

Debate Pack

8 January 2024

CDP-0002 (2024)

By Claire Mills (Afghanistan specialist),
Philip Loft (International development specialist),
Nigel Walker (compiler)

UK Government policy on Afghanistan

1	Summary	2
2	Background	2
3	Press and media articles	6
4	Press releases	8
5	PQs	15
6	Statements	24
7	Urgent questions	35
8	Further reading	39

1 Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on the UK Government's policy on Afghanistan is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 10 January, from 2:30-4:00pm. The debate will be opened by Tobias Ellwood MP.

2 Background

The UK Government does not recognise the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and does not have formal diplomatic relations with the country. In February 2022 the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said: [“we have a longstanding policy of recognising states, not Governments, and the Prime Minister has been clear that if the Taliban want international acceptance, they must abide by international norms”](#).

In line with the US and EU, however, the UK Government acknowledges that there is [“no alternative to engaging pragmatically with the current administration of Afghanistan”](#). The FDCO retains [a UK Mission to Afghanistan in Doha](#), through which regular engagement with Taliban officials takes place.

The [UK works with Special Representatives and envoys for Afghanistan](#) from Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway and the US to develop joint policies on Afghanistan and promote coherent approaches to the challenges that the country currently faces. The Government also [engages with other Afghans](#) based in the UK, and elsewhere, including human rights activists and non-Taliban political figures, in order to promote its objectives.

Government priorities

Since the Taliban-takeover in August 2021, [Afghanistan has been experiencing a severe humanitarian crisis](#), and [a significant deterioration in human rights](#). Among the Government's priorities for Afghanistan, therefore, are:

- More inclusive governance that [“is representative of its citizens”](#).
- [A commitment to human rights](#), including the rights of women and girls, the protection of ethnic and religious minorities and freedom of expression. The UK will continue to support Afghan civil society.
- The [provision of safe passage for those who wish to leave the country and to address shared concerns over security](#), including [cutting ties with terrorist organisations](#).

- [To provide aid and ensure humanitarian access into the country.](#)

The UK recently welcomed the recommendations of [a report by the UN Secretary General \(PDF\)](#) as “[an important opportunity for all parties, including the Taliban, and the international community, to work towards improving the lives of all Afghans](#)”. The Government continues to call on the Taliban to “[meet its international commitments](#)”.

The FCDO also advises [against all travel to Afghanistan](#). It considers the security situation to be volatile and that there is a significant risk of the detention of British nationals.

UK aid to Afghanistan

In 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimates that [29 million people in Afghanistan will be in need](#) of humanitarian assistance. It also reports continuing restrictions on women from participating in humanitarian work.

Priorities for UK aid

As set out in the FCDO’s [UK-Afghanistan development partnership summary](#), July 2023, around 70% of UK aid to Afghanistan in 2023/24 will focus on humanitarian preparedness and response. The three largest UK programmes are:

- [Supporting humanitarian assistance and protection](#)
- [Food security and livelihoods](#)
- [Afghanistan multi-year humanitarian response plan](#) (which closed in 2023)

The UK Government has also set a target for 50% of its bilateral aid to Afghanistan to reach women and girls. In November 2023, [it said the target was met in 2021/22](#) and it was “on track to do so” again in 2022/23.

Like other donor states, the UK does not provide any aid via the Taliban. Instead, aid is provided directly to UK partners such as the Red Cross and UN agencies. The Government says [it has “strict monitoring” and verification processes in place](#) for UK-funded programmes in Afghanistan.

Planned reductions in UK aid spending

Following the Taliban’s capture of Kabul in August 2021, increased UK commitments meant Afghanistan became [the UK’s largest bilateral aid programme](#), with spending rising to £286 million in 2021/22.

However, as set out in its [2022](#) and [2023](#) annual reports, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) plans for UK bilateral aid to Afghanistan to fall by around 47% from 2021/22 to 2024/25 (from around £286 million to £151 million). In 2023/24, the UK expects to spend around £100.4 million, before rising to £151 million in 2024/25.

The Minister for South Asia and the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, said [the Government must be “realistic” about what funding can be effectively distributed](#) and that the ability of organisations to deliver aid in certain areas of Afghanistan [has been “hindered by the imposition of quite draconian restrictions by the Taliban”](#).

The UK’s [Independent Commission for Aid Impact](#) (ICAI) also notes UK spending in Afghanistan will fall in 2023/24 “in the context of successive reductions to UK [aid] and the unprecedented scale of [aid] utilisation for housing refugees in the UK”.

In response to the October 2023 earthquakes, the Government [announced an additional £3 million](#) to the Red Cross, Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and UN Population Fund. According to UNOCHA, [an estimated 1,480 people were killed in the earthquakes](#) and 48,000 households were affected.

The [UN Development Programme](#) (UNDP) has warned that a reduction or withholding of external aid to Afghanistan “will worsen Afghanistan’s economic prospects and perpetuate extreme poverty for decades”.

Resettlement of eligible Afghans in the UK

Two immigration routes specifically cater for people affected by the situation in Afghanistan:

- The [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#) was launched in January 2022 with the aim of resettling up to 20,000 people in the UK over the following few years.
- The [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\)](#) is open to any current or former staff employed by HM Government in Afghanistan since 2001 who are assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life. Eligibility is regardless of employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. The scheme is open-ended and there is no limit on the number of people eligible.

[As of September 2023](#), around 24,600, including over 21,600 people eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) schemes have been brought to the UK.

Issues with the schemes remain, including delays in bringing eligible Afghans to the UK. Over 2,000 people, eligible under ARAP, are waiting in Pakistan and other third countries for permission to come to the UK. The Government has said it is committed to relocating all eligible persons who remain in Pakistan and third countries as soon as possible.

3

Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[Government criticised over ‘shameful saga’ of Afghan special forces abandoned by UK](#)

The Independent
Holly Bancroft and May Bulman
Wednesday
8 November 2023

[‘Don’t ignore us’: Afghans awaiting UK relocation fear time is running out](#)

The Guardian
Geneva Abdul
1 November 2023

[UK to charter flights for Afghan refugees stuck in Pakistan](#)

BBC News Online
Caroline Davies
25 October 2023

[Afghanistan: How many people has the UK resettled?](#)

BBC News Online
15 August 2023

[Should the UK engage with the Taliban government?](#)

IISS
Major General (Retired) James M. Cowan CBE DSO
14 August 2023

[Another sickening betrayal: Britain tells Afghans in hiding they can come to UK – but only if Taliban approves documents](#)

The Independent
Holly Bancroft
18 March 2023

[Joint UK Parliamentary Briefing on Afghanistan](#)

Human Rights Watch
17 August 2022

[UK withdrawal from Afghanistan was a 'disaster' and 'betrayal'](#)

Financial Times

Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe

24 May 2022

[UK announces plan to resettle 20,000 refugees from Afghanistan](#)

Al Jazeera

18 August 2021

[Afghanistan and the UK's illusion of strategy](#)

RUSI

Professor Michael Clarke

16 August 2021

4

Press releases

[The Taliban has a responsibility to meet its international commitments: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
29 December 2023

Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan:

Colleagues, I would first like to thank the penholders, the UAE and Japan, not only for their tireless efforts on this important text but also for their creativity and tenacity, which led to the Council mandating the independent assessment on Afghanistan, which was very ably executed by Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu.

