

HUW MERRIMAN MP
(Bexhill and Battle)



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Our Ref: HM23397

23 August 2021

Dear Dominic,

I write with regards to the distressing and severe situation which has unfolded in Afghanistan.

The Government has my full support in the efforts which you are taking to evacuate and repatriate British nationals and Afghan citizens who have helped the British effort over the last 20 years.

I also fully support the decision to provide a safe haven for those in Afghanistan whose liberty and safety, as history has sadly taught us, are most at risk from the Taliban.

It is only right that we act with pace and determination to bring not just these British passport holders back to the UK, but that we also act quickly to assist the brave Afghan men and women who worked with our nation to maintain peace and stability in their homeland.

I understand that the UK has the capacity to remove at least 1,000 people per day from Afghanistan, and indeed it has been exceeding this number. I am particularly concerned that President Biden will cease with the repatriation effort as stated on 31 August 2021. Once this has occurred, it will make the repatriation effort much more difficult and put lives at risk as a result. I would like to add my support to calls for President Biden to extend this timeline to allow for more British nationals and Afghans to be brought to the UK and to other countries who are repatriating to safety.

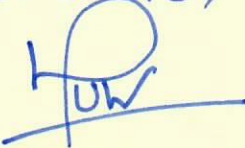
I also wish to mention the concerns raised with me by my constituent, Ms Lesley Abdela MBE, an expert on women's rights, gender consultant and journalist who has worked for women's representation in over 40 countries including Afghanistan. She rightly highlighted to me that Afghan women journalists are doubly targeted by the Taliban for their occupation and gender. I would, therefore, welcome any assurances you could provide me with on your Department's work to give refuge to female Afghan journalists. These fearless women will have a role to play in continuing to shine a light on the plight of those left behind in Afghanistan. As a nation which

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values its free press, it would be fitting that they did so from these shores.

I wish everyone in the department the very best in these difficult times and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours ever,
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Huw', written over a horizontal line.

Huw Merriman
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle