

Written evidence from Protection Approaches and Stonewall (AFG0041)

About

- 0.1 This submission comes jointly from Protection Approaches (PA) and Stonewall.
- 0.2 Protection Approaches works to confront and prevent identity-based violence by developing and implementing innovative programmes that address all forms of hate. From Newham in East London to Bangui in the Central African Republic, we work with local communities, civil society organisations, policymakers, governments, academics and multilateral institutions to develop strategies that predict, prevent and protect people from identity-based violence. Protection Approaches convenes the UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group: a group of 25 NGOs based in the UK who collaborate on atrocity prevention policy and advocacy. PA has trained and advised state representatives, parliamentarians, and law enforcement from Romania to Central African Republic to the United States, including on what national and local atrocity prevention strategies can look like. PA works closely with central UK government and missions. Protection Approaches is a registered charity in England and Wales, charity number 1171433. For more information, please see www.protectionapproaches.org.
- 0.3 Stonewall was founded in 1989 and since then has championed many human rights developments for the LGBTQI+ community both in the UK and globally. Stonewall's global work places them at the heart of the global advocacy and research community advancing the rights of LGBTQI+ people working in partnership with organisations in over 30 countries around the world. They have developed hate crime reporting systems, work with foreign policing and security bodies, advance refugee protection through advocacy at the UN, created a global network of civil society organisations working to advance the rights of LGBTQI+ communities through the SDGs. Stonewall are the civil society Co-Chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition of over 40 like-minded member states led by the governments of the United Kingdom and Argentina and over 120 civil society organisations looking to advance LGBTQI+ rights. Stonewall were awarded a place on the Advisory Council of the UN Partnership for Global Leadership and Equality and sit on the UK Foreign Secretary's Advisory Group. Stonewall is a registered charity in England, Wales and Scotland, charity number 1101255. For more information see www.stonewall.org.uk.
- 0.4 The submission has been prepared by Dr Kate Ferguson with support from Stonewall. Dr Ferguson is a foreign policy expert recognised as driving a new approach to preventing crises in the UK and internationally. She co-founded Protection Approaches in 2014 where she leads research and policy programmes. She is Chair of Policy at the European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and Honorary Research Fellow at the University of East Anglia. Dr Ferguson has trained and advised state representatives, parliamentarians, and law enforcement from Romania to the Central African Republic to the United States, including on what national and local atrocity prevention strategies can look like. She has a BA in History and PhD on the dynamics of modern atrocities both from the University of East Anglia, and an MPhil in Russian and East European Studies from the University of Oxford. Her book, Architectures of Violence: The Command Structures of Modern Mass Atrocities was published in 2020 by Hurst and Oxford University Press.
- 0.5 Contact information: Kate.Ferguson@protectionapproaches.org

Introduction

- 1.1 Afghanistan must be viewed as a country on a trajectory towards organised violence against many vulnerable groups. While the situation is exceptionally complex, there are always options states such as the UK and their partners can take to help protect lives and mitigate risk. This evidence addresses how Her Majesty's Government might do so.
- 1.2 This written evidence addresses the terms of reference of the inquiry, most particularly the question of how the UK can support those at risk both in the immediate and longer term. It responds to the wider questions relating to UK strategy towards Afghanistan and in its broader foreign policy. While this evidence comes jointly from Protection Approaches and Stonewall, and pays particular attention to the acute risks facing LGBTQI+ people in Afghanistan, it builds upon previous submissions from Protection Approaches and the work of the Committee itself relating to the gaps within and across Her Majesty's Government of atrocity prevention capacities, systems, expertise and resourcing. It is clear that in Afghanistan, the absence of atrocity prevention thinking and strategy has left HMG less prepared for a grave but foreseeable crisis, less able to monitor the still-rising risks of violence, and on the backfoot at a time when strategic clarity was – and is – most needed.
- 1.3 Our joint analysis is informed by Protection Approaches expertise in atrocity prevention and UK foreign policy, and by the urgent, direct requests for protection that Stonewall receives daily from people trapped in Afghanistan, in neighbouring countries, and from families in the UK who are gravely concerned about the safety of their relatives. Both Stonewall and Protection Approaches have been in conversation with Her Majesty's Government regarding atrocity risks – including LGBTQI+ vulnerabilities – in Afghanistan. Both organisations are committed to working with the UK Government and its partners to focus on LGBTQI+ inclusive atrocity prevention thinking in their high-level responses to the catastrophic situation Afghans now face.

