as Cabinet Office has to be made aware.

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 27 August 2021 08:58

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

Thanks [REDACTED]

Just expanding the copy list to Connected Communities colleagues who lead on the resettlement programme.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Team Leader
Scottish Government International Division
2-H South, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] **Behalf Of** First Minister

Sent: 27 August 2021 08:56

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]>; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

All,

I think [REDACTED] may already be initiating conversations re this – however, grateful if the most up to date position/advice on resettlement can be provided ahead of the call.

There is no official Agenda for the meeting, however CO have indicated the call will focus largely on ‘resettlement’, so the latest SG advice on that would be appreciated as soon as is possible.

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Deputy Private Secretary to the First Minister
Office of the First Minister**

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [REDACTED]



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From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** First Minister

Sent: 27 August 2021 07:13

To: [REDACTED]

Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin)

<Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>;

Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John)

<John.Primrose@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

[REDACTED]/[REDACTED]

We're still awaiting final call details from CDL's office, however it looks as though the call will indeed go ahead at 10am – grateful if you can both join alongside FM.

I will send over call details once all has been confirmed.

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Deputy Private Secretary to the First Minister

Office of the First Minister

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [REDACTED]



Office of the First Minister of Scotland

FirstMinister.gov.scot

Prìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 26 August 2021 17:54

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

Hi [REDACTED]

Here's today's update on Afghanistan. Let me know if you need more.

I'm happy to join the call tomorrow to take the note.

Cheers

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Team Leader
Scottish Government International Division
2-H South, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** First Minister
Sent: 26 August 2021 17:46
To: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>
Cc: Rogers D (David) (Constitution and Cabinet Director) <David.Rogers@gov.scot>; Cameron DA (Donald) (Constitution and UKR) <Donald.Cameron@gov.scot>; McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED]; Wightman S (Scott) <Scott.Wightman@gov.scot>; Permanent Secretary <PermanentSecretary@gov.scot>; First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: FW: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

[REDACTED]

FM intends to join the call below with CDL tomorrow morning at 1000hrs and has asked if Mr Robertson can also join as well?

With apologies for the wide ranging copylist but grateful if an official could also join the call for note taking purposes? It would also be useful to have a light briefing note on the current situation.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Deputy Private Secretary - Diary
Office of the First Minister**

5th Floor | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | [REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** CDL Diary Mailbox
Sent: 26 August 2021 16:00
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; PS.FirstMinister@gov.wales; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]; [REDACTED]
Cc: Secretary of State Scotland Mailbox <secretaryofstate@ukgovscotland.gov.uk>; State, Secretary <secretary.state@ukgovwales.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
Subject: Call with CDL tomorrow morning re Afghanistan

Hiya,

I think you are all aware that will be a call with CDL tomorrow on Afghanistan. Apologies but I have limited availability and as it stands can only do 10am for 45 minutes.

Can you please let me know if this will work?
Many thanks,
[REDACTED]



Angus Robertson MSP
Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution,
External Affairs and Culture
The Scottish Government

Dear Angus,

Humanitarian Emergency Funding for Afghanistan

We are writing in regard to the current situation in Afghanistan and the plight of those Afghans seeking refuge outside of the country. The First Minister's statement that the Scottish Government stands ready to do all it can to support those in peril is welcome and we strongly endorse her calls on the UK Government to accept a greater number of Afghans who wish to seek refuge here.

However, we believe there is one action which can be taken by the Scottish Government without the need to wait for a change of UK policy.

The Humanitarian Emergency Fund has played an important role in disaster relief since its inception in 2016 and it is hard to envisage a circumstance more sadly fitting of its criteria. Therefore, we propose that you ask the HEF panel to immediately convene, to consider how emergency funding could be deployed to assist the people of Afghanistan and those who have been forced to flee.

Not only would this funding allow partner organisations to continue and expand their life-saving work at this critical moment, it would provide a strong signal to the many thousands of people across Scotland who want to help but are not currently sure how, or who they should donate to.

Yours in solidarity,

Maggie Chapman MSP & Ross Greer MSP
Spokespeople for International Development and External Affairs
Scottish Green Party



The Right Honourable Dominic Raab MP

[REDACTED]
and First Secretary of State
King Charles St
Whitehall
London
SW1A2AH

By email to: dominic.raab.mp@parliament.uk
fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

Our Ref: KH/KD/LB

Date: 25 August 2021

Dear Foreign Secretary

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

United States' and allies' military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

[REDACTED]

In his capacity as [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

face is well-known across the country.

Reports have b

[REDACTED]

speaker.

Understandably, [REDACTED] is extremely worried. It is unknown whether the [REDACTED] will survive as an organisation.



former Locally Employed Staff assesses

as the security

[REDACTED] filed an application several weeks
ARAP are listed below:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

support for [REDACTED] relocation application, and request, respectfully, that you uphold it.

Yours sincerely

Ken Dailing
President

cc: britishembassy.kabul@fcdo.gov.uk
CabSec.Justice@gov.scot

Background to [REDACTED]

The [REDACTED] worked with the Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan from 2004 to first establish the [REDACTED], and assisted in the developments of its bylaws, its first independent and secret ballot, and continued working closely with the [REDACTED] for several years beyond this.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



David Torrance MSP
53 Kirk Wynd
Kirkcaldy
KY1 1EH

Angus Robertson MSP
Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution,
External Affairs and Culture
The Scottish Government **[by email]**

DT/IT
21 August 2021

Dear Angus,

Earlier this week I was approached by a constituent who is a veterinary surgeon about the plight of colleagues (and their families) in Afghanistan who work for the animal welfare charity Nowzad in Kabul.

The charity's leaders are trying to arrange evacuation of all the staff and families, plus the animals in its care.

I have explained to her that foreign policy, diplomatic relations and armed forces matters are all reserved to the UK Parliament. However, I wonder if you would be able to raise the issue on her behalf with the relevant member(s) of the UK Government and urge them to do whatever is possible to assist?

Yours sincerely,

Redacted

David Torrance
MSP for the Kirkcaldy Constituency

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 August 2021 17:58
To: Robertson A (Angus), MSP
Subject: Afghanistan

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Robertson

Please can you read this?

I went to the West End Craft Fair and met a woman from Afghanistan. [REDACTED].

Her story was mainly about her family and her three sisters who live in Kabul with their parents. She says they are at increased risk because of her.

Two of her three sisters are in their early twenties and during the night there was knocking at their door. No-one answered it. And last night nothing happened, but [REDACTED] fled Afghanistan because of targeting by the Taliban.

Her parents feel they are powerless.

[REDACTED] was granted refugee status in the UK in 2017. She was an artist and businesswoman in Afghanistan and worked as a translator.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/21/afghanistan-businesswoman-of-year-to-shared-house><https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fuk-news%2F2017%2Fmar%2F21%2Fafghanistan-businesswoman-of-year-to-shared-house&data=04%7C01%7CAngus.Robertson.msp%40parliament.scot%7Cd71e70b0dc6840144bca08d961a02c7a%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637648162832305735%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6lk1haWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=SY8%2BpQk2PAmOHZhOoidNGTICexr4a5cHuX2vX5GWiLU%3D&reserved=0>

She desperately wants to get her family out of Afghanistan. She also spoke to a journalist with ITV. I know that you cannot help everyone. Can you help her?

