

Research Briefing

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Afghanistan: Refugees and displaced people in 2021

1

Situation summary

During the draw-down of coalition forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban staged a rapid advance and captured the Afghan capital, Kabul, on 15 August 2021. They are now in effective control of the country.

Prior to the Taliban's capture of Kabul, the UN warned the situation in Afghanistan "[has the hallmarks of humanitarian catastrophe](#)."¹ It has raised concerns about the effect of the conflict on women and children, the increasing numbers of internally displaced people, and the impact of Covid-19 and food shortages.

This briefing looks at the situation facing civilians, refugees, and internally displaced people in Afghanistan. **It should be read as correct as of the time of publication (3 September 2021).**

Other Library briefings on Afghanistan

The Library has published the below briefings. Although the situation in Afghanistan remains uncertain, they describe intended plans to resettle locally

¹ UN, [Fast moving Afghanistan crisis \[...\]](#), 13 August 2021

employed civilians, a history of UK aid spending and Afghan development since 2001, and the potential impact of greater Taliban influence on Afghan society:

- [Afghanistan: Development, UK aid and the future](#)
- [Afghanistan statistics: UK deaths, casualties, mission costs and refugees](#)
- [Withdrawal of military forces in Afghanistan and its implications for peace](#)
- [Resettlement scheme for locally employed civilians in Afghanistan](#)
- [Afghanistan: Key resources for British nationals and Afghans](#)

2

High levels of civilian casualties

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan between January and June 2021 were the highest since records began in 2009

In July 2021, the UN reported that in Afghanistan there were more women and children killed and wounded during the first half of 2021, than in the first six months of any year since records began in 2009.² A total of 116,000 civilians have been killed or injured since 2009.

From January to June 2021, [5,183 civilians were killed or injured](#), an increase of 47 percent compared to the same period in 2020. Anti-government groups, such as the Taliban and IS-Khorasan, were responsible for 64 percent of casualties. 32 percent of casualties were children.³



Source: UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, [Civilian casualties](#), 26 July 2021 and [Afghanistan: Protection of civilians in armed conflict](#), February 2021; p12

² UN, [Afghanistan: Record number of women and children killed or wounded](#), 26 July 2021

³ UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), [Civilian casualties to hit unprecedented highs in 2021 unless urgent action to stem violence](#), 26 July 2021; UNAMA, [Afghanistan: Protection of civilians in armed conflict midyear update](#), 26 July 2021

Since the publication of the UN statistics in July, Unicef has warned of a “rapid escalation of violations against children.” On 9 August, it reported that 27 children had been killed and 136 injured in the previous 72 hours. More than 1,000 people were killed or injured due to “indiscriminate” attacks against civilians in Helmand, Kandahar, and Herat between 9 July and 9 August.⁴

The Taliban does not control the entirety of Afghanistan. In September, fighting between the Taliban and forces in Afghanistan’s Panjshir Valley under Ahmad Massoud reportedly intensified.⁵

3

Growing humanitarian needs

17 million Afghans are food insecure

In July 2021, the UN stated that 18.5 million people, or nearly half of Afghan’s population, [needed humanitarian support](#). It reported a third of the country was suffering from malnutrition, and half of children under five were experiencing acute malnutrition.⁶ In August, the World Food Programme warned that it [may run out of its main supply for Afghanistan](#)—wheat flour—from October.⁷

This is due to a combination of poverty, the coronavirus pandemic, underdevelopment of social services, droughts, the ongoing conflict, and shortfalls in funding for agencies and NGOs.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in Afghanistan has called for US \$1.3 billion of funding to support its humanitarian activities in the country. Currently, this is 40 percent funded, with US \$772 million still required. The [UK has provided US \\$20.6 million](#), or 4.1 percent. In 2020, the OCHA had only 52 percent of its appeal met.⁸

As of 21 July 2021, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)’s financial appeal for the Afghanistan situation (including operations in Iran and Pakistan) [also remained underfunded](#), at 43 percent of the \$127.1 million still required (US \$55.1 million).⁹