Risks of identity-based violence and mass atrocity crimes in Afghanistan

- 2.1 “Almost no civilian in Afghanistan has escaped being personally affected in some way by the ongoing violence,” the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Tadamichi Yamamoto, said in February 2020. In addition to and entwined in Afghanistan's recent and historical armed conflict is the legacy of persecution against different groups, including widespread and systematic violence that meets the threshold of mass atrocity crimes.¹ Amnesty International reported recently that the past twenty years has “seen thousands of civilian deaths and the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious human rights violations and abuses by all parties.”²
- 2.2 Identity-based violence is widely perpetrated by the Taliban and other armed actors in Afghanistan against groups because of their actual or perceived religion, ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, sexuality, education level, profession, (dis)ability, economic background, or political affiliation. An important acknowledgement of the significance of the crimes perpetrated by the Taliban is the decision in March 2020 by the International Criminal Court to pursue a formal investigation of alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes

¹ Mass atrocity crimes is a non-legal catch all that includes crimes against humanity, genocide, ethnic cleansing and war crimes.

² Amnesty International, Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan's fall into the hands of the Taliban, September 21, 2021, Index Number: ASA 11/4727/2021

committed by the Taliban, affiliated armed groups, and Afghan National Security Forces since May 2003 when in Afghanistan joined the ICC.³

- 2.3 These patterns of violence, instability and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan will continue to deepen without high-level, creative and committed response from the UK and its partners. John Simpson, the eminent BBC reporter with vast experience in Afghanistan, struggled to retain his composure when delivering his recent report on 8 November 2021 about the devastating effect of the chronic food insecurity and economic collapse: “it hasn’t happened yet but you know it is just around the corner.” The same can be said with regard to the atrocity risks in Afghanistan; we know what is just around the corner.
- 2.4 The legacy of the Taliban in Afghanistan is already of concern to the ICC, the UN and numerous experts are testament to the immediate and medium-term risks of mass atrocity crimes against the country’s vulnerable communities being extremely high. Communities particularly at risk include but are not limited to women and girls; the LGBTIQ+ community; human rights defenders; (former) government workers; refugees; Sikhs, Hindus; Shi’as; Hazara; journalists; and disabled people.⁴ HMG must place these vulnerabilities at the centre of its Afghanistan policy.
- 2.5 We welcomed the outcomes of the UK Prime Minister’s *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* in March this year. It holds great promise with clear commitments to an integrated approach to conflict and instability, prioritising atrocity prevention, and addressing grievances and political marginalisation as core drivers of conflict. **We would respectfully ask the Afghanistan Task Force and the FCDO leadership how these commitments to prioritising atrocity prevention are reflected in the UK’s current Afghanistan strategy and where accountability within government for this resides.**
- 2.6 In times of such extraordinary crisis, flux and insecurity we know that there can be a temptation to feel that nothing much can be done or to focus only on the firefighting that limited resources allow. **We are concerned that the UK government has yet to embrace fully the calls from this Committee and from civil society experts to adopt clear policy, systems and capabilities geared towards the specific challenge of preventing mass atrocity crimes. We urge the UK government to urgently and comprehensively centre atrocity prevention in its approach to Afghanistan,** to consider the full spectrum of entry points it and its partners have access to, and to invest now in prevention and preparedness ahead of the predictable escalation of risks.
- 2.7 Atrocity crimes are not inevitable. In Afghanistan, any assessment of risk indicators should sound urgent alarm bells. Lessons learnt from recent mass atrocities should be at the forefront in the decision making of the UK government and the Afghanistan taskforce. Policy should be informed by the legacy of the atrocities against the Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2017 where the United Kingdom, and other governments, learnt many hard but important lessons and committed to finally integrating modest atrocity prevention systems and capabilities.