As we've said multiple times in this chamber, we should seize the momentum of the independent assessment with the hope of changing Afghanistan's current negative trajectory.

At the same time, the Taliban has a responsibility to meet its international commitments, including via the immediate reversal of policies restricting women's rights and fundamental freedoms.

So, we encourage all parties, including Afghan and international stakeholders, to take forward the independent assessment's recommendations, working towards an Afghanistan that is at peace with its people, its neighbours, and the international community.

Thank you, President.

[Special representatives and envoys for Afghanistan: joint statement](#) **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office** **3 November 2023**

Statement from special representatives and envoys for Afghanistan from Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, UK and USA after their 18 October 2023 meeting:

Special representatives and envoys for Afghanistan from Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States met in Rome on 18 October 2023 to discuss joint policies on Afghanistan.

The special representatives and envoys for Afghanistan agreed to continue their regular consultations to develop consistent joint policies on Afghanistan and promote coherent approaches to the outstanding challenges facing Afghanistan.

Special observers at the meeting included representatives from Türkiye, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the OIC, UNAMA and UNODC. In addition, Afghan civil society figures participated in a preparatory virtual session, held in advance of the proceedings. Participants issued the below joint statement:

1. Acknowledged the dire humanitarian and economic situation that the Afghan population faces, with more than 29 million Afghans in need of urgent assistance; focused on the need to address Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis and reiterated their call on the Taliban to ensure unhindered access for all humanitarian aid workers, both men and women, to perform their jobs effectively in all areas of the country, with an emphasis on the need to serve vulnerable populations who cannot be reached without the employment of women.
2. Highlighted the substantial humanitarian assistance provided for Afghanistan from their respective governments and organizations, which, according to UNOCHA, totals roughly US\$6.3 billion since August 2021, representing about 74% of all humanitarian aid contributions made to Afghanistan since that time; noted, however, that humanitarian aid levels are dropping while needs are not; and emphasized the need for monitoring of aid for robust donor support to continue.
3. Expressed their support to the population recently hit by devastating earthquakes in Western Afghanistan; and affirmed commitments by group members to provide assistance to the affected communities and coordinate their efforts for an effective response to the most urgent needs. An additional amount of US\$33 million aid in support of earthquake-hit areas has already been decided by their respective governments and organisations, more assistance is in the planning stages.
4. Acknowledged that support for humanitarian aid, while essential, does not address the underlying causes of Afghanistan's deteriorating macro-economic situation; recalled the Taliban's responsibility for the deterioration of the economic and humanitarian situation, as well as their responsibility for the recovery of the country and the improvement of the economic situation; called for expanding donors support to basic needs assistance, private sector growth initiatives, women's empowerment efforts and livelihoods generation; and noted the importance of multilateral development banks playing a leading role in this effort, including through drawing on own-bank financing to complement

continuing bilateral contributions. The amount of resources already provided by their respective governments and organisations since August 2021 in support of basic human needs and livelihood totals approximately US\$2.1 billion.

5. Expressed grave concern for the human rights situation in Afghanistan; and reiterated their firm belief that the Taliban's policies excluding women and girls from social, economic, political and cultural life in Afghanistan, including restrictions on education and employment, violate the rights of Afghans and international obligations, deeply undermine the economy and affect the prospect of the country's development and long-term stability. Welcomed the reports by UNAMA and by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and noted the willingness of the Taliban to allow access to the country to the Special Rapporteur and to engage with both.
6. Called on the Taliban to reverse their restrictive educational policies immediately; and affirmed that education is a human right and that equal access to quality education, based on curricula that meet international standards and that cover various areas of knowledge should be ensured for all.
7. Noted with regret that the Taliban has taken no serious steps to initiate an inclusive political process with fellow Afghans regarding the future order of the country; and affirmed that legitimacy is derived, first and foremost, from the Afghan people. Emphasized that a new constitution for the country should only be adopted following a transparent, inclusive, and meaningful national consultative dialogue and urged the Taliban and other Afghans to seek advice from the UN and OIC in this regard.
8. Welcomed the implementation of the Taliban's ban on opium cultivation in Afghanistan and the roughly 80% drop in the opium harvest across the country this year; called for this ban to continue and for additional steps to be taken to address synthetic drug production and drug trafficking; welcomed the establishment by UNAMA of a Technical Working Group on counternarcotics and other initiatives that could allow for engagement with the Taliban on these issues, including alternative livelihoods and the challenges of substance abuse in the country.
9. Urged greater attention to Afghanistan's vulnerability to climate change; and called for creative, sustainable solutions to the grave environmental challenges facing the country.
10. Acknowledged Taliban actions to tackle terrorist threats from ISIS-K but expressed concern that some terrorist groups still reside safely inside Afghanistan and are able to plan and carry out cross-border terrorist strikes.

11. Urged all states, including Afghanistan's neighbours, to uphold their applicable obligations with respect to the protection of refugees and to promote the right to seek asylum, and to ensure individuals, particularly those from at risk groups, who would face persecution or torture if returned, are protected from being forcibly returned, and call on these states to put in place measures to develop a system of registration for undocumented Afghans, while ensuring protection for vulnerable Afghans in need of international protection.
12. Stressed the importance of international unity on Afghanistan, including on not normalizing relations with the Taliban and on support for respecting the rights of every citizen of Afghanistan, particularly the right of women and girls to education, employment, and public participation; welcomed the important work of UNAMA under the leadership of SRSG Roza Otunbayeva; looked forward to the UN Special Coordinator's report on 17 November; and welcomed the UN Secretary General's offer to host a second meeting of special representatives and envoys soon.
13. Expressed appreciation to Italy for hosting this meeting on Afghanistan.

[The UK is unwavering in our commitment to provide aid to the people of Afghanistan: UK statement at the UN Security Council](#)
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
26 September 2023

Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the Security Council meeting on Afghanistan:

Thank you President.

I join others in thanking SRSG Otunbayeva, Executive Director Sima Bahous and Karima Bennouna for your briefings.

Twenty-two years on since Kofi Annan's Nobel speech, which the SRSG referenced, and over two years since the Taliban's seizure of power, our dominant concern remains the Taliban's systematic assault on the rights of women and girls continues.

There have been over 50 decrees curtailing women's ability to participate in public, political, economic and social life and barring girls from secondary schools and higher education.

These decrees have also impacted the UN's ability to get aid to those who need it most. This at a time of dire need - two thirds of the population of Afghanistan require humanitarian assistance.

Forty per cent are facing acute food insecurity – a number that would be far higher without families and communities in Afghanistan supporting each other in whatever ways they can.

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest and climate vulnerable countries in the world. Its prospects further dimmed by a significant ‘brain drain’ as a result of migration, persecution and uncertainty.

We note the progress the Taliban has taken in tackling ISKP and we underscore the importance of continued action against terrorist groups within Afghanistan and their affiliates.

The people of Afghanistan remain our priority – so what can we do?