[Image removed by sender.]<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fuk-news%2F2017%2Fmar%2F21%2Fafghanistan-businesswoman-of-year-to-shared-house&data=04%7C01%7CAngus.Robertson.msp%40parliament.scot%7Cd71e70b0dc6840144bca08d961a02c7a%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637648162832305735%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6lk1haWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=SY8%2BpQk2PAmOHZhOoidNGTICexr4a5cHuX2vX5GWiLU%3D&reserved=0>

From businesswoman of the year to £5 a day in a shared house | UK news | The Guardian<https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theguardian.com%2Fuk-news%2F2017%2Fmar%2F21%2Fafghanistan-businesswoman-of-year-to-shared-house&data=04%7C01%7CAngus.Robertson.msp%40parliament.scot%7Cd71e70b0dc6840144bca08d961a02c7a%7Cd603c99ccfdd4292926800db0d0cf081%7C1%7C1%7C637648162832315695%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6lk1haWwiLCJXVC16Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=XUIwbC5J5e0txU9k8dRINPPaJCXzqF%2BTKS4wnexW50%3D&reserved=0>

She was voted Afghan businesswoman of the year, has been praised by Prince Charles and has had her art displayed at the V&A museum in London and the Smithsonian in Washington. She is the subject ...

www.theguardian.com

Thank you for reading this.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

Engagement title	Meeting with UKG Ministers
Engagement timing	Monday 6 September 12:45 - 13:30
Meeting Link	To follow
Background/Purpose include invitation history	Opportunity to meet with the new UKG Minister for Afghan resettlement and Communities Minister and raise key issues.
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Atkins, UKG Minister for Afghan Resettlement • Lord Greenhalgh, UKG Minister for Building Safety and Communities.
Annexes	Summary: Annex A FMQ:Annex B
Media Handling include mobile number (s)	<i>N/A</i>
Official Support include mobile number(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED] Connected Communities • [REDACTED], Connected Communities • [REDACTED], Connected Communities, • [REDACTED], Connected Communities

SUMMARY PAGE

Background

Operation warm welcome

- On 1 September UKG released further information on ‘Operation Warm Welcome’ and the cross government support being put in place for Afghan arrivals in the UK.
- It announced:
 - that those coming to the UK through resettlement routes would receive immediate indefinite leave to remain
 - to give children and young adults the best start in life the government is making at least £12 million available to prioritise additional school places so children can be enrolled as soon as possible, and to provide school transport, specialist teachers and English language support to assist with learning.
 - further funding will be provided for up to 300 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships for Afghans at UK universities and adults will also be able to access English language courses free of charge
 - £3 million of additional NHS funding so that Afghans arriving under the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme can access healthcare and register with a GP once they leave quarantine;
 - all are being offered the COVID-19 vaccine and so far more than 700 arrivals under the ARAP scheme have left quarantine and received their first vaccination, with more leaving and receiving a job each day;
 - £5 million funding for councils in England, Wales and Scotland to support Afghans coming to the UK via the ARAP scheme and provide a top up to help meet the costs of renting properties;
 - the government is already working with more than 100 councils across the UK to meet the demand for housing, with over 2,000 places already confirmed;
 - the Communities Secretary will convene a roundtable with council leaders from across the country in the coming days;
 - to harness the generosity of the British public and make sure those who want to help know where to turn we will launch an online portal to allow people to submit offers of support for people arriving from Afghanistan;
 - this portal is already available to submit offers of housing and work is now underway to expand this to further offers, such as job opportunities, professional skills training or donations of items like clothes or toys; and
 - £200 million has been committed to meet the cost of the first year of the Afghanistan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme, which aims to welcome up to 20,000 Afghans.

Numbers to date

- Scottish local authorities have participated in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff relocation scheme since 2014. Prior to June 2021, five Scottish local authorities had welcomed nearly 400 people.
- From June 2021 to the end of August a further [REDACTED] families (around [REDACTED] individuals) arrived in Scotland across 8 local authorities.
- A further [REDACTED] families (approximately [REDACTED] individuals) are expected to arrive in the next few weeks and a further [REDACTED] properties are being matched.
- 18 local authorities have confirmed their commitment going forward under the Locally Employed Staff/ ARAP (Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy) and others are going through internal processes.

- Scotland's local authorities have unanimously agreed to support refugee resettlement. More detail on the new resettlement programme is needed to be able to start planning and confirm offers.

Hotels

- Use of hotels in Scotland to accommodate Afghan nationals who have arrived through the UK's Locally Employed Staff relocation scheme (also referred to as ARAP – Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) is expected imminently.
- People will travel from hotels in England where they have completed quarantine.
- Arrival dates are subject to change, but the first people may arrive to Edinburgh tomorrow (4 September).
- The hotels identified are: [REDACTED]
- Local authorities are receiving funding from the Home Office for wraparound support.
- Home Office have advised local authorities that £600 per person will be provided to fund any immediate health care needs, this is through the £3 million previously announced as part of UK's 'Operation Warm Welcome'. No further details are available at this point in time and we are seeking clarity on how this will be provided. The assumption is that it will be provided direct to Health Boards.
- Connected Communities Division is working with COSLA, health colleagues and education colleagues to ensure that appropriate service provision is in place to support people while they are in hotels.

Engagement to date

- Officials continue to engage regularly with both HO, UKG and COSLA.
- A Ministerial roundtable with the Afghan community organisations in Scotland was held on 31 August

Key issues to raise

- Clarity on UKG funding to aid resettlement and operation warm welcome - how this will be provided to devolved administrations and/or local authorities/Health Boards.
- Issue of housing availability and potential need for additional funding in this area to enable innovative approaches
- Access to interpreters/interpretation – immediately for ensuring families can understand what is available to them and how.
- Access to English language lessons for families, especially women and children to enable their integration.
- Access to employment – need to work together to ensure a wide range of employment opportunities for families, and the need to ensure it is fair work not just the lowest paid opportunities. Business organisations have already expressed a willingness to help, and an initial meeting between them and SG/COSLA has taken place.
- Access to Higher and Further education – whether the scholarships announced as part of Operation Warm Welcome include Scottish institutions and what discussion is taking place with the sector.

AFGHAN RELOCATION & REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FMQ

ISSUE: *The Herald*, 2 September: Scotland's councils have drawn up plans to welcome hundreds of Afghan refugees in the coming months.

