

To: Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, UK Prime Minister

Cc: Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Affairs, Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for Home Department and Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defence of the UK

Dear Prime Minister

Subject: The UK cannot abandon Afghan women now

We are writing with urgent concern about the immediate risks that Afghan women are facing, particularly those who have participated in the peace process, led women's rights-related activism and journalism, and delivered programmes to meet women's needs. As the Taliban have now taken Kabul, it is a matter of hours, days in the best-case scenario, until these women and their families are at a high and imminent risk of threat to life. As civil society organisations, experts and networks with members working directly in or with partners in Afghanistan, we have created strong relationships with Afghan women networks, activists and peace negotiators who have played a visible, meaningfully enabling role both in partnership with and on behalf of the UK Government.

As a direct result of this exposure, these Afghan women leaders, activists and negotiators are now at a high and imminent risk of threat to life.

Collectively, we are calling on the UK Government to immediately:

1. **Ensure safe and legal routes to those facing imminent danger and their dependants to reach safety. This includes:**
 1. **Provide visas for, and assist with, the escort and evacuation of Afghan women at risk.**
 2. **Extend the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)** to include Afghan individuals and their dependants who are at heightened risk of persecution due to their activism, work on human rights and women's rights, and their contribution to the peace process. This would be in line with approaches taken by UK allies including Canada, the US, Ireland and Australia.
 3. **Work closely with governments of neighbouring countries** for the passage out of Afghanistan to be safe and timely.
2. **The UK should cease forced removals and reconsider any refused asylum claims** in light of the change of the political situation and expedite any existing family reunification applications.
3. **Prioritise the needs and rights of Afghan women and girls** in any actions taken in response to the situation in Afghanistan, both nationally and internationally. This includes actively leveraging all multilateral avenues to safeguard Afghan women and girls and shaping any humanitarian response to ensure it is locally informed and gender and conflict sensitive, while encouraging neighbouring countries to keep borders open to evacuations and facilitate aid, including supporting safehouses and GBV services for women and their families who cannot flee.

During the past decades, the UK Government has requested the support of civil society organisations to host and promote the participation of women's rights experts, activists and advocates, and their organisations and networks. Numerous women human rights activists,

defenders and humanitarian responders have been hosted by and collaborated with the UK Government and others in national and international spaces to advance gender equality, peace and security in Afghanistan. However, those women's meaningful participation doesn't come without a cost (something we all anticipated) or a high level of responsibility. **We request the UK Government to act urgently to protect these women who are at high risk of persecution and death due to their work on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in Afghanistan in support of the UK government's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP). The UK must prioritise support and protection for human right defenders and individuals as the UK engages with them on their work and priorities, in line with our shared commitment to continue engaging with women and girls' networks in conflict affected settings.**

Some examples of these women's work with and support to the UK government's work on WPS include, but are by no means limited to: UK-funded consultations to inform UK Government action on how to implement its existing commitments on WPS, and to assess the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls living in fragile and conflict-affected states including Afghanistan; multiple events related to the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) in London and Kabul, including the main Global Summit in London and Kabul; a workshop on the UK's NAP on WPS hosted at the British Embassy in Kabul.

The work of women human rights defenders, organisations and networks has made a material difference to both the UK's successful delivery of its mission and objectives in Afghanistan, and also achieving gender equality and upholding women's rights in conflict on an international scale. Afghanistan has been a priority country in the UK's various National Action Plans on WPS, the UK's continued role as 'penholder' on WPS at the UN Security Council, and actions as a co-founder of the Call to Action on Gender Based Violence in Emergencies, co-leader of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence, and signatory to the WPS-Humanitarian Action Compact.

The UK cannot abandon these women now.

Organisations:

1. Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)
2. Saferworld
3. International Alert
4. Care International UK
5. Conciliation Resources
6. Bond
7. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
8. Women for Women International
9. Plan International UK
10. Womankind Worldwide
11. ALIGHT
12. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
13. Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI
14. Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
15. Beyond Borders
16. Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
17. One Young World
18. Health Professionals for Global Health, UK
19. United Nations Association - UK (UNA-UK)
20. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United Kingdom
21. SecurityWomen

22. Centre for Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE WPS)
23. Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) network
24. Legal Action Worldwide (LAW)
25. Women of Colour Working in Emergencies (WeCiE)
26. VOICE
27. Security Hub
28. Streets Kitchen
29. Anne-Floor Dekker, WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform
30. Claire Barnett, Executive Director UN Women UK
31. Professor Christine Chinkin CMG, Principal Investigator, UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and
32. Quhramaana Kakar - Founding director of Women for Peace and Participation (WPP) UK.

Individuals:

1. Cordelia Apold
2. LouiErin Heenan
3. Rachel Lipsitz
4. Fiona Dwyer, Solace Women's Aid
5. Richard Foster
6. Laila Khan
7. Michelle Manuel
8. Lee Abraham
9. Ruth Appleton
10. Carol Baker
11. Anna Rose, Women's Officer, Haverstock Branch, Holborn & St Pancras CLP
12. Professor Aoife Nolan, Co-Director, Human Rights Law Centre, School of Law, University of Nottingham
13. Peter Bond, Unite the Union
14. Brita Fernandez Schmidt
15. Hannah Bond
16. Gareth Murphy, Branch Secretary Unite Community Camden LE/00018
17. Laura Fox-Newby, MD, Good Thyngs,
18. Sangeeta Shah, Associate Professor, School of Law, University of Nottingham
19. Helene Reardon Bond
20. Luke Pearson
21. Una Doyle
22. Khaled Daair
23. Avila Kilmurray
24. Kim Roper
25. Delphine Valette
26. Susan Henderson
27. Malini Skandachanmugarasan
28. Hayley Roffey
29. Riva Joffe
30. Andrew Feinstein
31. Diane Pearson
32. Cllr Sean Halsall, Sefton Council
33. Elaine Bolton, Unite the Union
34. Matthew Bond
35. Nora Russell

36. Anna Robinson
37. Griselda Mussett
38. Sylvia Finzi
39. Aline Burgmann,
40. Faye Windridge
41. Cllr Helena Dollimore
42. Sanju Pal
43. Julia Huff
44. Adi Hollander
45. Declan Goodhall
46. Dr Louise Arimatsu (Centre for Women Peace & Security, LSE)
47. Cllr Alison Kelly
48. Harriet Evans
49. Nia Phillips
50. Mary O'Sullivan
51. Julian Hough
52. Lauren Hough
53. Councillor Simon Pearson
54. Gary Lane
55. Linda Heap, Treasurer, Southport CLP
56. Jon Glackin, Streets Kitchen
57. Jonathan Girvan
58. Jane Deighton
59. Cllr Jen Corcoran
60. Cllr Janis Blackburne
61. Jane Jutsum, Director Solace Women's Aid
62. Karin von Krenner
63. Lesley Abdela, Shevolution
64. Angela Care Evans
65. Debra Noel Adams
66. Lucy Moy-Thomas
67. Reetta Lepisto
68. Paul Renny
69. Haringey Unison
70. Shezan Abdul
71. Ruth Appleton
72. Esra Adibelli
73. Christine Bond
74. Nursen Aydin
75. Louise Osborne, Unite Women' Committee
76. Baroness Mary Goudie