



Home Office

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To: All MPs and Peers

Dear Colleague,

### **Update on casework to the Home Office on Afghanistan**

We have all been deeply moved by the recent events in Afghanistan. The world witnessed the very real terror felt by people in Afghanistan as troops withdrew, and their desperation to flee to safety. The evacuation has ended but we all acknowledge that, as the Taliban asserts its control, Afghans are living in fear and uncertainty. As the Prime Minister has assured the House, the United Kingdom is working with our international partners to address this.

As the new Minister for Afghan Resettlement, I would like to thank you for your commitment and that of your staff in raising the harrowing circumstances of your constituents, their families and those who have worked with the British government in Afghanistan or are particularly vulnerable to attack. This has been an international emergency in which Parliamentarians and our staff have played an important role in our national humanitarian response.

### **Operation Pitting**

Operation Pitting was the largest and most complex evacuation in living memory, conducted in very dangerous circumstances, including the lethal bomb explosion that murdered over 100 people. We are united across the House in our sincere thanks to our courageous troops, Border Force officers and civil servants working on the ground in Op Pitting.

The Ministry of Defence, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Home Office combined their departmental specialisms to work together during Op Pitting. We continue to work together to deliver the Prime Minister's pledge to welcome our new Afghan friends warmly to our country, and to develop the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

We have listened carefully to colleagues' experiences regarding correspondence and helplines. We understand the frustration and concern, particularly given the urgency of evacuating people under Op Pitting. By way of context, our Home Office helpline was established to support Afghan Citizens eligible for evacuation prior to British forces leaving. In the first 10 days, over 5.3 million attempted calls were made to that helpline.

The FCDO and MoD also received large volumes of requests for assistance both from British and Afghan nationals.

Colleagues will understand that in the emergency of Op Pitting, everyone focused on helping people on the ground. This meant that emails were not answered in the usual timely fashion to which Parliamentarians are entitled to expect.

With the situation on the ground worsening each day and the evacuation window reducing rapidly, details of over 174,000 Afghans seeking support to leave Afghanistan and fly to the UK were captured by the Home Office.

### **The present situation**

British forces have now left Afghanistan and we have no consular presence in the country.

We must deal with the circumstances as they are, rather than as we would wish them to be. This new reality means that, at present, we cannot provide to MPs assessments or updates on those individuals who remain in Afghanistan and whose cases they have raised. We appreciate that is difficult news to deliver to constituents who are desperately worried about family members and friends.

With great regret, we will not be able, therefore, to respond to colleagues with specific updates on individuals. The deteriorating security situation means that such information is not possible to obtain or may change very quickly.

Given the very difficult circumstances in Afghanistan, we cannot pursue cases concerning Afghan people in country in the usual ways. The Home Office is logging the cases we have received, and we are considering how this data will be used in the future. Accordingly, please signpost individuals to gov.uk to check for the latest information about Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) ([Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria and offer details - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) ([Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) rather than seek to pursue cases on their behalf.

### **The future**

We must now move to the next phase of our support for Afghanistan with the launch of the ACRS. This scheme is for vulnerable and at-risk cohorts who do not qualify for ARAP. As part of the ACRS, the Government has committed to take around 5,000 people in the first year and 20,000 over the coming years.

The UK has led the world at times of humanitarian crisis and when people have fled persecution and oppression. In that great tradition, this will be one of the most comprehensive resettlement schemes the UK has ever established. The government welcomes your support for the scheme and will set out progress in due course.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Victoria Atkins MP**