- The ability to continue to support refugee resettlement is dependent on availability of suitable properties and essential services.
- Capacity for refugee resettlement has been impacted by the stepping up of the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) relocation scheme under the UK's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP).
- The Home Office urged local authorities to prioritise places for this in June.
- The Home Office have procured three hotels to accommodate LES arrivals: [REDACTED]
- Local authorities are receiving funding from the Home Office to provide wrap around support.
- People arriving to hotels will have completed hotel quarantine in England.
- People accommodated in hotels may not remain in Scotland permanently, depending on match to suitable long term accommodation.
- 27 August: COSLA Leaders agreed continuing commitment to refugee resettlement from all local authorities.
- More detail on the resettlement programme and funding is needed for local authorities to make firm offers.
- 1 Sept: UK Government announced 'Operation Warm Welcome' with funding to support Afghans in the UK, including additional school places and NHS care.
- We have not yet received any confirmed detail on funding for Scotland.
- Scotland is deciding whether to participate in the new UKG national rota for the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, under which Scotland could receive up to 50 children a year.

Top Lines

- Scotland is committed to playing our part in welcoming and supporting people fleeing Afghanistan.
- We will work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.
- Afghan families are already being welcomed into Scottish communities under the Locally Employed Staff relocation scheme.
- Local Authorities across Scotland are keen to support the Afghan Citizens resettlement scheme, but need more information from UK Government.
- Scotland has a long history of welcoming people of all nationalities and faiths, including those seeking refuge and asylum from war and terror elsewhere.

The Scottish Government is pressing the UK Government for more detail about the new Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programme.

- I wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August to welcome the announcement of an Afghan resettlement programme, reaffirm Scotland's commitment to play our part and seek more detail on the programme.
- On 1 September, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government wrote to the Home Secretary requesting more detail.
- The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible. To enable us all, but particularly local authorities, to plan our response.

- Once more detail about the resettlement programme is known, work will be able to progress to identify suitable properties with available essential services, and offer places to the UK resettlement programme.
- While the announcement of a UK resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees is welcome in principle, the commitment to 20,000 in the 'long term' and just 5,000 in the first year is inadequate.
- We call on the UK Government to go further.
- We believe a substantial increase in numbers being committed to is required if the UK Government is to meet its responsibilities.
- It is right that the new Afghan resettlement scheme will be in addition to the UK's existing global refugee resettlement commitment.

The UK Government has announced 'Operation Warm Welcome' to support Afghan arrivals in the UK, including English language learning, university scholarships and integration support.

- The UK Government must provide further detail on the support that will be provided and how this will operate.
- We need clarity on how the funding outlined for healthcare and school places will be delivered to devolved services.
- We welcome any additional resource to support integration, but need detail of the implications for devolved nations to ensure support can be provided as quickly as possible.

As we did with the Syrian resettlement programme, Scotland is ready and willing to play our part and do all we can to help those in peril.

- Scottish local authorities led the way in welcoming refugees fleeing the horror of the conflict in Syria.
- Alongside our local authorities; third sector, faith and community organisations have welcomed people and helped to provide the safety and security people need to rebuild their lives in their new homes.
- All 32 of Scotland's local authorities participated in the Syrian resettlement scheme, welcoming over 3,300 refugees across Scotland.
- That's 16% of the total refugees welcomed to the UK under that scheme.

All options should be explored to identify suitable housing for people arriving for resettlement.

- The Scottish Government is aware that the MOD and local authorities have already had some discussion about using vacant MOD service personnel housing for people arriving for resettlement.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture has committed to raise the use of MOD housing to accommodate refugees with the Secretary of State for Defence.
- The Cabinet Secretary will encourage the UK Government to ensure discussions continue wherever suitable properties are empty and could accommodate refugees arriving in the UK.

The Scottish Government commends local authorities welcoming people through the UK's Afghan locally employed staff relocation programme.

- We welcome the UK Government announcement that people arriving through the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) will receive immediate indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- We also welcome that those who have already relocated under the policy will be able to apply free of charge to convert their temporary leave into indefinite leave.

- The Home Office must ensure people are supported and make the application to convert their leave as quick and easy as possible, so that they too can rebuild their lives with the certainty of their right to remain.
- The Scottish Government recognises the hugely important work that Locally Employed Staff undertook for the UK in Afghanistan and the risks they face as a result of that service.
- Scottish local authorities are among those to have welcomed Afghan locally employed staff and their families since 2014.
- In June 2021, the Home Office asked local authorities to prioritise provision of resettlement places for relocation of Afghan locally employed staff as they worked to increase relocations through this programme.

Refugee resettlement and relocation are UK Government schemes and the Home Office is responsible for any sourcing of hotels to accommodate people.

- The Scottish Government is clear that our preference would be for people to move into housing as soon as possible.
- We recognise that the speed and scale of evacuation now requires the use of other forms of accommodation in the short term.
- The UK Government must engage with relevant local authorities before procuring any hotels.
- Living in a hotel during a crisis is not a luxury. It is a measure to ensure people can be accommodated and supported in a place of safety, until they can move to permanent housing.
- Work is underway to ensure anyone accommodated in a hotel will have the support and services they need.

Scottish local authorities have consistently shown their willingness to assist vulnerable young asylum seekers who arrive in the country alone.

- Scotland has provided over 20 placements to unaccompanied asylum seeking children through the National Transfer Scheme over the past year, despite the funding and capacity challenges compounded by the pandemic.
- This is in addition to the UASC currently cared for by local authorities throughout Scotland, which is estimated to be over 400 young people.
- The small change to funding arrangements by the Home Office which now ensures the higher UASC daily rate of £143 applies to all children transferred through the National Transfer Scheme was greatly needed.
- The majority of Scottish local authorities are not eligible to apply for the higher daily rate for the unaccompanied asylum seeking children currently in their care.
- The Home Office's Care Leavers' funding for older unaccompanied asylum seeking children fails to take into account Scotland's statutory duty to provide after care support up until the age of 26.
- This shortfall in funding urgently needs to be addressed and we will continue to press the UK Government on this reserved issue.

The UK Government must consider asylum applications from Afghan nationals quickly and compassionately.

- The Prime Minister made a commitment during the Westminster debate on 18 August that the UK will not return Afghan nationals who have sought asylum in the UK.
- I wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August to urge the Home Office to urgently review any cases which are in the asylum appeals process, or where people have previously been refused asylum.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government also made this request to the Home Secretary in her letter of 1 September.
- As a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, the UK has international obligations to recognise refugees who are in the UK and offer them the protection they need.

The situation in Afghanistan and the complexity of asylum and humanitarian routes to safety demonstrate how flawed the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill is.

- On 26 July, I wrote to the Home Secretary to raise my deep concerns about the significant and disturbing changes proposed in the UK Government's New Plan for Immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government set out more detailed concerns and requested amendments be made in a letter to the Home Secretary of 1 September.
- I do not believe the UK Government's plans will achieve the change that is desperately needed for our asylum system.
- They will also place our international standing as a country of welcome and refuge at serious risk.
- The Scottish Government has repeatedly called for the Home Office to deliver more humane and flexible asylum and immigration policies which uphold people's rights.
- The Scottish Government recognises the need to deter and prevent abuse of our immigration and asylum systems, but we are clear that people seeking sanctuary should be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Opening

I want to speak today about the situation in Afghanistan – particularly what Scotland can do to support the Afghan people.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on every life lost, every family displaced, every girl denied an education and every minority group now living in fear. The tragedy of Afghanistan is the tragedy of countless individuals and millions of families.