³ Afghanistan: Situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ICC-02/17 <https://www.icc-cpi.int/afghanistan>

⁴ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, “[Afghanistan](#)”; Amnesty International, “[Afghanistan: The fate of thousands hanging in the balance: Afghanistan’s fall into the hands of the Taliban](#),” 21 September 2021; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “[Women and Hazara in Afghanistan Face Heightened Risk of Mass Atrocities After Taliban Takeover](#),” 13 September 2021; Ali M. Latifi, “[‘Death knell’: Afghan journalists fear new Taliban media rules](#),” *Al Jazeera*, 29 September 2021; Jessica Murray, “[Disabled Afghans in special jeopardy, warns exiled campaigner](#),” *The Guardian*, 6 September 2021

2.8 The *Integrated Review* is clear and a call to UK leadership. The UK's Afghanistan taskforce should, at the very least, strengthen UK analysis of risk dynamics to ensure it properly identifies acute vulnerabilities facing many minority, minoritized and marginalised communities that could still be mitigated. Integration of such skills, expertise, systems and capabilities while working with other partners to do the same could significantly bolster how the UK views its policy and programme options and help to provide a much-needed rudder to international efforts – efforts that remain chaotic, disjointed, leaderless and where the voices of those most at risk are not heard.

The urgent need for LGBTQI-inclusive and LGBTQI-specific atrocity prevention:

“My father was threatened several times by the Taliban, they beat my father because of my [LGBTQI+] status. They informed that if they give refuge to these people, the Taliban will kill them. Nowhere is safe for us.”

- 3.1 We consider there to be an imminent and medium-term risk of widespread and systematic persecution of and violence against LGBTQI+ people, those who are believed to belong to this community, and their families. LGBTQI+ people are not the only community facing atrocity risks, but the absence of LGBTQI+ expertise and focussed policy in high level responses to the human catastrophe in Afghanistan is stark and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency by all actors with access to the country and Afghan populations in exile in the region.
- 3.2 We focus in this submission on the rights and vulnerabilities of Afghanistan's LGBTQI+ community for two reasons. First, Stonewall, working with partners, has had direct and sustained contact with LGBTQI+ people in Afghanistan, in neighbouring countries and in third countries. We continue to receive reports from LGBTQI+ Afghans hiding in very insecure environments because they are at risk of violence and killings from their family, community and the Taliban. Second, we are concerned by the conspicuous absence of LGBTQI+ risks and vulnerabilities assessments and programme responses across humanitarian responses to the crisis in Afghanistan.
- 3.3 Our focus on LGBTQI+ rights and vulnerabilities is illustrative of the deep human rights deficits present in Afghanistan and of the acute risks of widespread identity-based violence facing all minority, minoritized and marginalised communities in the country. When the rights – including the right to life – of any group are threatened we know that the risks facing other groups are also threatened. **We caution against responses by the UK or others that only address atrocity risks facing one group or another, be that LGBTQI+ groups or the Hazara.** Specific strategies and programmes are often needed but should always be situated within an inclusive policy that recognises the rights, vulnerabilities and needs of all – and works towards intersectional, sustainable goals. This includes developing clear, proactive approaches to reaching in and listening to all groups facing violence, discrimination and insecurity in Afghanistan and those who have left the country.
- 3.4 Under the rule of the Taliban, LGBTQI+ people are targets for violence, abuse, and extra-judicial executions in Afghanistan. Much of the homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia that they face centres on notions of shame and dishonour. This doesn't just impact the individual, but also their family and community, as they are seen to be dishonourable through their association with an LGBTQI+ person. This context means, that not only is

there a criminal law sanction, there is a deeply rooted risk of honour crimes for LGBTQI+ people and their families.

