



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC21-124904

27 OCT 2021

Father Peter Smith and co-signatories
Micah Australia
Level 2 Suite 1
21 Bolton Street
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Dear Father Smith and co-signatories

Thank you for writing to me regarding the situation in Afghanistan.

The situation in Afghanistan remains extremely volatile and dangerous, and deeply disturbing.

As the Taliban gained de facto control over the country, the Australian Government's immediate priority was ensuring the safe and orderly departure of our citizens, permanent residents and visa holders, including former locally-engaged Afghan employees and their families. We worked tirelessly to bring them and their families to Australia as quickly as possible, and made 32 evacuation flights out of Kabul, evacuating around 4,100 people to safety. Our evacuation operation was one of the largest humanitarian operations in our history.

I know there is deep concern for the safety and wellbeing of the Afghans who have worked alongside Australian soldiers, diplomats and aid workers over the past two decades, who may remain in Afghanistan or the region.

Please know we are continuing to do everything we can to help those who have stood with us, as we have done for many years.

Since 2013, we have resettled more than 2,000 former locally-engaged Afghan employees and their families in Australia, with more than 650 having arrived in Australia since April this year.

In addition, please know Afghan temporary visa holders currently in Australia will be supported by the Australian Government and will not be asked to return to Afghanistan while the security situation remains dire.

Together with our allies and partners, Australia has laboured long and hard to help the people of Afghanistan secure a better future. We will work with the international community to ensure any future Government of Afghanistan respects the human rights of all its citizens — especially women and girls — and is held to account for any human rights violations that take place.

Australia has a long and successful humanitarian program, and I am pleased we will welcome an initial humanitarian intake of at least 3,000 Afghan nationals in 2021–22. Priority will be given to persecuted minorities, women and children, and those who have links to Australia, such as family members. This 3,000 commitment is a floor, not a ceiling, and we will increase the size of our intake as needed including in future years at these elevated levels. More than 12,000 Afghan nationals have already been resettled in Australia since 2013, and they are making a wonderful contribution to their new home.

Alongside our coalition partners, Australians have sacrificed so much in the cause of fighting terrorism, promoting freedom, and seeking to support the people of Afghanistan. This has been Australia's longest war, and our efforts have undoubtedly helped to hamper, interrupt and curtail many mass casualty attacks. Of course, we must accept — with realism and humility — the limits of our ability to realise all of the aspirations of the Afghan people. But despite this grave disappointment, our cause was, and always will be, a just one.

More than 40,000 Australian Defence Force men and women served on operations in support of Australia's mission in Afghanistan, along with diplomats, police officers and aid workers. I honour their sacrifice, and I especially pay tribute to the 41 Australians who died in Afghanistan in the service of our country, and the terrible loss suffered by their families. We will never forget them.

Thank you for writing to me at this very difficult time.

Yours sincerely

SCOTT MORRISON