I want to make three fundamental arguments – firstly I want to address the Humanitarian Challenge; secondly to address how Scotland can play a full role in the resettlement of refugees; and finally what Scotland, as a good Global Citizen, is and will be, doing to support the people of Afghanistan, and those who served in Afghanistan.

Recent history

Over the course of the last 20 years, the UK has been instrumental in supporting the government of Afghanistan, both militarily and in building the civil

society that improved the lives of so many people – especially of women and young girls. Supporting projects to improve education, healthcare, local governance and economic growth across the country. We must work together to protect what gains were made.

The economy in Afghanistan was already fragile and the state heavily dependent on foreign aid. That international assistance now hangs in the balance as we see the economy collapse.

Human rights

The human rights situation is extremely worrying. Women and girls, those who worked for foreign governments or aid agencies are all threatened. The Taliban has a history of brutal discrimination against minority ethnic groups across Afghanistan, and religious minorities.

Current situation in Afghanistan

. We have all seen the footage, and heard the stories, of the people desperately trying to leave Afghanistan for fear of Taliban retribution. We saw footage of parents desperately throwing their children and babies over barbed wire fences and walls to soldiers, in the hopes that they will be taken to safety. A position I know you all agree that no parent should ever be in.

Over 120,000 people were safely evacuated thanks to the International effort at Kabul Airport. Scotland is forever grateful to all of the service personnel, who worked tirelessly and sacrificed so much in the service of their country.. Scotland also wants to recognise the dedicated work of diplomats and those in the humanitarian and aid sector who have worked to bring Afghanistan a better future.

Now that the flights have ceased, and there is no western presence in Afghanistan, we must ask ourselves, what can Scotland do? We have heard this week that hundreds of people eligible for relocation remain in Afghanistan. The UK government is speaking of dual nationals as if they were second class citizens, and has said any Afghans who flee to neighbouring countries and later make the perilous journey to the UK, via the Channel, for a better life would still be subject to the government's crackdown on boat crossings. As if the people of Afghanistan had not suffered enough.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Housing and Local Government wrote to the Home Secretary yesterday to make clear our opposition to the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill. People who come to Scotland seeking sanctuary must be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Extremely vulnerable people, such as children or victims of human trafficking, deserve a system which enables access to support rather than one which erects barriers, not a system which, according to the United Nations High

Commissioner for refugees is a violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention that will “damage lives”..

Need to support all Afghans

We should be mindful of the lessons of the past. While millions of refugees were resettled after the Second World War, facilitated by skills matching, and employment needs, hundreds of thousands of displaced people, deemed of less worth to countries, were left behind. Because they were old, or sick, or disabled. We will not abandon people due to sickness, age, or disability. That is not the Scottish way.

We in Scotland are fortunate, to have been born and live in a prosperous country. But we must never forget the many people in the world who are not so fortunate.

Those who risked their lives to make the perilous journey across Afghanistan to seek refuge elsewhere – because home is no longer safe. No one should be left behind, no one should live in fear and terror. I echo the words spoken by MP Tom Tugendhatd that no one chooses to live in authoritarian regimes.

We in Scotland know that the basic human right to live in peace, dignity, and security should not be dependent on what skills you have or what you can offer the economy of another country.

Humanitarian Challenge

Today millions of Afghans throughout the country are in dire need of humanitarian assistance with 3.5 million internally displaced persons. 14 million people in are food insecure, as a result of decades of conflict, drought and the impact of the pandemic.

On Tuesday Jens Laerke of UN office for Coordination of Humanitarian affairs warned that the \$1.3 billion funding requirement to help this humanitarian crisis had not been met.

The Scottish Government calls on all involved to ensure humanitarian access for those in need. And in Scotland, we will play our part.

How Scotland supported Syrian refugees, and the false claim of the UK leading on this

I would like now to address how Scotland will play a full role in refugee resettlement. I'd like to start by looking back at how Scotland welcomed and supported Syrian refugees and refute the false claim of the UK leading on this.

Six years ago, Scottish local authorities led the way in welcoming refugees fleeing the horror of the conflict in Syria. The first flight bringing refugees to the UK for resettlement landed in Glasgow on a dark, dreich day in November 2015.

At that time few local authorities in Scotland had experience of supporting refugees. That is no longer the case. I am proud to say that in the intervening years, every local authority in Scotland has welcomed and supported refugees. Over 3,500 people have arrived and have been rebuilding their lives in their new

communities, bringing with them skills and cultures from which we all benefit.

I thank the local authority teams who have made this possible as well as the many third sector, community and faith organisations and members of the public, who have worked tirelessly to provide the friendship and support people need as they settle in a new home.

It angers me greatly when I hear the efforts of so many people being denigrated and dismissed by those who have not bothered to check their facts. While I am clear that we can and should do more, Scotland is a country that has responded, and it has been a nation-wide response.

What more the UK could be doing on resettlement

Scotland is therefore standing by to play a full role in providing a home for Afghans. In principle, I very much welcome the UK Government's announcement of the new Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programme, as well

as Operation Warm Welcome However, I think we all know that the current commitment to take 20,000 people over five years, with 5,000 in the first year, is nowhere near enough. We have all seen the devastating scenes at Kabul airport, as thousands of people have tried desperately to flee. The Scottish government is also deeply concerned about the fate of Afghans who contributed to British aid efforts, or supported western efforts to enhance human rights, and are not prioritised for resettlement. We must support those who supported us and have been left behind.

We will continue to work with the Home Office, COSLA, local authorities and other partners to provide people with the safety and security they need to rebuild their lives.

The New Scots refugee integration strategy, led in partnership with COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council, provides the framework for welcoming refugees in Scotland. It ensured Scotland was prepared for resettlement in 2015 and continues to underpin our

approach. We believe that integration begins from day one and that everyone in our communities has a part to play.

Scottish local authorities have been welcoming Afghans who worked for British Forces or other UK Government institutions, along with their families for a number of years now. This experience, along with that gained through resettlement of refugees from the conflict in Syria, will be invaluable in welcoming people into our communities.

So we will work with the UK Government to make the resettlement programme a success. But I also call on the UK Government to go further and increase these numbers to meet its responsibilities. The First Minister has urgently sought more detailed information about how the scheme will operate and how it will protect women, girls and others who are at the greatest risk. We need this information as soon as possible, so that all partners can plan their response.

Update on Scottish response to date

I am pleased to be able to give you the following update on Scotland's offer to Afghans resettling here:

[text from Connected Communities to be inserted]

In addition, the UK Government must also deal quickly and compassionately with Afghans who are already in the UK seeking asylum. Their cases must be expedited, and those previously refused must be reviewed. It should go without saying that there must be no attempts to remove people to Afghanistan.

