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THE PRIME MINISTER

20 August 2021

Dear Mark,

With the situation in Afghanistan front of all our minds, I wanted to write to seek your continued support in resettling vulnerable Afghans in the UK.

I am grateful for the efforts you have already made in assisting arrivals under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, and for your generous offers of further assistance. So far, over 2,000 people have already been relocated to safety in the UK under this scheme. The success of resettlement to date has been achieved by working in close partnership with you, over 300 local authorities, and many charities and individuals across the UK. With a further 2,000 Afghan applications completed, and many more being processed, your continued support will be vital.

It is however right that we go much further. This is why on Wednesday I set out the Government's plans to support the resettlement of thousands of Afghans for a new safe and legal route – the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme. As a result of this new resettlement route, thousands of vulnerable Afghans who are most in need - particularly women, girls, and religious minorities - will be welcomed to the UK. This will be one of the most generous resettlement schemes in our country's history. Those who have been forced to flee their home or face threats of persecution or oppression from the Taliban will be offered a route to make their homes in the UK permanently.

The UK Government's ambition is for the resettlement of up to 5,000 Afghan nationals who are at risk due to the current crisis, in its first year, with up to 20,000 in the longer-term. Priority will be given to women and girls, and others who are most at risk of human rights abuses and dehumanising treatment by the Taliban.

The ambition to provide protection to thousands of people fleeing Afghanistan, and the complex picture on the ground, means there will be significant challenges to delivering this scheme, but the Government is working at speed to develop a system to identify those most at risk and resettle them, ensuring help goes to those that need it most.

Vital to future success will be our continued joint working, much like our approach to the Syrian refugees. I am grateful for your support, and the Home Secretary and Communities Secretary will reach out to counterparts in the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive very shortly to ensure that we are working closely together as we have so successfully in the past.

with best wishes
as ever
Mark

The Right Honourable Mark Drakeford MS