3.5 Since the Taliban took over this summer there have been reports of LGBTQI+ Afghans being raped, tortured and murdered.⁵ Testimonies shared with Stonewall make the fear and threat LGBTQI+ Afghans experience palpable: “I am really terrified and as a gay I feel they will kill me or stone me to death any moment. If they found out that I am gay they will kill me and my family members.” This is not an uncommon fear and one that is deeply rooted in those in hiding and those looking for a pathway out of the country. They fear being on the streets in case they are stopped by the Taliban, they fear their families, and their neighbours. The dilemma faced by those working to evacuate and protect LGBTQI+ Afghans, is that even reporting on their context, exposes this community to even more risk given the immediacy of social media. Threats of violence are abound in social media, as are calls to the Taliban not to allow any LGBTQI+ people to leave the country and for them to be killed.

3.6 Those developing atrocity prevention approaches need to take into account this context of secrecy and silence. The risks in reporting on LGBTQI+ Afghans requires new strategies for ensuring that we can safely reach those who continue to hide, those who choose to navigate the perilous path to leaving the country, and those who are trying to survive in neighbouring countries where LGBTQI+ people are at risk and with little support to settle as refugees. We would invite an opportunity to provide further details on the risks faced by the hundreds we have been in contact with, who is targeted and how.

3.7 The UK government should be praised for securing safe passage for LGBTQI+ Afghans in recent months. Organisations including Stonewall and Rainbow Railroad have been instrumental in ensuring that those who have been assisted to leave the country have done so with a secure pathway to settling into the UK. There is a pressing need for more evacuations, and for certainty in refugee resettlement offers for LGBTQI+ people by a wider group of countries. The UK and its partners must address the immediate and medium-term risks facing vulnerable communities in Afghanistan. Such support must continue. This includes the provision of safe passage and sanctuary, such as the inclusion of LGBTQI+ Afghans under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme,⁶ but must also include the creation of proactive and creative pathways in collaboration with civil society to be able to reach and evacuate LGBTQI+ Afghans in hiding; human rights-based and LGBTQI+ sensitive asylum procedures and resettlement approaches; and provision of mental health services.

3.8 The UK and its partners must uphold its legal and moral responsibilities to help protect all people at risk of atrocity crimes; such responsibilities include LGBTQI+ Afghans and yet there is a risk that they are not being expressly included in even the most basic humanitarian programming.

3.9 The UK and its partners must confront the risks facing the majority who are inevitably going to be left behind, do not want to, or cannot leave. Afghanistan is a country on the brink of humanitarian, economic, and violent catastrophe. We therefore urge the Committee to call HMG’s attention to the urgent need for strategic, practical, and inclusive thinking that

⁵ Human Dignity Trust, [Country Profile: Afghanistan](#); Tracey Shelton, “[LGBT Afghans are on the run, afraid they could be stoned to death under Taliban law](#),” *ABC News*, 2 September 2021; Ben Westcott, “[Angry and afraid, Afghanistan's LGBTQ community say they're being hunted down after Taliban takeover](#),” *CNN*, 18 September 2021

⁶ Home Office, “[Afghanistan Resettlement and Immigration Policy Statement](#),” 13 September 2021

focusses on what can still be prevented, the lives that can be saved, and the preparing for the scenarios where UK leverage and capabilities will make a difference. **Urgent consideration should be given to the participation of LGBTQI+ Afghans to securely inform UK government decision makers of the risks and threats they faced or witnessed before evacuation.**