First and foremost we need to take urgent action to avert a humanitarian catastrophe as winter approaches. The UK has contributed over half a billion dollars to address the humanitarian crisis since April 2021 and we call on fellow Member States to step up support where they can. But as we heard from SRSO Otunbayeva, the UN’s revised Humanitarian Appeal for Afghanistan for 2023 is only 28% funded.

The UK is unwavering in our commitment to provide aid to the people of Afghanistan and to support UN efforts. We are clear, however, that male only delivery chains do not and cannot achieve that and we support calls for closer monitoring of aid delivery.

Second, the international community should remain united in our message to the Taliban. We have set out our expectations in consecutive Council resolutions on humanitarian access, cutting ties with terrorists, respect for human rights and inclusive governance.

The Taliban should be clear on the costs of their policies: international recognition should not be on the table; sanctions relief should not come. And Afghanistan cannot be self-reliant when fifty per cent of its people are excluded from society. Without inclusive governance and society, peace and stability will remain elusive.

Finally, we look forward to Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioglu’s independent assessment, which will provide a valuable basis for a more coherent, strategic international approach as we look to build on the Secretary-General’s conference with special envoys in Doha and other regional initiatives, in which the UK will continue to play its part.

While the Taliban continue on this path, international recognition will not be on the table: UK statement at UN Security Council

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
21 June 2023**

Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Afghanistan:

Thank you President, and I thank SRSO Otunbayeva for her clear report and Ms Shabana Basij-Rasikh for your extraordinary report and for shining a spotlight on the importance and potential of girls' education, and giving us the hope and the possibility of Afghanistan spiraling upwards towards hope.

Since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, the situation for the Afghan people has been defined by humanitarian suffering, economic hardship, and a relentless assault on human rights.

The figures speak for themselves: two thirds of the Afghan population are in humanitarian need in 2023. Economic output has decreased by over 20 per cent since 2021. Over two million girls between years seven and 11 are unable formally to access secondary school education.

The Taliban has issued over 50 decrees restricting the rights of women and girls and impeded the UN's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance at a time of dire need.

The trajectory is negative and options are limited. The Afghan people remain our priority – so how can we collectively navigate the months ahead:

First, our commitment to provide support for Afghans remains resolute. We support UN efforts to provide assistance despite the challenging context, while holding firm on the principle that there should be no delivery of aid without women. The UK has contributed well over half a billion dollars to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan since April 2021. We call on other Member States to step up funding, noting the UN's revised Humanitarian Appeal for Afghanistan for 2023 for \$3.2 billion is currently, according to OCHA's tracker, only 14 percent funded.

Second, the international community should remain united in our message to the Taliban. We have set out our expectations in consecutive Council resolutions: on humanitarian access, cutting ties with terrorists, respect for human rights and inclusive governance. And, in April, we unanimously agreed a resolution condemning restrictions on the rights of women and girls.

Finally, these clear expectations should be matched by clear consequences – while the Taliban continue on this path, international recognition will not be on the table, sanctions relief and development assistance will not come. We

recognise that continued engagement, predicated on these fundamentals, is the only way forward. The Secretary-General's meeting of Special Envoys in Doha was a good first step and we too look forward to the independent review of Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu.

Afghanistan cannot be self-reliant when 50 percent of its population is excluded from society and history has shown that there can be no stable and durable peace whilst large swathes of society and ethnic groups are excluded.

I thank you, President.

5

PQs

Refugees: Afghanistan**22 Dec 2023 | 6731****Asked by: John Healey**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his planned timeline for when all eligible personnel under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will be relocated from Pakistan to the UK.

Answering member: Johnny Mercer | Cabinet Office

The UK has made an ambitious and generous commitment to help at-risk people in Afghanistan and, so far, we have brought around 24,600 people to safety, including over 21,600, people eligible for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) schemes, as of September 2023. The Government is committed to relocating all eligible persons who remain in Pakistan and third countries as soon as possible.

Afghanistan: Taliban**19 Dec 2023 | 6857****Asked by: Catherine West**

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he is taking to use official engagement with the Taliban to engage with the Afghan people.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

FCDO officials regularly meet Taliban representatives to support HMG objectives on Afghanistan. This includes pressing on human rights, including the rights of women and girls and minorities. We are clear that Afghanistan needs more inclusive governance that is representative of its citizens. We have therefore encouraged the Taliban to engage with a diverse range of Afghans, particularly women and civil society representatives, and listen to their views. Ministers and officials also engage with other Afghans, based in the UK and elsewhere, including human rights activists and non-Taliban political figures.

Afghanistan: Civil Society

18 Dec 2023 | 6856

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps he has taken to facilitate regular engagement with Afghan civil society.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK ministers and officials engage regularly with a range of Afghan civil society organisations. This includes engagement with Afghan women's organisations, both in Afghanistan and in the UK and diaspora. For example, officials regularly engage with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Afghan Women and Girls led by Wendy Chamberlain MP and the Afghan Women Support Forum, established by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger. Both these forums comprise Afghan women activists including civil society representatives from Afghanistan and in the UK.

Taliban Relations and Afghan Refugees

05 Dec 2023 | 834 c1380

Asked by: Baroness D'Souza

The lack of recognition of the Taliban authority has inadvertently provided the Taliban and Pakistan with unrestricted freedom and influence over policies in Afghanistan. The current concern, as the noble Lord pointed out, is the enforced resettlement of thousands of refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan. The Taliban policy of relocating Shia minorities in Sunni areas has dangerous implications. What measures, including further negotiations with the Pakistan Government, can the UK Government take to avert potential religious and other conflicts in the region?

Answered by: Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I thank the noble Baroness for her Question and her deep interest in this subject. I think the reason the Pakistan Government are doing this is that they are concerned about the activities of the Pakistan Taliban within Afghanistan, and this is their way of trying to get the Taliban Government to address that. One of the points I made to them is that that might well be counter-productive and we think this is the wrong move. We will continue to raise this with the Pakistan authorities at every level and on every occasion. Obviously, we have a specific British interest to make sure that any Afghans who worked for our authorities in Afghanistan, and who have a right to come and settle here under either of the two schemes we have, are not inadvertently pushed back into Afghanistan. That is our number one concern.

On the issue of the regime and recognition, I am sure there will be other questions about this, but, fundamentally, as the House knows, the Foreign Office always says that we recognise states and not Governments, which I know is right. However, on this occasion, when you look at this regime and what it is responsible for, you see that it bans women from working for the United Nations; it is the only country in the world to ban girls from secondary school; it restricts women's access to parks, playgrounds and other public spaces; and it has a complete ban on women attending university. We are some way off moving to recognise this regime. We need to keep the pressure on for it to change its approach.

Afghanistan: Humanitarian Aid

28 Nov 2023 | 2586

Asked by: Lisa Nandy

To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure the long-term stability of (a) NGOs and (b) aid agencies that (i) provide humanitarian support and (ii) have other operations in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government is committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is one of FCDO's largest bilateral aid programmes this financial year, at £100 million. Since April 2021, the UK has disbursed over £600 million in aid for Afghanistan, providing lifesaving support to the most vulnerable. The UK has recently launched two multi-year humanitarian programmes from 2023 - 2026, through which we will spend up to £400 million through UN agencies, the Red Cross and NGOs. The UK is also funding NGOs through our Supporting Afghanistan's Basic Services programme. We continue to support the World Bank's Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund.