⁴ UN, [“Shocking” escalation of grave violations against children in Afghanistan: Unicef](#), 9 August 2021

⁵ Reuters, [Taliban and Afghan rebels claim heavy casualties in fighting over valley](#), 2 September 2021

⁶ UN, [Afghanistan: Funding shortfall amid deepening humanitarian crisis](#), 15 July 2021; Unicef, [Around 10 million children in Afghanistan need humanitarian assistance to survive, says Unicef](#), 23 August 2021

⁷ World Food Programme (WFP), [Afghanistan: WFP continues to deliver as winter and humanitarian crisis loom](#), 24 August 2021

⁸ UN OCHA, [Afghanistan humanitarian response plan 2021. Response appeal snapshot for 2021](#), accessed 3 September 2021

⁹ UNHCR, [Funding update: Afghanistan](#), 21 July 2021

Prior to the Taliban's capture of Kabul, the UK Government said it [would work with the UN OCHA, UNCHR and International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) to respond to Afghan migration and internal displacement.¹⁰

In August 2021, the International Red Cross/Red Crescent (IFRC) [reported that 80 percent of the country was in drought conditions](#). It estimates that 3 million livestock will be at risk of death and the wheat crop will also be affected.¹¹

The UN has said that the number of Afghans [facing food insecurity](#) rose from 13.9 million in 2020 to 17.0 million in 2021.¹² Oxfam has named Afghanistan as one of the [world's worst "hunger hot spots."](#)¹³

The coronavirus pandemic has claimed at [least 7,100 lives in Afghanistan](#). However, there is [severe undertesting](#). As of July 2021, there had been only 700,000 tests for a population of 40.4 million since the pandemic began.¹⁴ Public health restrictions have also affected schools and put pressure on its health system.¹⁵

4 Internally displaced people

3.5 million Afghans are now internally displaced

The total Afghan population is [around 39-40 million](#).¹⁶ At the end of 2020, there were 2.9 million Afghans already displaced across the country.¹⁷ By mid-July, this rose to 3.5 million.¹⁸

On 16 August 2021, the UNHCR said that 80 percent of the 250,000 Afghans who have fled their homes since the end of May are women and children. Nearly 120,000 arrived in Kabul.¹⁹

The BBC reported in August that many in Kabul are struggling to find food, shelter, medicines, and sanitary items.²⁰ The UN OCHA states that of the 551,000 displaced from 1 January to 9 August 2021, assistance was provided

¹⁰ PQ HL2016 [[Afghanistan: Emigration](#)], 28 July 2021

¹¹ IFRC, [Afghanistan: Over 80 percent of country in serious drought](#), 4 August 2021

¹² UN, ["If you don't feed people, you feed conflict," UN chief tells security council](#), 11 March 2021

¹³ Oxfam, [The hunger versus multiplies](#), 9 July 2021, Table 1

¹⁴ World Health Organization, [Afghanistan: Covid-19](#), 29 July 2021

¹⁵ Anadolu Agency, [Afghanistan shuts all schools amid surging Covid-19 infections, deaths](#), 12 June 2021

¹⁶ UN Population, [Afghanistan 2019](#)

¹⁷ UNHCR, [UNHCR warns Afghanistan's conflict taking the heaviest toll on displaced women and children](#), 16 August 2021

¹⁸ UN, [Afghanistan: 270,000 newly displaced this year, warns UNHCR](#), 13 July 2021; Humanitarian Response OCHA, [Internal displacement due to conflict: Situation](#), 9 August 2021

¹⁹ UNHCR, [The refugee brief](#), 13 August 2021,

²⁰ BBC News, [Afghanistan: The people fleeing the north for safety in Kabul](#), 12 August 2021

to around 185,000. It states assistance can be delayed due to constraints on humanitarian access.²¹

A UN OCHA update, published on 22 August, said [more humanitarian teams have been deployed to assist displaced people in Kabul](#) and other urban areas. Earlier in August, some inter-agency humanitarian teams were not operating due to uncertainty around the situation in the city.²²