Assessing the UK's current approach to Afghanistan

- 4.1 In HMG's approach to Afghanistan urgently requires a coordinated atrocity prevention strategy.⁷ The persisting insistence that HMG does not need a distinct strategy is once again contributing to delayed and inconsistent responses in a context where evidence of widespread systemic discrimination and violence is both evident and worsening. It is unclear the extent to which atrocity prevention expertise is present within the Afghanistan taskforce but there does not appear to be a clear role with responsibility for viewing both the crisis and the UK's policy options through that lens. It is unclear what indicators of risk the country team are monitoring or which experts they are working with to assess trends that do not require an in-country presence.
- 4.2 In recent years this Committee identified the same gaps in HMG's country and cross-government policy towards Xinjiang⁸, Myanmar⁹, Tigray¹⁰ and Syria¹¹ and called upon the government to prioritise the skills, systems, capabilities and policies of atrocity prevention. It is devastating that in the face of evident and acute risks facing LGBTQI+ and many other vulnerable Afghan communities the same gaps in UK policy persist in the UK's Afghanistan policy. The people of Afghanistan do not need the UK to be viewing its country policy from the perspective of conflict prevention or democratisation; UK policy towards Afghanistan must be rooted in human rights and prioritise 1) crisis prevention – prevention of famine, prevention of atrocity crimes – and 2) preparedness – preparation for the crises that we know are coming and those that are likely.
- 4.3 This reluctance to confront the coming risks in Afghanistan appears to point to a wider problem in UK foreign policy where emphasis continues to be placed on responding to crises rather than upon strategy. The promise of the *Integrated Review* and subsequent publication of its outcomes set intentions to bring strategy and coherence to HMG's international policy. More specifically, it promised a prioritisation of atrocity prevention. The outcomes of the *Integrated Review* asked the government to be judged on actions not words: in assessing UK policy on Afghanistan it is difficult to see where these commitments are being demonstrated.
- 4.4 As Protection Approaches has recommended before with regards to UK policy on Myanmar, Xinjiang, Syria, Tigray, Sudan and DRC, the UK's policy on Afghanistan requires atrocity prevention to be properly integrated into the country strategy, for indicators of identity-based violence and atrocity crimes to be properly monitored and analysed, for responsibility for UK atrocity prevention policy in Afghanistan to be properly allocated, and for Whitehall

⁷ Kate Ferguson, "[Putting atrocity prevention at the heart of British foreign policy](#)," *Foreign Policy Centre*, 9 September 2020

⁸ Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "[The UK's Responsibility to Act on Atrocities in Xinjiang and Beyond](#)," 8 July 2021

⁹ Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "[Violence in Rakhine State and the UK's response](#)," 11 December 2017

¹⁰ International Development Committee, "[Humanitarian situation in Tigray](#)," 27 April 2021

¹¹ Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "[Global Britain: The Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention](#)," 5 September 2018

to provide support to the country team via clear policy support, appropriate resourcing, and training (in addition to the limited options available through the Diplomatic Academy).