I suggest now we, as a Scottish Parliament, ask the UK Government to make a commitment that all Afghans in the UK will be supported, that no one will be turned away and every case will be dealt with compassion and respect. I will ask all parties – now – to sign up to this initiative and demonstrate that we are united as a country in welcoming Afghans here.

In Scotland, we are committed to do all we can to welcome new arrivals from Afghanistan. I was delighted to meet with organisations in Scotland who will play a key role on our support for Afghans coming to Scotland under the resettlement programme. These included the Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA, Glasgow Afghan United and the Afghan Human Rights Foundation. I would like to put on record my thanks to them for everything they are - and will - do as we welcome new refugees.

What is clear is we need to be welcoming refugees with an approach rooted in human rights, in particular meeting the needs of women as they adapt to living in a new culture. Secondly what is clear is we are not starting from scratch, we need to learn from the successes, and the challenges from supporting Syrian refugees. Thirdly, co-ordination is key if we are to ensure everyone feels safe, welcomed, empowered and integrated within what will be a very strange environment for many. Scottish Government will play a full part in ensuring this will happen.

Humanitarian aid

I want to return at this point to the critical humanitarian needs in Afghanistan which I raised earlier in this statement.

While the announcement by the UK Government that aid to Afghanistan will be doubled is a step in the right direction, this ultimately amounts to nothing more than a reversal of previous major cuts on aid to Afghanistan.

The UK Government's commitment of £286 million in aid this year is actually less than the figure for 2019, while the needs of people in Afghanistan have increased significantly over that time.

Scotland's aid offer

I am proud to be a member of the Scottish Government, as we did with the Syrian crisis, the people of Scotland stand ready to assist those in Afghanistan at this time when humanitarian needs are so great.

I am pleased to announce to the Parliament that the Scottish Government have made £250,000 available from our Humanitarian Emergency Fund to provide critical help to the people of Afghanistan. This is additional to the financial commitment the Scottish people already make to the UK's aid budget through tax contributions.

We are in close contact with our humanitarian partners on the Fund's Panel to explore ways in which this funding can be delivered safely and effectively to support those on the ground.

Veterans

The final point I would like to address is on our armed services. It is vitally important that we recognise the impact the recent events may have on our veterans - particularly those that served in Afghanistan, and the families and friends of those who were injured or sadly

lost their lives there. The commitment and sacrifice made by our Armed Forces and their families will always be valued and respected by the Scottish Government and the nation. We recognise and will be forever grateful for the role those that served in Afghanistan played in contributing to our safety and security.

Veterans may currently be experiencing increased mental health and emotional difficulties. It is crucial that they have access to the right support and help when they need it.

Mental health support can be accessed through our specialist veterans' support organisations Veterans First Point and Combat Stress. Veterans and their families can also access more general mental health services such as the NHS24 Mental Health Hub and the Breathing Space telephone support service.

Closing

As we debate today how best to support the people of Afghanistan I ask that we all remember that a person's right to live in peace, dignity, and security should not depend on what they can offer the economy of another country. That we ask ourselves, if those were our mothers, daughters, sisters, brothers, sons, and fathers, what would we want another country to do to help?

[2,250 words – about 12.5 minutes]

Presiding Officer, I would like to thank all members who have taken part in this afternoon's debate.

The contributions have shown powerful compassion for the lives and livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan.

They have told the stories of the people affected by the US-led military withdrawal, and across party lines members have demonstrated the willingness of this Parliament to step up.

As we know, the return and resurgence of the Taliban has stirred fear in many; not least for Afghanistan's women.

The reign of Taliban rule from 1996 – 2001, was one in which women and minorities lived in absolute and all-encompassing terror.

Women confined to their homes, unless accompanied by a man.

Women refused an education.

Women banned from working.

The Taliban now say they will 'respect' women.

Almost as though they have attended a PR course on how to appear reasonable, we must not forget this is a violent regime who do not recognise human rights.

Yesterday a senior Taliban official, in response to a question on whether or not women would form part of the proposed Taliban regime, stated that members would be selected on 'merit', specifically those with 'capacity' for posts.

The implication being that women have neither.

Misogyny knows no borders; and it does Afghan women a real disservice to suggest that we in the UK, or in Scotland, have all answers. We should also be cognisant of the politics at play - as Talat Yaqoob wrote earlier this week:

'We are in yet another crisis where Muslim women are used as tools to deflect from foreign policy disaster and domestic political fall-outs, all without nuance and all too often, without hearing from the women being pointed at, written about or photographed, crying in fear'.

We must commit to **actively listen** to the voices of the women, whom, as Talat notes, were frozen out entirely from the negotiations regarding the military withdrawal.

Earlier this week the Cabinet Secretary and I met with members of the Afghan community in Scotland. Safia Khalid, who works for Glasgow Afghan United, made some really practical points, which I want to share with members.

She spoke of the need for Afghan women to be trained to understand the rights they have in Scotland.

She spoke of the need for Afghan women to be shown where they can shop, how they can travel, and the importance of making sure that they do not feel lonely.

She spoke of the importance of access to English

language classes with childcare provision - and the reality that, for many Afghan women only their husbands would understand English.

As I formally close this debate on supporting the people of Afghanistan, I would like to make three points. The first is to address the global response required, the second is how Scotland is playing its part, and finally to talk about how we must do everything we can to protect the human rights of the people of Afghanistan into the future.

The U.K has a duty to help the people of Afghanistan; not least because of our involvement since 2001, and our historic involvement in the three Anglo-Afghan Wars from the years 1838 to 1919, when a ceasefire led to Afghanistan reclaiming Independence. The United Kingdom was at the centre of the intervention into Afghanistan in 2001 and it **must be** at the centre of the solution to the current crisis.

The UK Government's Afghan Citizens Resettlement offers to take just 20,000 people over five years, with 5,000 people in the first year.

Presiding Officer, that is not enough. According to the House of Commons library the UK accepted:

- Around 80,000 Jewish refugees between 1933 and 1939, equivalent to around 11,000 per year.
- Around 27,000 Asian Ugandans were resettled to the UK in 1972 and 1973, or 13,500 per year.
- And between 17,000 and 22,500 Vietnamese refugees were resettled to the UK between 1979 and 1992, or around 1,400 per year.

The UK Government must do more.

Because resettled people are granted refugee status by the UK while abroad and then brought to live in the UK, their status is determined by officials from the UN and the UK Government.

The UK Government will choose, therefore, who will be offered resettlement in the UK.

I know the Prime Minister has written to the First Minister on this matter; he can be assured of Scotland's support on this matter. But the resettlement **scheme must do more for the people of Afghanistan**, it must commit to take more Afghan

refugees and we in Scotland stand ready and willing to help in that endeavour.

We have called on the UK Government to do more to deliver humane and flexible asylum and immigration policies. The UK government seems unwilling to deliver policies that reflect Scotland's values, interests or circumstances. Scottish Ministers are accountable to the people of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament - we need to have the powers to deliver migration policies that are aligned with the needs and values of Scotland.

Our Local Authorities continue to go above and beyond and demonstrate Scotland's enduring commitment to refugees.