5 Aid access

5.1 Attacks on aid workers and withdrawal to places of safety

From 1997 to 25 August 2021, a total of [1,314 aid workers have been killed, wounded, or kidnapped in Afghanistan](#), mostly by armed opposition forces such as the Taliban.²³

Many aid workers are local Afghans—99 percent in the case of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), for example, which provides humanitarian and other assistance in the country.²⁴

In July, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan compound in Herat was attacked.²⁵ The [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (Doctors Without Borders) Afghanistan Bost Hospital in Lashkar Gah was also hit by rocket attacks, as were other medical NGOs in the area. The hospital continued to operate after the attacks.²⁶

[The areas in which aid agencies are active has contracted](#) greatly due to security concerns, corruption, and the Taliban's demands to tax aid into areas under its control.²⁷ However, as of 17 August the UN had access to 394 of the 401 districts in Afghanistan.²⁸

In August, the UN urged all parties in Afghanistan to allow unimpeded access and assurance to aid workers that will be able to deliver aid safely.²⁹ On 16

²¹ Humanitarian Response OCHA, [Internal displacement due to conflict: Response](#), 9 August 2021

²² UNOCHA, [Afghanistan: Internal displacement in Kabul](#), 15 August 2021; UNOCHA, [Afghanistan: Weekly humanitarian update](#), 16-22 August 2021

²³ Aid Worker Security, [Database-Afghanistan](#), accessed 16 August 2021

²⁴ IRC, [IRC urges leaders to protect civilians and safeguard aid workers in Afghanistan \[...\]](#), 15 August 2021

²⁵ Al-Jazeera, [UN compound attacked as battle for Afghanistan's Herat rages](#), 30 July 2021

²⁶ Al-Jazeera, [Taliban claims capture of more provincial capitals in Afghanistan](#), 9 August 2021

²⁷ CORE, [Humanitarian access SCORE report: Afghanistan](#), April 2020, p4

²⁸ Reuters, [UN aid chief warns of hunger caused by drought](#), 17 August 2021

²⁹ UN, ["Shocking" escalation of grave violations against children in Afghanistan: Unicef](#), 9 August 2021

August, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, [called for human rights to be protected and for humanitarian aid to continue](#).³⁰

During 2021, some aid workers have also moved to places of safety. Save the Children, for example, reported on 14 August that in Kunduz, aid agencies are currently unable to access displaced families and its staff members in many areas of the country had left their homes to go to Kabul or safe places.³¹

On 10 August, Médecins Sans Frontières warned that access to healthcare was “dangerously limited.”³² Health agencies, such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the Italian NGO, Emergency, are [continuing to run their health services](#) in parts of the country.³³

5.2 Intention of UN Agencies and others to remain

In mid-August, UN agencies [said they intend to remain in Afghanistan](#) to provide and coordinate aid.³⁴ This includes the UN World Food Programme, IOM, and Unicef.³⁵ However, around 100 UN staff have been temporarily relocated to Kazakhstan to reduce the risk to UN personnel and the World Health Organization states it has been unable to deliver medical supplies due to the security situation in the country.³⁶

On 30 August, the WHO made its [first medical supplies shipment](#) to Afghanistan since the Taliban’s capture of Kabul.³⁷ In late August, the UN was also able to deliver food supplies via Pakistan.³⁸

Other NGOs have expressed an intention to continue to work in Afghanistan. These include [Save the Children](#), though the majority of their work is currently suspended, and the [International Red Cross/Red Crescent](#).³⁹

³⁰ UN, [Afghanistan: “Now is the time to stand as one,” UN Chief tells Security Council](#), 16 August 2021

³¹ Save the Children International, [What’s happening in Afghanistan right now? \[Tweet\]](#), 14 August 2021; Save the Children, [Afghanistan: Fears for children injured and displaced in Kunduz](#), 10 August 2021

³² Médecins Sans Frontières, [As violence soars across Afghanistan access to healthcare is dangerously limited](#), 10 August 2021

³³ The New Humanitarian, [In Afghanistan, aid groups wrestle with the new reality of Taliban control](#), 16 August 2021

³⁴ VOA News, [UN agencies pledge to remain in Afghanistan despite challenges](#), 15 August 2021