Afghanistan: Women's Rights

15 Nov 2023 | 497

Asked by: Wendy Chamberlain

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps with international donors to support work by local NGOs in Afghanistan on advancing the rights of women and girls.

Answering member: Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK condemns the Taliban's restrictions on Afghan women and girls. We continue to support girls' education in Afghanistan through bilateral and

multilateral contributions to NGOs, UN partners and multilateral funds, and we are supporting Afghanistan civil society and women-led organisations through our contribution to the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund.

FCDO officials and ministers regularly engage with women-led organisations in Afghanistan, including local and international NGOs and UN Women. On June 27, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South Asia, hosted a meeting of Afghan women leaders to discuss the impact of the restrictions, as well as the inclusion of Afghan women in the future political process.

Afghanistan: Public Sector

14 Nov 2023 | 169

Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the delivery of public services in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK continues to be able to support the delivery of public services in Afghanistan, despite the challenging context. Through our Supporting Afghanistan's Basic Services programme, our NGO partners have delivered services in health, education and livelihoods. Through the World Bank's Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF), the FCDO contributed to supporting 135,680 children (92,262 girls) to access education between September 2022 and May 2023. We work with key international partners to understand the status of the delivery of public services, for example through the World Bank's regular economic monitoring and welfare surveys.

Afghan Interpreters

18 Oct 2023 | 833 cc207-210

Asked by: Baroness Coussins

To ask His Majesty's Government how many former interpreters who worked with the armed forces in Afghanistan, and former British Council employees, are in Pakistan awaiting relocation to the United Kingdom under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy or other schemes; and how much longer they expect this process to take.

Answered by: Lord Sharpe of Epsom | Home Office

My Lords, the ARAP scheme offers relocation to Afghans who worked with us in Afghanistan. The ACRS is designed to support those who have assisted with UK efforts in Afghanistan, including with the British Council, as well as vulnerable people. As of August 2023, we have relocated approximately

12,300 ARAP and 9,700 ACRS-eligible individuals. We will ensure that all eligible British Council contractors who remain in the region are brought to the UK, as the Minister for Immigration set out in the other place yesterday.

Afghanistan: Earthquakes

25 Oct 2023 | 202933

Asked by: Tobias Ellwood

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to provide support to Afghanistan following earthquakes in October 2023.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO allocated £1 million towards the Red Cross response to help meet emergency needs following the first earthquake on 7 October. This has funded shelter and emergency relief items for vulnerable people. UK funded prepositioned supplies have been drawn on by humanitarian partners for early response. \$5 million has been allocated from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and a further \$5 million from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, both of which the UK supports. We continue to closely monitor the situation.

Afghanistan: Women

20 Sep 2023 | 199067

Asked by: Lisa Nandy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions Ministers in his Department have had with multilateral partners on access to aid for women in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government strongly condemns the Taliban's decision to ban Afghan women from working for the UN and NGOs in Afghanistan, including through an unanimously agreed UN Security Council Resolution on the 27 April, a G7 joint Foreign Ministers' statement on 8 March and G7 Leaders Communiqué on 20 May. We continue to work with the international community in pushing for women and girls' rights. In July Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister for South Asia, met the UN Special Co-ordinator Feridun Sinirlioğlu where both agreed that finding solutions to improve the situation for Afghan women and girls should be at the top of the international agenda.

Afghanistan: Politics and Government

14 Sep 2023 | 198398

Asked by: Rachael Maskell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help de-escalate the risk of violence in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government is firmly committed to supporting an inclusive political settlement in Afghanistan. Such a settlement will enable the Afghan people to live in lasting peace and security. We have made clear to the Taliban that they need to enter into a genuine intra-Afghan political dialogue, in order to make progress towards reaching a political settlement. We have encouraged them to engage with a diverse range of Afghans, particularly women and civil society representatives. FCDO Ministers and officials engage regularly with these important constituencies. The Government also provides support to peacebuilding organisations through the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund.

Afghanistan: Hazara

14 Sep 2023 | 198397

Asked by: Rachael Maskell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the situation of the Hazara community in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

FCDO officials regularly press the Taliban to protect religious and ethnic minorities, including the Hazara community. We are working with international partners to ensure credible monitoring. In October, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate. His February report included an assessment of the violence and threats against religious minorities and the situation for Hazara communities. Ministers and officials engage regularly with a range of Afghans, including Hazaras, to ensure our policy and programming reflect the diversity of needs in Afghanistan. In May, officials met a representative from the Hazara National Congress.

Afghanistan: Armed Forces

14 Sep 2023 | 198068

Asked by: Adam Holloway

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the extent of the UK's responsibility for the security of former members of Commando Force 333.

Answering member: James Heapey | Ministry of Defence

The ARAP scheme provides relocation or other assistance specifically to Afghan nationals who worked for or alongside UK forces in support of the UK's mission in Afghanistan, as set out in the specific eligibility criteria in the ARAP policy.

Members of the Afghan national security forces such as Commando Force 333 - whilst their efforts heroic - are not automatically in scope for relocation under ARAP unless they meet these criteria.

Those who are eligible can also apply for support in the UK under Op NEWHOPE. The Ministry of Defence works closely with third sector partners to deliver Operation NEWHOPE, which is our pastoral commitment to support the individuals who have and want to maintain their Defence connection by providing camaraderie, community support, and pathways to employment.

Afghanistan: Aid for Women

11 Sep 2023 | 832 cc675-8

Asked by: Lord Watson of Wyre Forest

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to aid and support the women of Afghanistan since the departure of United Kingdom armed forces.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office My Lords, we prioritise support for women and girls in response to the Taliban's repression. We have repeatedly urged the Taliban to reverse harmful policies. I assure the noble Lord that we raise these issues internationally. I regularly meet Afghan women and leaders to hear their concerns directly. Since April 2021, the Government have disbursed more than £532 million to Afghanistan, giving 2.3 million women access to food, healthcare and other essential assistance. At least 50% of beneficiaries of UK aid are women and girls.

Afghanistan: Embassies

07 Sep 2023 | 195206

Asked by: Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to reopen the embassy in Afghanistan.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The British Embassy in Kabul suspended operations in August 2021. The UK Mission to Afghanistan based in Doha is leading our diplomatic, security and humanitarian engagement. The UK will consider re-opening the embassy when the political and security situation allow.

[Afghanistan: Women](#)

04 Sep 2023 | 195080

Asked by: Chi Onwurah

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take in response to the report A/HRC/53/21: Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government is grateful for the report of the Special Rapporteur and the working group which sheds further light on the Taliban's severe restrictions on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. Officials are considering the report's recommendations.

We have repeatedly condemned the Taliban's decisions to restrict the rights of women and girls, including through the UN Security Council, Human Rights Council resolutions and public statements. We continue to work with the international community to press the Taliban to reverse their harmful policies.

[Afghanistan: LGBT+ People](#)

22 Jun 2023 | 190194

Asked by: Nadia Whittome

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the treatment of LGBT+ people in Afghanistan by (a) the Taliban Government, (b) religious authorities and (c) Afghan society since August 2021.