- 4.5 During the Committee's recent inquiry on the atrocities taking place in Xinjiang, Paul Williams, Director of Open Societies and Human Rights and former UK focal point for the Responsibility to Protect, said that the FCDO were looking at how to engage with civil society organisations as a "new tool" of atrocity prevention particularly in gathering "upstream information."¹² We would urge the committee to inquire how this is being done with regards to Afghanistan, and more particularly if/how the FCDO is reaching in to LGBTQI+ organisations working with LGBTQI+ Afghans in the UK or elsewhere?
- 4.6 **There is still no coordinating mechanism, no clear strategy in Whitehall or in the UK's policy on Afghanistan.** While the *Integrated Review* lists as a priority a "more integrated approach" to conflict and stability with "greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict (such as grievances, political marginalisation and criminal economies), atrocity prevention,"¹³ it remains unclear how these commitments will be upheld and integrated into policy and the newly established Conflict and Situation Centres. The need for such coordination is already evident but the spectrum of risks present in Afghanistan underlines this need: people are at risk of identity-based violence and mass atrocities crimes because of their religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political affiliation, profession, disability.
- 4.7 These risks in Afghanistan should bring together existing UK policies, capabilities and programming on LGBTQ+ rights and the LGBTQ+ action plan, Freedom of Religion and Belief and recommendation 7 of the Truro Review, Women and Girls, Women Peace and Security, Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Media Freedom, Human Rights, commitment to disability inclusion and rights, Protection of Civilians and so on.
- 4.8 It is worth noting in full that recommendation 7 of the Truro review is to (a) ensure that there are mechanisms in place to facilitate an immediate response to atrocity crimes, including genocide and (b) take steps in response to atrocity crimes by (i) setting up early warning mechanisms, (ii) using diplomacy to help de-escalate tensions and resolve disputes and (iii) developing support to help with upstream prevention work.¹⁴
- 4.9 **The UK still lacks atrocity prevention risk assessment and analysis capabilities:** Knowing what to look for, how to analyse relevant indicators, and how to 'raise the alarm' are crucial steps for successful early warning of atrocity risks and early preventative action: current UK risk assessment tools lack the remit, capabilities, and flexibility required for the UK to adequately identify or analyse atrocity risks. As noted in previous evidence submissions, the UK's early warning system has over-relied upon two core processes: the Cabinet Office's annual Countries at Risk of Instability (CRI); and the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS). While both are powerful analytical tools, neither are early warning mechanisms capable of capturing real-time threats and informing rapid responses. It is welcome that the JACS was significantly revised and updated earlier this year so as to become a tool to be employed in circumstances of atrocity risks as well as conflict and we certainly hope that a new JACS was triggered by the rapid pull out of the United States. However both processes are heavy duty, for analysing longer-term trends and establishing agreed understandings and approaches across government. As a result, they continue to miss or underappreciate

¹² Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "[Oral evidence: Xinjiang detention camps](#)," HC800, 27 April 2021, Q317

¹³ HMG, "[Global Britain](#)," March 2021, p. 79

¹⁴ Bishop of Truro, "[Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians](#)," June 2019

more immediate mass atrocity risks. As HMG continues to restructure the FCDO and Cabinet Office analytical systems, there is rare opportunity to integrate more iterative and responsive early warning, horizon scanning, scenario planning, network analysis, and risk assessment capabilities.

- 2.1 Mass atrocities are commonly grounded in a pre-existing, older grievances, discrimination, and tension and set off by events that changes these dynamics for the worse. What LGBTQI+ Afghans are experiencing today continues a long history of LGBTQI+ people being disproportionately targeted and subject to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic sexual violence, forced marriages, honour killings, conversion practices and execution. Simply being LGBTQI+ will, under the rule of the Taliban, mean extra-judicial executions and the death penalty. We know that such violence often foreshadows or accompanies widespread identity-based violence and mass atrocities against LGBTQI+ communities but also other groups; what assessments did HMG make, is making, and is planning to make of these risks and how will this analysis inform UK policy in Afghanistan, the region, and national policy including immigration and asylum policies? If these analyses are not undertaken, is this a conscious decision or – as we contend – because there is no position of mechanism tasked with doing so?
- 2.2 This analysis gap requires human expertise and bureaucratic coordination rather than big data, statistical modelling or large budgets.¹⁵ Atrocity predication and policy analysis is low-cost but high-impact, yet the FCDO omits common indicators of identity-based violence in much of its analysis, lacks specialist expertise, and as such leaves HMG without the necessary knowledge and tools to respond effectively and with coherence.