Most recently with staff from both Highland and Aberdeenshire having travelled to England to collect families from hotel accommodation – to ensure that those families had the best and warmest welcome to their new homes.

Presiding Officer, time is of the essence for the women and girls of Afghanistan. **Safe and legal routes** for

Afghan people must be created to allow them to relocate. Families cannot languish in poorly supplied refugee camps with drawn-out resettlement. All nations have a duty to fund and provide humanitarian aid to support neighbouring countries who are hosting the vast majority of asylum seekers, to ensure that vulnerable people on the move – particularly women and children – can transit without fear of violence or exploitation. We must provide aid and assistance to local Afghan NGOs to best support the country's 2.9 million internally displaced people.

The Scottish Government fully supports the challenging work the international community and Afghans have undertaken together over the last 20 years on human rights in Afghanistan. We must ensure the gains made in the past 20 years do not fall away, especially for women and girls who have been subjected to violence, harassment and intimidation.

How Scotland is playing its part

We have heard today our commitment to supporting the people of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan must know that Scotland can be a safe harbour for them; we stand willing to help and ready to assist, as we did with Syrian refugees. As a Fife MSP I'm proud that Fife Council have been one of those local authorities to already put plans in place, coordinating their efforts with Fife Voluntary Action who are actively collecting donations at their offices in Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy.

Culture is a powerful tool to help to integrate people into the Scottish way of life. We are exploring how existing cultural programmes can be utilised as a vehicle to support our new arrivals and help them to feel welcome and an equal part of society.

I met this week with leaders of the Afghan community in Scotland, to discuss how we can support our new Afghan arrivals, and will maintain an open dialogue to help trouble shoot any concerns.

As Minister for International Development, I was pleased the Humanitarian Emergency Fund could be activated to provide £250,000 to support humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan.

Members who were here last session will recall that we received our International Development offer earlier this year; and that, following the election, the SNP will increase our International Development budget by a third. The UK Government's decision to cut overseas aid during the worst excesses of the pandemic was nothing short of deplorable. Or, to quote the Baroness of Lundin Links, it was a '*Bloody Disgrace*'.

Now is the time for the UK Government to recommit to the 0.7% target; which should never have been reneged upon.

Putting the people of Afghanistan first

The people of Scotland will play our part in assisting those in Afghanistan who are experiencing such enormous humanitarian needs.

Thousands of people risked their lives to cross Kabul to reach the airport. They faced Taliban checkpoints – where there were kill lists and bribes. For those fortunate enough to have the money to pay the bribe, or to not be on that kill list, their fight for a better life did not end there. We all saw the images of people desperately trying to get onto airplanes. So many were not lucky enough to have made it and the ‘choices’ they face now, no one should ever have to make.

As we continue our hard work for the people of Scotland and Afghanistan, let us remember all those who have lost so much. From the ethnic minorities now facing persecution, to the women and young girls living in fear, to the thousands of displaced people who have fought so hard and for so long just to live in peace.

Let us remember those who lost their lives in the abhorrent suicide bombings at the airport on the 26th of August. Our thoughts are with the families of the UK Citizens, US Service men and Afghan citizens who were brutally taken from this world. Our work is just beginning.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 30 August 2021 10:37

To: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>;

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government <CabSecSJHLG@gov.scot>;

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development <MinisterCEID@gov.scot>

Cc: Campbell J (Jeanette) (Special Adviser) <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Nicolson S (Stuart)

(Special Adviser) <Stuart.Nicolson@gov.scot>; McCaig C (Callum) <Callum.Mccaig@gov.scot>;

Primrose J (John) <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; Marshall R (Robert) <Robert.Marshall@gov.scot>;

Deputy Director for Equality and Inclusion <ddequalityinclusion@gov.scot>; Sunderland RE (Rachel)

<Rachel.Sunderland@gov.scot>; [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED]

[REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED][REDACTED] [REDACTED][REDACTED]

Subject: Ministerial Briefing - Roundtable on Afghanistan

Importance: High

Cabinet Secretary / PO Minister / PO

With thanks to colleagues, please find attached:

- Ministerial Briefing – Roundtable on Afghanistan
- Opening Remarks – Mr Robertson
- Closing Remarks – Ms Robison

Please be advised that further briefing lines may need to be sent tomorrow morning before the roundtable takes place.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | Race Equality Policy Manager | Equality & Human Rights Division | Scottish Government | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)



Roundtable with the Afghan Community

Engagement title	Minister ial Roundtab le with the Afghan Comm unity						
Engagement timing	Tuesday 31 September 12:00 - 13:00						
Meeting Link	Click here to join the meeting						
Background/Purpose include invitation history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet with stakeholders who work with Afghan Scots to discuss their concerns about the current situation. • To emphasise that Scotland is ready to assist outlining key actions we have and are taking. • To hear about what COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council are doing to welcome New Scots to support their integration and how the third sector can support this effort. 						
Attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture • Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development • [REDACTED] - Chair, Glasgow Afghan United • [REDACTED] - Chair, Afghan Human Rights Foundation • [REDACTED] - Chief Executive, BEMIS • [REDACTED] - Chair, Scottish Refugee Council • [REDACTED] - Head of Policy, Scottish Refugee Council • [REDACTED] - Head of Asylum, Resettlement and Integration, Scottish Refugee Council • [REDACTED] - COSLA Wellbeing Spokesperson • [REDACTED] - Policy Manager, Pop ulation and Diversitv Team COSLA 						
Annexes	<u>ANNEX A: AGENDA</u> <u>ANNEX 8: O PENING/ CLOSING REMARKS</u> <u>ANNEX C: LOGISTICS</u> <u>ANNEX C: KEY LINES TOT AKE</u> <u>ANNEX D: BACKGROUND INFORMATION</u> <u>ANNEX E: ATTENDEES AND ORGANISATIONS</u> <u>BACKGROUND</u>						
Media Handling include mobile number(s)	There is likely to be a tweet prepared after the event. Ministers will be invited to review any media outputs.						
Official Support include mobile number(s)	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>[REDACTED]</td> <td>[REDACTED]</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Equalities and Inclusion</td> <td>Connected Communities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>[REDACTED]</td> <td>[REDACTED]</td> </tr> </table>	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Equalities and Inclusion	Connected Communities	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]						
Equalities and Inclusion	Connected Communities						
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]						

AGENDA

TIME	ITEM	SUPPORTED / LED BY
12:00 – 12:05	Welcome	Cabinet Secretary – Mr Robertson
12:05 - 12:10	Glasgow Afghan United	[REDACTED]
12:10 – 12:15	Afghan Human Rights Foundation	[REDACTED]
12:15 – 12:20	Scottish Refugee Council	[REDACTED]
12:20 – 12:25	COSLA	[REDACTED]
12:25 – 12:55	Open Discussion and Q & A	Cabinet Secretary
12:55 – 13:00	Next Steps & Close	Cabinet Secretary – Mr Robertson

OPENING / CLOSING REMARKS

Sent separately

LOGISTICS

- Once the Cabinet Secretary Mr Robertson has welcomed everyone and made his opening remarks, he will then invite the relevant representative to speak for around 5 minutes, after which a Q & A will take place.
- During the Q & A, Ministers, [REDACTED] and others are welcome to answer any points that are relevant for them.
- Ms Robison will close the meeting.
- Officials will provide support if needed via MS Teams, liaising with private offices.