Answering member: Leo Docherty | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO continues to monitor the human rights situation in Afghanistan closely, including the situation of the LGBT+ community. On 7 October 2022, we co-sponsored a Human Rights Council resolution to extend the UN Special Rapporteur's mandate to monitor human rights in Afghanistan. As the UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett has since reported, LGBT+ people face discrimination, threats and violence in Afghanistan. FCDO officials continue to call on the Taliban to protect all minority communities.

6

Statements

Support to the people of Afghanistan

17 Jul 2023 | HLWS946

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and United Nations): Today I am updating the House on UK efforts to support those most in need in Afghanistan. Afghanistan remains one of HM Government's (HMG's) largest bilateral aid allocations and we continue to be a major contributor to humanitarian, health and education support. Since April 2021, HMG has disbursed over £532 million in aid for Afghanistan while the country continues to experience one of the world's most acute humanitarian crises. This financial year we have made a further commitment of £100 million and plan an additional £151 million for next financial year. HMG continues to influence international thinking on how to support basic services in Afghanistan, challenge the Taliban on human rights abuses, and build consensus on engaging with the Taliban to make progress on issues of mutual benefit. We remain committed that at least 50% of people reached with UK aid in Afghanistan will be women and girls – a commitment we met in 2021-2022 and are on track to meet for 2022-2023.

The scale of the need in Afghanistan is profound. Two thirds of the population are estimated to be in humanitarian need. We remain appalled at the continued erosion of the rights of women and girls, which has led to their almost total exclusion from political, educational and social spaces. On 23 March 2022, the Taliban banned girls' access to secondary schools and closed universities to women in December 2022. On 5 April 2023, the Taliban banned Afghan women from working for the UN in Afghanistan, extending their 24 December 2022 directive banning Afghan women from working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs). HMG has strongly condemned the Taliban's decisions through a range of international statements, including the UN Security Council Resolution 2681. Together with likeminded countries – including those in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation – we continue to press the Taliban to reverse their prohibitive decrees.

Afghan women play a vital role in the delivery of aid operations, and the FCDO is supporting our international partners to adapt programmes and find solutions to include women and girls in the implementation of aid. Afghan women and girls must have safe and equitable access to aid. HMG continues to support girls' education in Afghanistan through bilateral and multilateral contributions to NGOs, UN partners and multilateral funds. Educated, empowered women will contribute to Afghanistan's economic development, as well as to its peace and stability.

The UN's Humanitarian Appeal for Afghanistan this year is for \$3.2 billion and is currently only 15% funded. We continue to press donors to meet their

commitments to support the Afghan people. In 2022-2023, the UK disbursed £95 million to the UN's World Food Programme, supporting 4.2 million people. Through UNICEF, HMG expects to reach an estimated 1.6 million people with nutrition, water and sanitation, and child and social protection services in 2022-2023. £50 million was allocated to the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund last year to provide support for health, water, protection, shelter, food, livelihoods, and education interventions.

As co-Chair of the Afghanistan Coordination Group until recently, HMG has worked with international partners to deliver sustained essential services for the Afghan people. In 2022, HMG supported the Asian Development Bank to approve a \$405m package of support. This followed an approval in December 2021 to transfer \$280m of funds from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund to UN agencies. This funding supports UN agencies to finance core public health services, education, and the provision of emergency food services.

We continue to engage pragmatically with the Taliban, primarily through the UK Mission to Afghanistan, based in Doha. FCDO ministers are in regular contact with their international counterparts on Afghanistan. In 2023 The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP and I as Minister of State have met UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, Afghan women and civil society organisations to discuss the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls. The Foreign Secretary and his ministerial team regularly discuss Afghanistan during their international engagements. The Prime Minister's Special Representative to Afghanistan regularly engages with international counterparts, including at a substantive meeting for Special Envoys hosted by the UN Secretary General in Doha in May 2023.

[UK's response to the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan](#)

19 Jul 2022 | HLWS218

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and United Nations): The UK has committed £286 million in financial year 2022/23 for Afghanistan. This aid will provide life-saving support to the most vulnerable, especially women and girls. We are working with aid agencies to ensure that marginalised groups have equal, safe and dignified access to assistance and services. Our funding has included support for access to sustainable clean water and sanitation, nutrition treatment and primary healthcare services, as well as support in response to gender-based violence.

The earthquake in Paktika and Khost provinces in eastern Afghanistan on 22 June exacerbated the humanitarian situation and killed over 1000 people and injured over 2900. The Government offered support only hours after the earthquake struck. UK aid was already being delivered to the affected areas

prior to the earthquake via the UN, non-government organisations and the Red Cross. The Government rapidly allocated £3 million for immediate life-saving support to people affected. £2 million has been disbursed to the International Federation of the Red Cross, £500,000 to the Norwegian Refugee Council and £500,000 to the International Rescue Committee to provide shelter, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene support.

The Government's response to the earthquake is part of our concerted ongoing humanitarian support. Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis is affecting just under half of the population, with 18.9 million facing acute food insecurity. Afghanistan remains one of the world's most severe food security crises. People continue to turn to drastic measures to feed their families. Over 6 million people have been internally displaced and millions of children are out of school, in part because the Taliban still prevent girls from attending secondary school.

The UK has disbursed £140m in humanitarian aid since April 2022 including £50m to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, £70m to the World Food Programme and £12m to the United Nations Children's Fund. Through the World Food Programme, the UK aims to support over 4 million people with food assistance. All our funding is provided directly to humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan. All UK aid is subject to strict monitoring and verification to ensure it is only used to help the vulnerable people it is intended for.

Humanitarian partners report they are increasingly facing interference attempts by the Taliban and other armed groups in the delivery of independent, equitable and safe humanitarian assistance. There have been instances of periodic disruption in aid delivery in specific locations, however to date, UK funded agencies continue to deliver. The UK regularly emphasises to the Taliban the need for humanitarian organisations to operate independently in the delivery of assistance and to respect the rights of women and girls.

The UK continues to engage closely with donors and played an instrumental role in supporting the World Bank Board's decision to make the remaining \$1 billion in the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund available. \$793m of programming is currently in the process of being mobilised, focusing on community projects and livelihoods, health and food security.

The Foreign Secretary and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon are in regular contact with their international counterparts on Afghanistan. At the G7 Foreign Ministers meeting in May, the Foreign Secretary discussed the current security, humanitarian, and human rights situation as well as longer term prospects for the country and region with her counterparts. Ministers have regular discussions with humanitarian actors working in Afghanistan, most

recently during Lord Ahmad's trip to Geneva in June 2022, where he met the Red Cross and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Afghanistan Policy

13 Sep 2021 | 700 cc683-702

Victoria Atkins (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department): With permission, Mr Speaker—thank you for accommodating this statement today—I would like to make a statement on the Government's response to the situation in Afghanistan and specifically the effort we are mounting to support Afghans resettling in the United Kingdom.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out to the House last week, Operation Pitting was the biggest UK military evacuation for over 70 years and enabled around 15,000 people to leave Afghanistan and get to safety in the UK. This is in addition to the families we have already welcomed under the Afghan relocations and assistance policy for those who served alongside our British forces and worked with the British Government. We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

The Home Office has been at the heart of the UK's response to the fast-moving events in Afghanistan, and I pay tribute to the dedicated officials who have worked day and night to support this unprecedented mission. From Border Force officers on the ground in Kabul supporting our military and diplomats in extremely challenging circumstances to the UK Visas and Immigration staff in Liverpool, they worked alongside colleagues from across Government, the military, the police and our intelligence agencies. They conducted vital security checks, processed visa and passport applications and welcomed and supported evacuees.

