



The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

18th of August, 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as members of the Jewish community who are deeply distressed by the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and **we are urging you to take further action in response to this calamity.**

As members of the Australian Jewish community who want to be known as generous, compassionate and welcoming global citizens, we urge you to replicate the compassion that was shown to our community after the Holocaust and that our government, in which you were a Minister, demonstrated to Syrians almost six years ago.

There is an undeniable connection between Jewish people and refugees. In Egypt we were expelled and spent 40 years wandering the desert. During the Spanish Inquisition, hundreds of thousands of Jews were forcibly converted or expelled. Jews found refuge all over the world after the Holocaust: we are often strangers in unknown lands, yet we are told no less than 36 times in the Torah to love the stranger.

Our cultural memory and identity is bound up with fear, uncertainty, longing, integration and freedom.

We are no longer strangers in Australia. Now, as we witness the displacement and fear of our fellow human beings, who are unwelcome strangers in their own land, we must extend the hand of friendship and protection to them too.

We note that your government has facilitated the arrival of 1800 Afghan staff and their families under our humanitarian program, including over 400 since April. We also note that you and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have provided an assurance that no Afghan citizens who are currently in Australia on a temporary visa will be asked to return to Afghanistan at this stage. We congratulate you on taking these important steps and we urge you to continue the evacuation of all Afghan people who provided Australia with assistance. We also ask you to take the following actions:

1. **Strengthen your assurance to thousands of Afghan temporary visa holders in Australia by granting them permanent protection visas.** Research indicates that refugees living in a state of protracted uncertainty are at greater risk of developing severe mental health conditions. Their struggle can only be exacerbated watching the events unfolding in Afghanistan now. It is difficult to imagine a scenario where it could be safe for them to return in the near future.

2. **Additional aid should be sent to the region to help feed and shelter the thousands of displaced Afghans who have fled the Taliban.** When faced with a crisis of this magnitude; where hundreds of thousands of Afghan citizens are fleeing their homes and where disturbing reports of war crimes and sexual enslavement are emerging, as a participant in the war and the attempted reconstruction of Afghanistan, we have a moral obligation as a wealthy and capable country to bolster our humanitarian response accordingly.
3. **Follow the lead of our allies and offer 20,000 additional resettlement places for Afghan refugees, while urging others to join us.** Canada and the United Kingdom have both announced a commitment to create 20,000 additional places for Afghan refugees.

In Elie Wiesel's acceptance speech for the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize, he said:

"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the centre of the universe."

Sincerely,

Stand Up: Jewish Commitment to a Better World on behalf of *[number of petition signers]* supporters