³⁵ CBS News, [UN World Food Programme says it will “stay and deliver” in Afghanistan](#), 15 August 2021; International Organization for Migration, [IOM Director General’s statement on the situation in Afghanistan](#), 10 August 2021; Devex, [Afghanistan: Aid organizations face uncertain future under Taliban](#), 16 August 2021

³⁶ VOA News, [UN moves 100 international staff out of Afghanistan](#), 18 August 2021; BBC News, [Vital aid prevented from entering Afghanistan: WHO](#), 20 August 2021

³⁷ Devex, [WHO lands first medical supplies shipment under Taliban rule](#), 30 August 2021

³⁸ UN, [Afghanistan crisis: Food supply for millions could run out this month](#), 1 September 2021

³⁹ Save the Children, [Save the Children committed to protecting children in Afghanistan](#), 17 August 2021; International Committee of the Red Cross, [A statement on Afghanistan \[...\]](#), 17 August 2021

For information on aid spending pledges and G7 and UK Government statements on humanitarian aid access see the Library Briefing, [Afghanistan: UK aid, development, and the future](#).

6 Refugees

There are 2.5 million officially recorded Afghan refugees worldwide

On 16 August 2021, the UNHCR said that while many hundreds of thousands of people are displaced, [“for now the displacement is largely internal.”](#) However, it emphasised the need to support the humanitarian response in the country, and potentially outside Afghanistan, if there is increased cross-border movement.⁴⁰ In a [statement made on 17 August](#), the UNHCR called for all borders to remain open and for states not to forcibly return refugees.⁴¹

Estimates of the number of refugees expected to leave Afghanistan vary. In July, for example, the Iranian Government estimated it could face an [influx of 500,000 Afghans](#) over the next six months.⁴² In August, the UNHCR said it expects [500,000 to leave in 2021](#) as a “worst case scenario,” though emphasised large-scale outflows have not yet been seen.⁴³ The German Interior Minister has said he expects [up to 5 million refugees](#) to leave Afghanistan.⁴⁴

The US has [allocated up to US \\$500 million](#) to help Afghan refugees,⁴⁵ and the Germans [€100 million](#).⁴⁶ The UK has pledged £286 million in aid to Afghanistan in 2021—this includes [£30 million in humanitarian aid](#) to Afghanistan’s neighbours to support regional stability and respond to any increase in refugees. £10 million will be made immediately available to the UNHCR and other partners.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ AP Press, [The latest: Nations call for safe passage out of Afghanistan](#), 16 August 2021

⁴¹ UNHCR, [Position on returns to Afghanistan](#), 17 August 2021 ; UNHCR, [Afghanistan situation: Supplementary appeal](#), July 2021

⁴² UNHCR, [Afghanistan situation: Emergency preparedness and response in Iran](#), 20 July 2021

⁴³ Reuters, [Half a million Afghan could flee across borders—UNHCR](#), 27 August 2021

⁴⁴ BBC News, [Taliban assert authority as US defends pull-out](#), 17 August 2021, at 13:11

⁴⁵ White House, [Memorandum for the Secretary of State on unexpected urgent refugee and migration needs](#), 16 August 2021

⁴⁶ Info Migrants, [Germany to support displaced Afghans with 100 million](#), 20 August 2021

⁴⁷ FCDO, [UK to provide £30 million of live-saving supplies for Afghan refugees](#), 3 September 2021

6.1

Afghan refugees in Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan

There are around 2.5 million UNHCR-registered refugees from Afghanistan globally.⁴⁸ These figures are likely to underestimate the true number.

UN-recorded Afghan refugees are [concentrated in Pakistan and Iran](#). As of 31 December 2020, there were 1.4 million in Pakistan, and 780,000 in Iran (totaling 2.2 million).⁴⁹ A further 2.6 million undocumented Afghans are estimated to live in Iran (to May 2021).⁵⁰ Undocumented Afghans are not included in the table below.