KEY LINES TO TAKE

Humanitarian Aid

- We have reached out to Scottish based NGOs to make them aware we are keen to support as much as possible any of their Afghan staff who wish to relocate to Scotland given their links.
- We are also liaising with the SG Humanitarian Emergency Fund Panel of experts to explore what their operations and partners on the ground in Afghanistan can safely do and how the SG can fund this.

What the Scottish Government is doing?

The Scottish Government commends local authorities welcoming people through the UK's Afghan locally employed staff relocation programme.

- The Scottish Government recognises the hugely important work that Locally Employed Staff undertook for the UK in Afghanistan and the risks they face as a result of that service.
- The Afghan locally employed staff scheme has been in operation since 2013. It provides a range of support to current and former Afghan staff who worked for British Forces or other UK Government institutions, including relocation to the UK.
- Scottish local authorities are among those to have welcomed Afghan locally employed staff and their families since 2013.
- In June 2021, the Home Office asked local authorities to prioritise provision of resettlement places for relocation of Afghan locally employed staff as they worked to increase relocations through this programme.

Roundtable with the Afghan Community

- Scotland is playing its part in supporting the people who worked for British institutions in Afghanistan.
- Work is underway to ensure that people have the support and services they need on arrival and as they settle into communities.

Welcome the announcement of a UK resettlement programme for Afghan refugees.

- While the announcement of a UK resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees is welcome in principle, the commitment to 20,000 in the 'long term' and just 5,000 in the first year is inadequate and we call on the UK Government to go further.
- We believe a substantial increase in numbers being committed to is required if the UK Government is to meet its responsibilities.
- The First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister on 24 August seeking further detail on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Programme.
- The UK Government must provide further details of the new scheme as soon as possible to enable local authorities to assess their ability to participate and plan support.
- On 17 August the UK Government announced the new dedicated resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Priority will be given to women, girls and minority groups.

Scotland is committed to supporting refugees, asylum seekers and our communities through the pioneering and collaborative approach of the New Scots refugee integration strategy.

- New Scots is a partnership strategy, developed and led by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council.
- The key principle of New Scots distinctive approach is to support refugees and asylum seekers from 'day one' of arrival in Scotland.
- The strategy has been endorsed by UNHCR, who commended the involvement of refugees and asylum seekers in its development.

Over successive generations, refugees have helped make Scotland the strong, successful and diverse country it is today.

- We recognise the contribution that refugees make. They are assets to our communities: sharing their culture, building businesses, working in our public services, volunteering their skills and making friendships.
- We are committed to supporting refugees to build their skills and enable them to use their knowledge and experience in Scotland.

Employability is a theme of the New Scots strategy.

- Access to work is a key marker of integration for refugees but there can be significant barriers which prevent refugees entering employment or lead to them being underemployed.

Education is a theme of the New Scots strategy and the Scottish Government recognises the importance of access to higher and further education.

- The cost of tuition fees can be a barrier for refugees and asylum seekers pursuing education.
- The eligibility criteria for access to student support in Scotland is determined with reference to an applicant's residence, rather than their nationality.
- There are exceptions to general residency rules which may apply to people granted refugee status and current regulations also provide for Afghan nationals, and their family, who have relocated to the UK under the locally employed staff scheme.
- More information about tuition fee and student support is available from SAAS (Student Awards Agency Scotland).

Roundtable with the Afghan Community
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Afghan Population

- The 2011 census recorded 62,161 people born in Afghanistan living in England, 562 in Wales, 737 in Scotland and 36 in Northern Ireland. The Office for National Statistics estimates that, by 2019, the Afghan-born population of the UK had risen to 79,000.
- There are thought to be around over 4000 Afghan Scots living in Scotland.
- In total, 44 projects across 18 different ethnic and cultural communities from Afghan to Irish and Polish to Pakistan received grant funding (of around £25,000) from the Multicultural Homecoming programme to articulate and showcase what Scotland means to them as 'home' in 2014 utilising their own rich and diverse cultural characteristics.

Students

- 2020: there was approximately [REDACTED] Afghan domiciled enrolments at Scottish HEIs, and [REDACTED] Afghan Nationals enrolled at Scottish HEIs.
- [REDACTED] Afghan national students expected to come to Scotland for study, [REDACTED] of which are returning and [REDACTED] new students. There are [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] others who are applying to enter through a third country.

COSLA / Local Authority roles within the Afghanistan Situation

Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme

- The Home Office and MOD are continuing to work to get people out of Afghanistan before the 31 August deadline. Current estimates are that 5000 people may come to the UK through this scheme but at the moment they cannot confirm this.
- Scottish local authorities have once more stepped up at very short notice and are playing a disproportionate role in the efforts to accommodate the new arrivals.
- By the end of August over half Scottish Local Authorities will have received Afghan families, with more scheduled arrivals in the following weeks
- Home Office are using hotels as bridging accommodation as people come out of quarantine, from these hotels families will be rehoused into Local Authorities across the UK
- Currently the Home Office are in discussion with COSLA and some Scottish Local Authorities about use of hotels as bridging accommodation in Scotland.
- However, there is still an urgent need for more housing and larger housing in particular which is proving problematic.
- There are significant pressures on Local Authorities in relation to housing including post COVID recovery and addressing homelessness, as well as other asks in relation to UASC and the NTS, UKRS participation and for Glasgow in particular asylum.
- COSLA has established a Local Authority Officers group which is meeting fortnightly and Officers are ensuring Leaders and Chief Executives are kept informed.

Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

- Announced by UK Government to resettle 20,000 refugees over the coming years.
- There is no new detail on the ACRS
- However Local Authorities are keen to understand this detail so that they can consider how they support this urgent need

[REDACTED] Organisation: Afghan Human Rights Foundation (AHRF)

- Afghan Human Rights Foundation (AHRF) is an independent, non-governmental, non-partisan and non-profit organization working to promote human rights and democracy through engaging a variety of arts, and culture-based programs; creating space for dialogue at all levels of society, peace-building, social justice, societal transformation and public participation.
- AHRF was established in 2013 by [REDACTED], Human rights campaigner, activist and founder of Scottish Afghan Society and Co-founder of Glasgow refugees Action Group.
- The aim is to assist Afghan refugees with their integration into Scottish society. As a centre point for the Afghan community, we provides a wide range of practical support, help and advice.
- Since its' inception, the AHRF has assisted many refugees who have successfully integrated and are making positive contribution to their adopted country.
- They provide range of services for the Afghan refugee, migrant communities and asylum seekers. Providing Advice and support on Health, Education, Social services, Welfare benefits and immigration. Offer help with job applications, vocational and careers guidance. Assisting and providing advice on housing to destitute asylum seekers and refugees.
- They work closely with all major agencies including government and non-government organisations and NGOs for the betterment of our members so they can live free from discrimination and the fear of racial harassment and violence.

