



Foreign, Commonwealth
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Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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12 November 2021

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter of 27 October regarding Afghan Chevening scholars and alumni.

The FCDO contacted all 2021 Afghan Chevening scholars in August to offer them evacuation to the UK under Operation Pitting. Officials across government worked around the clock to enable the vast majority of scholars and their families to travel to the UK on military evacuation flights. This was the right thing to do.

A number of the 2021 cohort of scholars had travelled to third countries independently. Colleagues across the FCDO network accelerated their visa applications, and supported the scholars to travel to the UK. A small number chose to remain in a third country in order to regularise their status there; all have been offered the opportunity to defer their Chevening awards to 2022.

The evacuation offer included the scholars' immediate family members. This is limited to their spouse or partner and children under 18, and we cannot extend it to wider families. We of course understand the concerns people have for their relatives in Afghanistan. That is why we have made clear to the Taliban the need to respect the human rights of all Afghans. We are working with our partners to support Afghans, and have committed to doubling our aid to £286 million.

The UK evacuated many more people from Afghanistan than any country other than the United States. The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will offer resettlement to a mix of refugees outside Afghanistan and some within Afghanistan. The referral mechanism for those within Afghanistan is, as the Home Secretary's statement made clear, being worked through. Those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, rule of law; and vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk may be eligible for referral to the third pathway of this scheme.

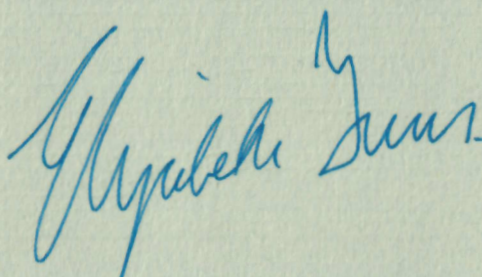
There will be many more people seeking to come to the UK under the Scheme than there are places, and it is right that the Government takes a considered approach to how people will be referred for resettlement.

We are working hard to support Chevening scholars in the UK. We are liaising with universities, local authorities and the Home Office to help scholars access support. All scholars and their families have a named contact point both at the FCDO and at the Chevening Secretariat. Chevening Programme Officers are checking-in with scholars regularly, and have travelled to universities across the UK to meet the scholars in-person.

When possible, we have supported scholars to move to their university town and into student accommodation, where they are now pursuing their studies. For some scholars accompanied by their families it has not yet been possible to find suitable accommodation in their university town, and so for the time being, they are studying remotely. Officials across government are working in partnership with local authorities to source appropriate accommodation as quickly as possible, although we have had to use hotels as a temporary measure due to unprecedented demand. In the meantime, the Home Office are providing wrap around support to enable families to build successful lives in the UK.

Where necessary, we have made additional financial support available to Afghan scholars from the 2020 cohort who were due to finish their scholarships this year.

The Government is committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan and to ensuring the thousands of Afghans who were evacuated to the UK receive the support they need to rebuild their lives.



THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary



Foreign Affairs Committee

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From the Chair
Tom Tugendhat MP

Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
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27 October 2021

Dear Foreign Secretary

I am writing on behalf of the Committee with some questions about the assistance given to Chevening scholars from Afghanistan, in the context of our current inquiry. I am particularly concerned by reports that the Taliban are threatening scholars' family members who remain in Afghanistan.

- What steps is the Government taking to bring family members of Chevening scholars to the UK, where they were not evacuated during Operation Pitting?
- What steps is the Government taking to bring Chevening scholars to the UK from third countries?
- What assistance is the Government giving to former Chevening scholars who remain in Afghanistan?
- What type of accommodation support is being provided to Chevening scholars in the UK, and does this apply to those who were evacuated by themselves, as well as those who came with family members?

I would appreciate your responses to the above questions by 8 November.

TOM TUGENDHAT