Afghan refugees under UNHCR mandate and asylum seekers, 2020				
	Refugees	Asylum-seekers	Total	% all refugees/Asylum-seekers
Pakistan	1,438,432	9,668	1,448,100	51%
Iran	780,000	-	780,000	28%
Germany	147,994	33,103	181,097	6%
Turkey	4,219	125,104	129,323	5%
Austria	40,096	6,473	46,569	2%
France	31,546	13,560	45,106	2%
Greece	21,456	19,706	41,162	1%
Total (all countries)	2,594,774	238,791	2,833,565	-

Source: UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed 16 August 2021

In July 2021, it was reported that between [500 to 2,000 Afghan refugees are also entering Turkey each week](#). Turkey already hosts around 3.6 million Syrian refugees, and around 129,000 UNHCR-registered Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.⁵¹

On 15 August, prior to the Taliban taking control of Kabul, both Turkey and Pakistan said they would work to stabilise Afghanistan to slow the flow of refugees.

The Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said he [hoped a new border wall will “totally stop the arrivals.”](#)⁵² Construction of a 81km-long wall was completed in the Turkish Van Province in December 2020, with plans to extend

⁴⁸ Reuters, [UN readies for more displaced Afghans after troop withdrawal](#), 14 June 2021; UNHCR, [Afghan refugees reach Iran as violence escalates](#), 9 August 2021

⁴⁹ UNHCR, [Operational data portal: Registered refugees from Afghanistan \(in Iran and Pakistan\)](#), 31 December 2020

⁵⁰ UNHCR, [Renewed commitment needed to support displaced Afghans and their hosts](#), 31 May 2021

⁵¹ Voice of America (VOA), [Turkey faces dilemma as Afghan refugees start arriving](#), 29 July 2021; UNHCR, [Refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey](#), accessed 16 August 2021; UNHCR, [Refugee statistics: Afghanistan](#), accessed 16 August 2021

⁵² Middle East Eye, [Afghanistan: Erdogan to work with Pakistan to stop influx of Afghan refugees](#), 15 August 2021

it further south.⁵³ Associated Press reports Turkey has now sent troops to its border with Iran to [strengthen border security](#).⁵⁴ At the end of August, the Turkish Government reiterated that it [will not accept further refugees](#).⁵⁵

In July, the Pakistan Government said it was “not in a position to accept any more refugees” and [called upon other countries to make arrangements for refugees in Afghanistan](#).⁵⁶ Pakistan has also strengthened its border security, but several thousand Afghan refugees have [reportedly entered the country](#).⁵⁷ Analysts have that noted Pakistan is likely to [come under international pressure](#) to keep its borders open.⁵⁸

Iran is setting up temporary refugee camps on its border with Afghanistan, though has reportedly closed its border with the country, citing Coronavirus restrictions and developments in Afghanistan.⁵⁹ However, it has been reported that up to [7,000 Afghans are crossing the border illegally](#) into Iran each day.⁶⁰ The Iranian Interior Ministry said it expected refugees to return to Afghanistan when the “situation improves.”⁶¹ Iran is currently experiencing a fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic and an economic crisis, with inflation rates expected to be above 40 percent this year.⁶²

6.2 European positions

The issue of Afghan refugees to Europe was expected to be raised during an EU meeting on 18 August. In July, the Afghan Government had requested deportations to the country [be halted for at least three months](#).⁶³ On 10 August, six EU member states [opposed suggestions that deportations from the EU to Afghanistan should be halted](#), in reflection of the country’s deteriorating security situation.⁶⁴

⁵³ The New Humanitarian, [The Afghan refugee crisis brewing on Turkey’s eastern border](#), 3 August 2021

⁵⁴ Al-Monitor, [Turkey bolsters border against Afghan refugees](#), 19 August 2021

⁵⁵ Al-Monitor, [Turkey won’t accept “refugee burden” from Afghanistan](#), 30 August 2021

⁵⁶ VOA, [Pakistan refuses to host additional Afghan refugees](#), 13 July 2021

⁵⁷ BBC News, [Afghanistan: Pakistan fences off from Afghan refugees](#), 19 August 2021; Al-Jazeera, [Thousands of Afghans enter Pakistan via Chaman border crossing](#), 17 August 2021; The Guardian, [“Unprecedented” numbers crossing from Afghanistan to Pakistan](#), 27 August 2021

