



Foreign Affairs Committee
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I am writing on behalf of the Committee to seek further information on the action the FCO is taking to secure the repatriation of UK citizens who find themselves stranded abroad as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are very conscious and grateful for the efforts being made by consular staff around the globe to provide assistance in extremely testing circumstances, as we mentioned in the evidence session last week. Since then, the Committee has received a number of emails from UK citizens, particularly from those in Australia, New Zealand, South America, India and South East Asia, about the response from consular officials to their requests for assistance. Committee members have received similar complaints from constituents, some of whom are running out of medication, are in need of medical assistance, are in serious financial difficulty, and often in considerable distress.

We note that some countries have secured access to airports in order to have chartered flights repatriate stranded citizens. We want to be assured that the FCO has taken every possible step to facilitate the return home of UK citizens as commercial airlines either cease to operate or are charging vastly inflated prices. In that context, can you set out:

- what steps you have taken to secure spaces on military aircraft or commercially chartered flights?
- from which governments have requests been made for access to airports, which have been successful, and which not?
- what temporary financial support is being provided to UK citizens who find themselves unable to support themselves?
- what steps are being made to provide tailored information to UK citizens in different countries, in addition to the website updates?
- what temporary bilateral agreements you have sought with countries where British citizens are in difficulty to offer reciprocal healthcare or welfare benefits to avoid unnecessary hardship?

Given the urgency for many British citizens facing hardship abroad, it would be helpful to have a response as soon as possible. We also look forward to receiving an oral update on the situation as it develops from the Permanent Under Secretary and other officials when the House returns after recess.

TOM TUGENDHAT MP
Chair