We are determined to ensure that those evacuated here have the best possible start to life in the UK. That includes providing clarity about their immigration status, which is the subject of a policy statement that the Government are publishing today. We recognise the difficult, exceptional and unique circumstances in which many arrived in the UK, so we will be offering immediate indefinite leave to remain to Afghan nationals and their family members who were evacuated or who were called forward during Operation Pitting but will come to the UK after evacuation. This will provide certainty about their status, entitlement to benefits and right to work.

Our commitment to the people of Afghanistan is enduring. The UK's humanitarian response is one of the most ambitious in the world to date and builds on our proud record of resettling more people than any other European country since 2015. The statement published today sets out details of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, which will see up to 20,000 men, women and children resettled in the UK. The scheme will prioritise those who

have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and have stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, and the rule of law, which could include judges, women's rights activists and journalists, along with many others. The scheme will also prioritise vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk and members of minority groups at risk, such as ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+ people.

Eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK in one of three ways. First, some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk, will be resettled under the scheme. Secondly, we will work with the Toggle showing location of Column 684 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to identify and resettle refugees who have fled Afghanistan. This replicates the approach that the UK has taken in response to the conflict in Syria and complements the UK resettlement scheme, which resettles refugees from across the world. We will start the process as soon as possible following consultation with the UNHCR. Thirdly, we will work with international partners and non-governmental organisations in the region to put in place a referral process for those inside Afghanistan, where it is possible to arrange safe passage, and for those who have recently fled to other countries in the region.

The Afghan citizens resettlement scheme complements the existing Afghan relocations and assistance policy, which remains open; applications can be made from anywhere in the world. Approximately 7,000 Afghan locally employed staff who served alongside our armed forces in Afghanistan, and their families, have been relocated to the UK under ARAP. Those brought to the UK under ARAP or the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme will have certainty of status through indefinite leave to remain. They will be able to apply for British citizenship after five years under existing rules.

We could not have welcomed so many people to the United Kingdom under Operation Pitting without the support of local authorities. I have written today to all councils across the United Kingdom to set out our funding commitment to them. We will provide a complete package covering health, education and integration support costs for those on the ACRS and ARAP. Local authorities will receive a core tariff of more than £20,000 per person, which will be provided over three years to support resettled Afghans to integrate into British society and become self-sufficient more quickly. Funding will also be provided to support education, English language and health provision in the first year, and there will be a further £20 million of flexible funding in the current financial year to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services. I urge more local authorities to come forward to support our Afghan friends, and I ask colleagues across the House to relay the message to their councils, too; I am already very appreciative of efforts across the House to do so.

All those brought to the UK under ARAP and ACRS will have the right to work and be able to apply for public funds. The Government are amending legislation to ensure that new arrivals under the two routes can access benefits from day one, including social housing. The Department for Work and Pensions will also offer new arrivals tailored support to help them to become self-sufficient more quickly, and surgeries will be set up across the country to answer benefits and employment questions. However, the challenge of integrating a large number of people at a fast pace and helping them to rebuild their lives cannot be met by central and local government alone. We will be working with the private, voluntary and community sectors to harness our efforts across the whole of society.

The people who have come forward with offers of support have again shown their kindness and compassion. I know that many colleagues have seen such examples in their constituencies. That spirit of generosity is one of the things that make our country so special. We are creating a portal where people, organisations and businesses can register offers of support, and we are extending the Toggle showing location of Column 685 community sponsorship scheme so that friends and neighbours, charities and faith groups can come together to support a family through the resettlement scheme.

Afghan nationals will also be able to make applications to come to the UK via one of our existing immigration routes. Family members of British citizens or those with indefinite leave to remain, or family members of refugees who do not qualify for the ACRS, can apply to come to the UK via the family routes or the family reunion rules respectively.

A number of Afghan nationals are already in the UK on an economic, work or study route, and we recognise that they may face difficulties in making a further application if they cannot obtain the correct documentation that they need to extend their stay. We will therefore take a concessionary approach for Afghan nationals similar to that which we took for Syrian nationals in 2015, which will allow us to waive certain document requirements in some circumstances. We will also remove the “no switching” rule on some routes for Afghan nationals, which means that there is no requirement to travel outside the UK to make an application at one of our global visa application centres. There is no change in the UK’s position that people can only claim asylum from within the UK. There are a number of claims already in the asylum system, and they will be considered in line with new country guidance, which will be published shortly. We also urge any Afghan nationals in the UK without lawful status to get in touch with the Home Office as soon as possible.

The shocking events in Afghanistan demand a comprehensive, compassionate and sensible approach. That is what the Afghan people who are starting their lives here deserve, it is what the British public expect, and it is what this Government will deliver. I commend my statement to the House.

Afghanistan

06 Sep 2021 | 700 cc21-42

Boris Johnson (The Prime Minister): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will update the House on the situation in Afghanistan and our enduring effort to provide sanctuary for those to whom we owe so much.

Since the House last met, our armed forces, diplomats and civil servants have completed the biggest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history, overcoming every possible challenge in the most harrowing conditions, bringing 15,000 people to safety in the UK and helping 36 other countries to airlift their own nationals. They faced the pressure of a remorseless deadline and witnessed a contemptible terrorist attack at the very gates of the airport, with two British nationals and 13 of our American allies among the dead. But they kept going, and in the space of a fortnight they evacuated our own nationals alongside Afghan friends of this country who guided, translated and served with our soldiers and officials, proving their courage and loyalty beyond doubt, sometimes in the heat of battle.

The whole House will join me in commending the courage and ingenuity of everyone involved in the Kabul airlift, one of the most spectacular operations in our country's post-war military history. This feat exemplified the spirit of all 150,000 British servicemen and women who deployed in Afghanistan over the last two decades, of whom 457 laid down their lives and many others suffered trauma and injury. Thanks to their efforts, no terrorist attack against this country or any of our western allies has been launched from Afghanistan for 20 years. They fulfilled the first duty of the British armed forces: to keep our people safe. They and their families should take pride in everything they did.

Just as they kept us safe, so we shall do right by our veterans. In addition to the extra £3 million that we have invested in mental health support through NHS Op Courage, we are providing another £5 million to assist the military charities that do such magnificent work, with the aim of ensuring that no veteran's request for help will go unanswered. The evacuation, Op Pitting, will now give way to Operation Warm Welcome, with an equal effort to help our Afghan friends to begin their new lives here in the United Kingdom, and recognising the strength of feeling across the House about the plight of individual Afghans.

Years before this episode, we began to fulfil our obligation to those Afghans who had helped us, bringing 1,400 to the UK. Then, in April this year, we expanded our efforts by opening the Afghan relocations and assistance policy. Even before the onset of Operation Pitting, we had brought around 2,000 to the UK between June and August—and our obligation lives on. Let me say to anyone to whom we have made commitments and who is currently in Afghanistan: we are working urgently with our friends in the region to

secure safe passage and, as soon as routes are available, we will do everything possible to help you to reach safety.