⁵⁸ The New Humanitarian, [“No more refugees” is not the answer to Afghanistan’s displacement crisis](#), 11 August 2021

⁵⁹ BBC News, [Iran closes border to Afghans fleeing Taliban](#), 18 August 2021

⁶⁰ The Guardian, [Afghanistan’s neighbours offered millions in aid to harbour refugees](#), 31 August 2021

⁶¹ The Independent, [Iran sets up refugee camps along border as Afghans flee Taliban rule](#), 15 August 2021

⁶² Al-Jazeera, [Iran announced 6-day lockdown amid surge of Covid cases](#), 14 August 2021; Al-Jazeera, [Can Iran’s new President Raisi fix a deeply troubled economy?](#), 2 August 2021

⁶³ IRC, [The IRC urges EU countries to urgently freeze deportations to Afghanistan](#), 12 August 2021

⁶⁴ The Guardian, [Expected Afghan influx reopens divisions over refugees in Europe](#), 16 August 2021; Politico, [EU officials play down prospects of Afghan deportations as war rages](#), 10 August 2021

These were Austria, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Greece, and Germany. The six requested additional support be given to the then-Afghan Government, led by Ashraf Ghani, and to neighbouring countries such as Pakistan to manage any refugee crisis.⁶⁵ However, Germany and the Netherlands are among those [who have now suspended any deportations](#) to Afghanistan because of its security situation.⁶⁶ Austria has said it will [accept no more Afghan refugees](#).⁶⁷

The countries are likely to be motivated by the large number of Afghan refugees seen in 2015. From January 2015 to March 2016, around 250,000 refugees from Afghanistan arrived in Greece.⁶⁸ In August 2021, Greece warned the EU was “not ready” for a potential replay of events six years ago.⁶⁹

On 16 August, the French President, Emmanuel Macron, said the EU was planning a “robust, coordinated and united” response to Afghan refugees. This is likely to include harmonised entry criteria.⁷⁰

6.3 UK scheme

The UK has put a block on any deportations to Afghanistan.⁷¹

Data on asylum applications to the UK can be found in the Library Briefing, [Afghanistan statistics: UK deaths, casualties, mission costs and refugees](#).

The UK Home Office has [announced a resettlement scheme for Afghans](#). The UK intends to resettle around 5,000 Afghan nationals at risk in 2021, and up to 20,000 in the longer term. Priority will be given to women and girls, and religious and other minorities.⁷²

The Labour Party has called for “specific and safe” asylum routes to ensure Afghan workers who helped UK forces can settle in the UK.⁷³

The UK has previously committed to resettle former Afghan interpreters and other locally employed civilians—see the Library’s briefing, [Resettlement scheme for locally employed civilians in Afghanistan](#).

In August 2021, the UK Government announced that UK Chevening scholarships for Afghan students would be paused because of the conflict in

⁶⁵ Reuters, [Six EU countries warn against open door for Afghan asylum seekers](#), 10 August 2021

⁶⁶ AP, [Germany, Netherlands suspends deportations to Afghanistan](#), 11 August 2021

⁶⁷ Politico, [Kurz: Austria won't take in any more Afghan refugees](#), 22 August 2021

⁶⁸ International Rescue Committee, [Afghan refugees and the European refugee crisis](#), June 2016

⁶⁹ Reuters, [Greece says EU not ready for new migrant crisis as Afghan conflict grows](#), 11 August 2021

⁷⁰ France 24, [Macron says that Afghanistan must not be “sanctuary of terrorism” again](#), 16 August 2021

⁷¹ The Telegraph, [Boris Johnson won't confirm how many Afghan refugees UK will take](#), 15 August 2021

⁷² Home Office, [Bespoke resettlement route for Afghan refugees announced](#), 18 August 2021

⁷³ BBC News, [Don't abandon Afghans who helped UK, Labour warns Government](#), 16 August 2021

the country. Around 35 people were affected.⁷⁴ Following criticism, the Prime Minister said the Government [would try and ensure the students get visas](#) to travel to the UK. Students had feared the scholarships would make them Taliban targets.⁷⁵