Glasgow Afghan United

- "Glasgow Afghan United has been in operation since 2004, and performs excellent work to support the full participation of New Scots in all aspects of civil society. In particular, they provide education and training to refugees, asylum seekers and other Afghan and ethnic minority people about their rights and responsibilities in Scotland and they promote awareness to the wider community about Afghan and ethnic minority culture and tradition, with a special focus on teaching these values to young ethnic minority people.
- Specific examples of their work include, a 'Women Empowerment Project', designed to help Ethnic Minority women integrate fully into society here in Scotland, through a range of means, including teaching English, involvement in health and fitness activities, volunteering and mney management training; an annual Refugee Festival Football Tournament, with over 50 nationalities competing; and the hosting of an array of cultural events.
- The aforementioned work does much to engage a variety of human rights, including rights to education, health, freedom from discrimination, and rights to take part in economic, social, and cultural pursuits. The work Glasgow Afghan United takes part in alone is enough of a reason to recommend engagement with this event in order to recognise the effort they give to integrate and support Afghan and other Ethnic Minority groups within Glasgow, and the efforts they deliver to enable these groups to engage with their human rights.

Scottish Refugee Council

- The Scottish Refugee Council (SRC) is an independent charity dedicated to supporting people in need of refugee protection.
- SRC coordinates the New Scots Connect network of refugee assisting organisations and groups across Scotland. To prepare for refugees arriving through resettlement, SRC are in the process of identifying support and services third sector and community organisations can provide and plan to create an Afghan Support Network. As further details about Afghan Citizens resettlement emerge, they intend to share appropriate individual offers of support with

Roundtable with the Afghan Community

local authorities and organisations in the Afghan Support Network. A form to register offers of help is being developed.

- SRC direct services provide practical support and advice to people, including those seeking asylum and newly recognised refugees. SRC also works with communities and community groups to raise awareness about refugee and asylum issues. SRC campaigns for improvements to the UK asylum system and positive policy changes that will make a difference for refugees and people seeking asylum.
- SRC coordinate the Scottish Refugee Festival which is held in June each year.
- SRC are a lead partner in the New Scots refugee integration strategy, alongside COSLA and the Scottish Government. SRC receives Scottish Government funding as an intermediary partner.

[REDACTED] is Chair of the Scottish Refugee Council

[REDACTED] is Head of Policy, Communications and Communities at SRC.

COSLA

- The Scottish Government works closely with COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team to support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum.
- COSLA is a lead partner in the New Scots refugee integration strategy, along with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Refugee Council.
- COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team are also the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) for Scotland. In this role they coordinate the participation of local authorities in asylum dispersal and refugee resettlement schemes, and engage with the Home Office on related issues.
- The Scottish Government provides funding to support work by COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team on asylum and refugee integration.

[REDACTED] is the COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing.

[REDACTED] the Policy Manager part of COSLA's Migration, Population and Diversity Team.

Mr Robertson - Opening Remarks – Ministerial Roundtable on Afghanistan

- Thank you all for joining us. It is really appreciated as I know you will all be extremely busy ensuring your family, friends and colleagues are safe and well.
- The whole of the Scottish Government's thoughts are with the people of Afghanistan.
- Despite the end of the evacuation process, we are doing everything we can to persuade the UK Government to offer as much assistance as they can to ensure anyone seeking safety is not missed.
- Indeed the First Minister has written to the Prime Minister urging the UK Government to increase the capacity of the resettlement scheme.
- Today, we hope to hear from your experience and work supporting communities, to ensure we are prepared to welcome refugees.
- We will then move to an open Q & A.

Closing Remarks – Ministerial Roundtable on Afghanistan

- Thank you everyone for their contributions today. They have been incredibly helpful and we will of course along with our partners take all suggestions away and work on how we best implement these to ensure our new Scots feel welcome and safe.
- We will come back on any points we were not able to respond to. We are open to having a further discussion about the situation and how we continue to support refugees.
- I am clear that we must work together to ensure the very best for our fellow citizens who have gone through so much.
- We will continue to take a human rights based approach and will call on others to ensure everyone's rights are respected and fulfilled.
- It is heartening to see organisations coming together, our door is always open and we are here to support you deliver the very best resources and support.

About You: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Tele phone (optional): [REDACTED]

Message: Dear Angus

First of all, I wanted to say congratulations on your election - it was my first time voting for an MSP and I was proud to vote for you.

Secondly, I wanted to write to you about the situation in Afghanistan - I completely agree with Nicola Sturgeon and know you've retweeted in support as well. I wanted to write to say how horrified I am at the way the UK appears to be abandoning women and girls in Afghanistan to the mercy of the Taliban. I agree with many of the points made in the downloadable letters to MPs circulating online and particularly about the way we appear to be abandoning the people who worked for us. But I just wanted to write to say that, as a woman, this is heartbreaking and mortifying. How can we turn our backs on them? I just feel so strongly that we cannot justify any departure which we know will be followed by girls being kicked out of school, locked up at home, and forced to 'marry'.

I have tried to find a way to show solidarity with them from Edinburgh but I can only see events being organised in London. I would be hugely grateful for any advice on expressions of solidarity being organised here.

Thank you to you & your team for reading this letter. One consolation in all this is that I know the Scottish Govt is more humane.

Many thanks
[REDACTED]

About You: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Tele phone (optional): [REDACTED]

Message: Dear Mr. Robertson,

I am writing to you because I am so concerned with the latest developments in Afghanistan. Seeing and reading about what the Afghans are going through, what they have fought so hard for over the last 20 years, is so heartbreaking to watch.

I am not fully educated on the situation and generally on the ins and outs of politics but I know what's right and wrong.

As a nation who has been involved for so long, we can no longer walk away from the situation. We have to help in whatever way we can. I feel for the women there who were making lives for themselves without being slaves to men. The businesses they were building, the education they were thriving from and the freedom to be themselves, now being shattered at the prospect of being slaves and baby-producers.

Please be my voice as one of your constituents and don't let the UK let them down. Please don't make this about Tory/Labour failings, but make it about humanity and doing the right thing.

Yours sincerely,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 06 September 2021 17:41

To: Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: Afghanistan Refugee Accommodation

Good afternoon

Ms Minto has been contacted by a constituent of hers in [REDACTED] who is very keen to offer help to refugees from Afghanistan. They have advised they have a large four bedroom house and could easily accommodate a small family of three or four. They have advised they would be happy to provide a safe, warm and welcoming environment and would happily provide whatever they could to make their lives as comfortable as possible.

Is there an appropriate place for them to register this support and interest? Ms Minto would be grateful for any advice you can provide.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Parliamentary Assistant to Jenni Minto MSP

M3.06, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Telephone: [REDACTED] Mobile:[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]