Over and above this effort, the UK is formally launching a separate resettlement programme, providing a safe and legal route for up to 20,000 Afghans in the region over the coming years, with 5,000 in the first year. We are upholding Britain's finest tradition of welcoming those in need. I emphasise that under this scheme we will of course work with the United Nations and aid agencies to identify those whom we should help, as we have done in respect of those who fled the war in Syria, but we will also include Afghans who have contributed to civil society or who face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example because of their role in standing up for democracy and human rights or because of their gender, sexuality or religion. All who come to our country through this safe and legal route will receive not a five-year visa, but indefinite leave to remain.

Our support will include free English courses for adults, and 300 university scholarships. We will shortly be writing to local authorities and the devolved Administrations with details of funding for extra school places and long-term accommodation across the UK. I am grateful for everything that they are doing, and, of course, for the work of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), who is the Minister for Afghan resettlement. I am delighted—but not surprised—that across our country, people have been fundraising for our Afghan friends, and we have received numerous offers of help from charities and ordinary families alike. Anyone who wishes to join that effort can do so through gov.uk.

Our first duty is the security of the United Kingdom, and if the new regime in Kabul wants international recognition and access to the billions of dollars currently frozen in overseas accounts, we and our friends will hold them to their agreement to prevent Afghanistan from ever again becoming an incubator for terrorism. We will insist on safe passage for anyone who wishes to leave, and respect for the rights of women and girls. Our aim is to rally the strongest international consensus behind those principles, so that as far as possible the world speaks to the Taliban with one voice. To that end, I called an emergency meeting of the G7 leaders which made these aims the basis of our common approach, and the UK helped to secure a UN Resolution, passed by the Security Council last week, making the same demands. Later this month, at the UN General Assembly in New York, I will work with UN Secretary-General Guterres and other leaders to widen that consensus still further. We will judge the Taliban by their actions, not their words, and will use every economic, political and diplomatic lever to protect our own countries from harm and to help the Afghan people. We have already doubled the UK's humanitarian and development assistance to £286 million this year, including funds to help people in the region.

On Saturday, we shall mark the 20th anniversary of the reason why we went into Afghanistan in the first place: the terrorist attacks on the United States which claimed 2,977 lives, including those of 67 Britons. If anyone is still tempted to say that we have achieved nothing in that country in 20 years, tell them that our armed forces and those of our allies enabled 3.6 million girls to go to school; tell them that this country and the western world were protected from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan throughout that period; and tell them that we have just mounted the biggest humanitarian airlift in recent history. Eight times, the Royal Air Force rescued more than 400 people on board a single plane—the most who have ever travelled on an RAF aircraft in its 103-year history—helping thousands of people in fear for their lives, Toggle showing location of Column 23 helping thousands to whom this country owes so much, and thereby revealing the fundamental values of the United Kingdom.

There are very few countries that have the military capability to do what we have just done, and fewer still who would have felt the moral imperative to act in the same way. We can be proud of our armed forces for everything they have achieved, and for the legacy they leave behind. What they did was in the best traditions of this country. I commend this statement to the House.

Afghanistan: FCDO Update

06 Sep 2021 | 700 cc43-66

Dominic Raab (The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I will update the House on the UK's international response to the situation in Afghanistan.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out, over the last three weeks, through a shared effort right across Government and our armed forces, we have delivered the largest and most complex evacuation in living memory. Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. That includes more than 8,000 British nationals; close to 5,000 Afghans who loyally served the UK, along with their dependants; and about 500 special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, including Chevening scholars, journalists, human rights defenders, campaigners for women's rights, judges and many others.

Of course, the work to get people out did not start on 15 August. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advised British nationals to leave the country in April and again on 6 August; we estimate that about 500 did so. At the same time, the Government launched the Afghan relocations and assistance policy scheme for interpreters and other Afghan staff, getting more than 1,900 out before the airlift began on 15 August. As the security situation deteriorated, we accelerated that process throughout July and early August. In total, since April, we have helped more than 17,000 people to leave.

I place on record my thanks, and I pay tribute to the herculean efforts of our troops, our diplomats and our civil servants, who have done an incredible job in the toughest of conditions. As we remember their efforts, we also remember those in the UK armed forces who made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan trying to make that country a better place for the Afghan people.

Now that the evacuation has ended, we have moved into a new phase. We stand by our commitment to support those who have worked for us and to take all remaining eligible cases. Securing their safe passage out of the country is an immediate priority. We are working through our diplomatic channels to that end, and of course the Taliban have given assurances that they will provide safe passage for foreign nationals and those eligible Afghans who wish to leave. On 30 August, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2593, driven by the UK alongside the US and France, affirming the international community's expectation and requirement that the Taliban should follow through on the assurances that they have given.

Last week, I visited Qatar and Pakistan. In Qatar, I met the Emir and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed, to discuss safe passage alongside the international community's wider approach to dealing with the Taliban. We discussed ongoing efforts to re-establish flights at Kabul airport, where Qatari technical staff are working on the ground, and to see how we can co-operate in handling the organisation of future flights. I also announced our new non-resident chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan, Martin Longden, who is now working out of Doha.

In Pakistan, I met Prime Minister Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi to discuss safe passage via third countries and the importance of holding the Taliban to their Toggles showing location of Column 44 commitments. I also announced that we are sending £30 million in support to Afghanistan's neighbours. This will provide life-saving support for refugees, including shelters, household necessities, sanitation and other hygiene facilities.

I dispatched last week a new rapid deployment team to the region, with an extra 22 staff in total. They will reinforce our embassy teams and high commission teams in neighbouring countries, processing British nationals or eligible Afghans who are seeking to leave via third countries. We want to do that as fast as we possibly can once they can leave, subject to the necessary security checks.

I also spoke to the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan earlier today and the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan last week. Our Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord Ahmad, visited Tajikistan last week and will return to the region shortly.

I turn to the wider international strategy. The international community is adjusting, and must adjust, to the new reality in Afghanistan and is recalibrating its approach. The UK is playing a leading role. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister convened G7 leaders on 24 August to discuss a shared response to the situation. That followed a G7 Foreign Ministers meeting, and we are building a global coalition around four key priorities set out in a UK G7 paper that we have shared with those partners.

First, we must prevent Afghanistan from ever again becoming a safe haven or harbour for terrorists. Secondly, we must prevent a humanitarian disaster and support refugees, wherever possible, in the region. The UK has allocated £286 million in aid for Afghanistan this year. We are supporting Afghanistan's neighbours, as I have set out, and the Home Secretary has set out our resettlement scheme, so we are leading by example, which enables us to encourage others to step up in what will inevitably have to be an international team effort.

Thirdly, we must preserve regional stability, which risks being shattered by the combination of renewed terrorist threat and an exodus of refugees. Fourthly, we must hold the Taliban and other factions to account for their conduct, including and in particular on human rights and on their treatment of women and girls. I am taking that forward through our bilateral partners; we have a G7+ meeting later this week, and the UK is also pressing for further discussions among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. We plan to host an event at the UN General Assembly later this month, as the Prime Minister indicated.

