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441-00231 (Foreign affairs)

Keywords

[Afghanistan](#)

[Refugees](#)

Paper petition

Original language of petition: English

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Petition to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister

WHEREAS:

- When Canadian mission personnel were evacuated from Afghanistan in August, many Afghans who had supported the Canadian government, military and NGOs during the conflict against the Taliban (2001-2014) were left behind;
- These loyal Afghans and their families remain at grave risk of reprisals by the Taliban for having helped Canada, veterans across Canada who served with them are deeply concerned;
- The protection and evacuation of them is being undertaken successfully by Canadian and other volunteer NGOs;
- The Canadian Veterans Transition Network (VTN), whose primary source of funds is donations from private citizens and organizations, is leading the operation;
- This operation continues to face many obstacles: severe lack of adequate, regular funding; private donations are not enough; delays in visa processing through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC); Canadian Government policy prohibiting funding of the safe houses; the unexpected expense of sheltering 1700 people in safe houses for three months; and speed is paramount given the fluid, dangerous environment;
- Canada can fast-track the referral process as we did in the Syrian crisis, and engage the NGOs who know the environment so well; and
- This approach will avoid the cumbersome, lengthy and costly process of formal "refugee referrals".

We, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada, call upon the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister, to:

- Avert a potentially catastrophic loss of life, by providing immediate funding to the VTN operations in Afghanistan for the provision of remaining safe houses, application support, ground logistics, security, and evacuation services (including airlift capabilities) for these Afghan families; and
- Direct IRCC to issue single use travel documents, and Facilitation Letters to support the documents, that will facilitate the movement of these families across borders out of Afghanistan.

Government response tabled

Response by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Signed by (Minister or Parliamentary Secretary): Marie-France Lalonde, M.P.

As of March 22, 2022, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has approved applications of more than 10,180 persons under our Special Immigration Measures to resettle Afghan nationals who assisted the Government of Canada along with their family members. We continue to move vulnerable Afghan nationals as quickly as conditions allow.

We are navigating a constantly evolving situation in which the Government of Canada has no military or diplomatic presence. Movement out of Afghanistan both by air and by land continues to be very difficult and dangerous.

IRCC recognizes many vulnerable at-risk Afghans remain in Afghanistan and are unable to leave due to their personal circumstances, a lack of safe travel routes or because they do not have the required travel documents accepted by other nations to be able to transit through their borders. A Single Journey Travel Document issued by the Government of Canada does not replace the need of a passport or visa to legally enter a third country. Similar to Canada, most nations define what is an acceptable travel document aligned with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.

Our officials have established new partnerships, and continue to build on existing ones, to address safety and security constraints limiting the mobility of Afghans. In addition to engaging closely with countries in the region and developing new partnerships, IRCC has added more employees and resources in our missions abroad, ensuring individuals qualified for our Special Immigration Measures are quickly processed to completion once out of Afghanistan. Canada's approach aligns with like-minded countries in their tireless work to assist Afghans in finding safe refuge.

IRCC has worked with various partners to date, including the Veteran's Transition Network (VTN), and more recently Aman Lara to support the movement of Afghan nationals out of Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan remains very challenging, and we are truly appreciative for all the work that these organizations and others have done to support this collective effort. IRCC is also engaging with dozens of organizations from civil society and the private sector who are ready and willing to support the arrivals of Afghan families via temporary accommodations, volunteer offers, monetary donations, in-kind donations of goods and services, and possible job opportunities.

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Signed by (Minister or Parliamentary Secretary): Rob Oliphant

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting regional efforts and providing assistance to Afghan refugees and host communities. On July 23, 2021, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced a special immigration measures program focused on Afghans who provided critical support to Canada's mission to Afghanistan.

On August 13 2021, IRCC announced a humanitarian program to resettle Afghan refugees with a focus on women leaders, human rights defenders, persecuted religious and ethnic minorities, journalists and people who helped Canadian journalists, LGBTI individuals, and extended family members of previously resettled interpreters. And most recently, the Government of Canada announced plans to resettle the extended family of interpreters previously resettled under the 2009 and 2012 public policies. Canada has committed to resettling up to 40,000 vulnerable Afghan refugees under these programs. Since August 2021, over 12 000 Afghans have arrived in Canada, under all streams and more will continue to arrive in the weeks and months ahead.

The Government of Canada recognizes that there are still many Afghans who have not been able to travel to Canada under the special immigration measures program, including some who may have had a relationship with the Government of Canada. IRCC continues to process accepted applications as quickly as possible, but the complex operating environment in Afghanistan means that it will take time for people to arrive in Canada.

Canada has provided funding to Veterans Transition Network (VTN), Journalists for Human Rights, and Aman Lara to support their efforts to protect vulnerable persons in Afghanistan, including human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, former Canadian Armed Forces interpreters and locally engaged staff. The Government of Canada continues to work closely with these organizations regarding the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

Since August 2021, Canada committed a total of \$143 million for 2022 to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. This includes \$56 million announced on December 21, 2021, and an additional \$50 million on March 31, 2022, during the Afghanistan Humanitarian Pledging Conference cohosted by the United Nations, United Kingdom, Germany and Qatar. Canada is supporting

a multi-sectoral humanitarian response across Afghanistan, including a particular emphasis on the provision of life-saving food and nutrition assistance.

Canada continues to respond through experienced humanitarian partners, such as United Nations agencies both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries, to address the needs of the most vulnerable. For example, between August to December 2021, with Canadian support, humanitarian partners provided 8.9 million people with food assistance and treatment for acute malnutrition to over 230,000 children under the age of five inside Afghanistan.

Canada engages with allies and countries in the region to explore avenues to assist those who remain on the ground, as well as those who have already travelled to third countries and wish to come to Canada. Canada is deploying its full diplomatic weight through a variety of channels including through the G7, Five Country forums and the United Nations. The Government of Canada is closely monitoring the situation on the ground and remains committed to responding to the needs of the people of Afghanistan.

History



Presented to the House of Commons

Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke)

March 22, 2022 (Petition No. 441-00231)

Government response tabled

May 5, 2022

Member of Parliament



Cheryl Gallant

Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke

Conservative Caucus

Ontario

1145 signatures

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