Appearing before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee on 1 September, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said the FCDO helped 58 Chevening scholars and their dependents, 268 journalists, 65 women’s rights activists, 9 judges and others [out of Afghanistan](#) prior to the closure of Kabul airport.⁷⁶ Nearly 15,000 British nationals, Afghan staff and others at risk were evacuated from Kabul since the beginning of Operation Pitting on 13 August 2021.⁷⁷

The FCDO has [deployed crisis response staff](#) to countries neighbouring Afghanistan to help those seeking to reach the UK. This is in support of existing teams in Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.⁷⁸

In September, the Foreign Secretary visited Qatar and Pakistan to discuss refugees from Afghanistan and prospects to reopen Kabul airport.⁷⁹ The Foreign Office Minister, Lord Ahmad, is due to visit Tajikistan.⁸⁰ On 1 September, members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee had expressed criticism of the lack of direct FCDO engagement with neighbouring states prior to the fall of Kabul.⁸¹

6.4 Refugees in other countries

The Canadians have [expanded their resettlement scheme](#) to include 20,000 vulnerable Afghans. “Vulnerable” Afghans include women leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, persecuted religious minorities, LGBT+ people and family members of previously resettled refugees.⁸²

Australia will provide 3,000 visas to Afghans as part of its existing humanitarian visa programme.⁸³

⁷⁴ BBC News, [UK scholarships for Afghan students paused](#), 15 August 2021

⁷⁵ The Guardian, [Boris Johnson intervenes over visas for Afghan students](#), 15 August 2021

⁷⁶ Parliament TV, [Foreign Affairs Select Committee](#), 1 September 2021, at 14:40:11

⁷⁷ BBC News, [Afghanistan: Boris Johnson vows to help those left behind](#), 28 August 2021

⁷⁸ FCDO Twitter, [News-15 crisis response staff are being deployed to countries neighbouring Afghanistan \[...\]](#), 1 September 2021

⁷⁹ FCDO, [Foreign Secretary travels to Qatar on security and safe passage for Afghans](#), 2 September 2021; BBC News, [Afghanistan: Dominic Raab visits Pakistan in push to help fleeing Afghans](#), 3 September 2021

⁸⁰ FCDO, [Foreign Secretary and Lord Ahmad visit Afghanistan’s neighbours](#), 2 September 2021

⁸¹ Parliament TV, [Foreign Affairs Select Committee](#), 1 September 2021

⁸² Government of Canada, [Canada expands resettlement program to bring more Afghans to safety](#), 13 August 2021

⁸³ ABC News, [How many Afghan refugees is Australian taking?](#), 18 August 2021

At the request of the US, Uganda, North Macedonia, and Albania have agreed to temporarily host 2,000, 450 and 300 refugees, respectively. Kosovo will also host Afghan refugees but have not provide details on numbers.⁸⁴

Afghanistan's northern neighbours, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, are expected to receive refugees. In July, Tajikistan said it was preparing to take in up to 100,000 refugees.⁸⁵

6.5 The need for safe corridors

Prior to the Taliban's capture of Kabul, Refugees International called for the [establishment of a humanitarian corridor](#) out of the country to allow safe passage for refugees.⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch has also urged governments to [suspend deportations to Afghanistan](#) and prioritise safe access to civilians who may be at risk from the Taliban due their past work or status.⁸⁷

UK charities have urged the Government to [set out safe and legal routes for Afghans](#) to claim asylum in the UK.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Al-Jazeera, [Where does the world stand on Afghan refugees?](#), 19 August 2021

⁸⁵ BBC News, [Afghanistan: Where will refugees go after Taliban takeover?](#), 24 August 2021

⁸⁶ Refugees International, [Statement by Refugees International](#), 14 August 2021

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, [Afghanistan At-risk civilians need evacuation, protection](#), 13 August 2021

⁸⁸ The I, [Afghanistan: Brace for refugee crisis or risk more asylum seekers dying at sea, charities tell UK Government](#), 13 August 2021

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