We will not recognise the Taliban, but we will engage, and we will carefully calibrate our actions to the choices that they make and the actions that they take. Given our strategic priorities—the ones that I have specified—we must also set some credible tests to hold the Taliban to the undertakings that they have made on safe passage, on terrorism, on humanitarian access, and on a more inclusive Government. We stand ready to use all the levers at our disposal—political, economic and diplomatic—in that effort. We continue to galvanise the international community and bring together the widest possible group of influential countries to deliver on those strategic priorities, and to exercise the maximum moderating influence on the Taliban that we possibly can. I commend this statement to the House.

7

Urgent questions

Evacuations from Afghanistan

26 May 2022 | 715 cc421-430

John Baron: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if she will make a statement on evacuations from Afghanistan.

James Cleverly (The Minister for Europe and North America): The Government are grateful to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs for its inquiry and its detailed report. We will consider the report carefully and provide a written response within the timeline that the Committee has requested.

The scale of the crisis in Afghanistan last year is unprecedented in recent times. The report recognises that the Taliban took over the country at a pace that surprised the Taliban themselves, the international community and the former Government of Afghanistan. Many months of planning for an evacuation, and the enormous efforts of staff to deliver it, enabled us to evacuate more than 15,000 people within a fortnight, under exceptionally difficult circumstances. The Government could not have delivered an evacuation at that scale without planning, grip and leadership.

The evacuation involved the processing of details of thousands of individuals by Ministry of Defence, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Home Office staff in the UK and teams on the ground in Kabul. In anticipation of the situation, the FCDO had reserved the Baron hotel, so the UK was the only country apart from the United States to have a dedicated emergency handling centre for receiving and processing people in Kabul International airport. RAF flights airlifted people to a dedicated terminal in Dubai, reserved in advance by the FCDO, where evacuees were assessed by other cross-Government teams; they were then flown on FCDO-chartered flights to the UK, where they were received by staff of the Home Office and other Departments, who ensured that they were catered for and quarantined. The evacuation was carefully planned and tightly co-ordinated throughout its delivery.

As it does following all crises, the FCDO has conducted a thorough lessons learned exercise. We have written to the FAC with the main findings of that exercise. Changes have already been implemented by the FCDO, for example in response to the situation in Ukraine.

We all regret that we were not able to help more people who worked with us or for us to get out of Afghanistan during the military evacuation. Since the end of the formal evacuation last summer, we have helped a further 4,600 people to leave Afghanistan. We will continue to work to deliver on our

commitment to those eligible for resettlement in the UK through the Afghan relocations and assistance policy and the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis: UK Response

09 Feb 2022 | 708 cc943-955

Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Foreign Secretary if she will make a statement on the UK response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Vicky Ford (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs): The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan remains deeply concerning. In January, the UN requested nearly \$4.5 billion for 2022—the largest humanitarian appeal on record. The UN has announced that it will be holding an international pledging conference on 31 March, and the UK is strongly supportive of that conference. On 28 January 2022, the Foreign Secretary announced £97 million of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan from the UK. This latest allocation of vital support delivers the Prime Minister’s promise to double the aid to Afghanistan, to £286 million. By the end of January 2022, we had disbursed over £176 million in aid, and will disburse the remainder by the end of this financial year—that is, the end of March.

UK aid allocated since October is supporting over 60 hospitals, providing health services for more than 300 million people, ensuring that 4.47 million people get emergency food assistance through the World Food Programme, and will provide 6.1 million people with emergency health, water, protection, shelter and food, through the UN Afghanistan humanitarian fund.

In addition to providing immediate assistance, we are playing a leading role in international efforts to address multiple causes of the crisis. The provision of basic services such as health and education remains critical. We continue to explore solutions for service delivery such as payment of frontline delivery workers. We are working closely and monitoring Afghanistan’s economy, specifically its lack of liquidity, and we are working with partners to seek solutions. The UK also played a key role pressing for a resolution establishing a humanitarian exemption under the UN Afghanistan sanctions regime. On 27 January, the UK Government laid legislation to implement UN security Council resolution 2615. That will save lives and reduce the impediments faced by humanitarian agencies.

Afghanistan: Humanitarian Crisis

12 Jan 2022 | 706 cc589-603

Clive Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if she will make a statement on the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Vicky Ford (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs): Afghanistan is facing a serious and worsening humanitarian crisis. It is affecting well over half the population, with 23 million people facing acute food insecurity. This is now the world's most severe food security crisis. The UN has this week requested nearly \$4.5 billion for 2022—the largest humanitarian appeal on record, reflecting the magnitude of the humanitarian challenge ahead.

The UK has been at the forefront of efforts to address the situation, working with the UN Security Council, the G20, the G7 and countries in the region. The Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and other Ministers have all been working extensively with world leaders. In August, the Prime Minister announced that the UK would double its assistance for Afghanistan to £286 million this financial year, and we have now disbursed over £145 million. That will support over 3.4 million people in Afghanistan and the region, providing emergency food, healthcare, shelter, water and protection. We are working at pace to allocate the remaining funding in response to the developing crisis and the new UN appeal. Further details were in the ministerial statement on 15 December. I thank the British people for donating £28 million to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal in December, of which £10 million was doubled by UK aid match funding. That has helped to provide lifesaving support.

We were particularly concerned about the impact of the situation on women, girls and other marginalised groups. Last month I, alongside the Minister of State with responsibility for south Asia, Lord Ahmad, met organisations representing women, LGBT+ and religious minorities to discuss support for their needs. In allocating UK aid, we want to ensure that women, girls and other marginalised groups have equal, safe and dignified access to assistance and services. We have pressed the Taliban to respect humanitarian principles.

Our partners report that aid is getting through. We continue to monitor the situation very carefully, especially in the winter months. Aid workers face challenges getting money into Afghanistan due to the banking system. We are working closely with multilateral organisations, banks and non-governmental organisations to address those challenges. We welcome the decision by the World Bank board in November to transfer £280 million to support the humanitarian response, but it is vital—it is vital—that the World Bank produces options to allocate the \$1.2 billion remaining in the fund. It is

important that donors across the world step up to the challenge, including by responding to the UN's call for additional funding.

8

Further reading

Committee reports

[Missing in action: UK leadership and the withdrawal from Afghanistan \(PDF\)](#)

First Report of Session 2022–23
House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee
HC 169 incorporating HC 685
24 May 2022

[Missing in action: UK leadership and the withdrawal from Afghanistan: Government Response to the Committee's First Report \(PDF\)](#)

Second Special Report of Session 2022–23
House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee
HC 630
Published on 29 July 2022

Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing '[Legal help: where to go and how to pay](#)' for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

Sources and subscriptions for MPs and staff

We try to use sources in our research that everyone can access, but sometimes only information that exists behind a paywall or via a subscription is available. We provide access to many online subscriptions to MPs and parliamentary staff, please contact hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk or visit commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources for more information.

Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at commonslibrary.parliament.uk. If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on commonslibrary.parliament.uk.

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe or scan the code below:



 commonslibrary.parliament.uk

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)