Recommendations for atrocity prevention and Afghanistan

- 3.1 Protection Approaches shares the Committee’s longstanding calls for the UK government to prioritise a cross-cutting atrocity prevention strategy. It should go without saying that any such strategy, whether developed across government or just for the country task force, would need to be inclusive, and be capable of monitoring and assessing risks facing all vulnerable communities. As HMG develops its new approaches to conflict and mass atrocities, including building out the new Conflict and Situation Centres, it would be a mistake not to ensure such changes in process, system and policy are inclusive of LGBTQI+ expertise and vulnerabilities.
- 3.2 Any commitment to integrate atrocity prevention to monitor ongoing atrocity risks in Afghanistan should prioritise three core strands – **analysis** to ensure an appropriate response, **communication** between and across government, and **institutionalisation** to ensure the integration of atrocity prevention across all government policies.¹⁶ Integrating the means of prevention analysis across government would facilitate intelligence collection and collation, conduct risk assessments of UK exposure to the possibility of complicity,

¹⁵ There are serious contentions regarding the efficacy and reliability of existing conflict and atrocity forecasting modelling. For more see Jens Stappenbeck, [Frühwarnung weiter denken: Errichtung einer digitalin Vorhersageplattform](#), PeaceLab, March 2017. Stappenbeck is currently reviewing efficacy of statistical databased early warning systems, working closely with the Germany government and others. Contact Jens Stappenbeck jens.stappenbeck@genocide-alert.de

¹⁶ Protection Approaches, UNA-UK, [Written evidence to Foreign Affairs Select Committee \(INR0087\)](#); Protection Approaches, [Written evidence submitted by Protection Approaches \(XIN0067\)](#); Kate Ferguson, [“What can the UK do to Help Protect the Uyghurs? Adopt a National Strategy of Atrocity Prevention,” ECR2P](#), 12 August 2020

undertake scenario planning, engage allies and partners, and develop the capacity to deploy civilian advisors to situations of concern. Improving communication would establish a clear internal communications protocol setting out how to monitor imminent warning signs, triggering moments, indicators and risk factors; when and how to raise the alarm – both across government and externally – and guidance on escalation. Institutionalising the UK's commitment to prevent atrocities would establish a coordinating function of prediction and prevention across Government.

- 3.3 Protection Approaches and Stonewall make five immediate recommendations for the FCDO to urgently address current gaps in policy, strategy and capabilities. These are practical, low-cost measures and permit the FCDO to kickstart the integration of atrocity prevention thinking and doing.
- 3.4 **HMG must urgently develop and adopt an LGBTQI+ inclusive atrocity prevention strategy for Afghanistan.**
- 3.5 **The UK Afghanistan team needs an Atrocity Prevention lead of appropriate seniority who can act as focal point on UK atrocity prevention policy**, including coordinating information flow, undertaking risk assessments, and prioritising support to populations at risk – including LGBTQI+ communities. The International Development Committee¹⁷ recently pointed to such gaps in the UK's country teams in Ethiopia and Eritrea and called for the urgent creation of atrocity prevention leads.
- 3.6 **HMG must rapidly upskill the Afghanistan country team and relevant Home Office officials with training on atrocity prevention**, providing support for victims and survivors of atrocities, and other relevant competencies. We know that most officials receive no such training, with this committee drawing attention to gaps in such training among the UK's China teams¹⁸ and the International Development Committee calling for urgent training for the UK Missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- 3.7 **The FCDO and Home Office should prioritise meeting with Afghan, LGBTQI+ and atrocity prevention civil society organisations**, including Stonewall and Protection Approaches. We know in times of complex crises civil society networks can help plug information gaps and are crucial in bringing the voices of those most at risk into policy rooms.
- 3.8 **The Afghanistan taskforce should introduce an emergency communications protocol.** An emergency communications protocol (ECP) is a document that provides guidelines, contact information and procedures for how information should be shared during all phases of an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action. Such a protocol connects field, embassy, London and New York and facilitates urgent communication in times of acute concern. Such processes have been introduced by other country teams.

¹⁷ International Development Committee, "[Humanitarian situation in Tigray](#)," 27 April 2021

¹⁸ Foreign Affairs Select Committee, "[The UK's Responsibility to Act on Atrocities in Xinjiang and Beyond](#)," 8 July 2021

December 2021