

ACTION FOR THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN: WHAT CANADIANS CAN DO NOW

One year after Kabul fell to the Taliban, the people of Afghanistan continue to face rampant violence as the Taliban enforces its rule and fails to protect women, children and men from ongoing conflict, economic collapse and famine.¹

Women are restricted from public life and employment and women and girls are denied education beyond the earliest years, a deprivation for themselves and for the people their learning could serve. Women and girls and members of ethnic, religious and LGBTQI+ minorities face threats to personal safety, dignity and livelihood. Those who are vulnerable or at high risk and seek refuge abroad face danger and formidable obstacles in reaching safe shores.

Canadians and the Government of Canada have acted in support of Afghans within Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries, and have welcomed vulnerable and at-risk Afghans through the past year.

What can we do now?

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR AFGHANS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

On 31 March 2022, the Government of Canada announced an increase of \$50M in life-saving humanitarian assistance to Afghans within Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries, bringing the amount allocated in 2022 to \$143M. We welcome this assistance and its distribution through UN and other international partners with operational capacity. We also note that from 2001 to 2021 Canada provided \$3.9B in total aid to Afghanistan², showing that Canada can expand humanitarian aid further.

Canadians are supporting Canadian humanitarian organizations that have respected records of work in Afghanistan. But at present the language of Canadian anti-terrorism legislation, which applies to the Taliban, restricts the ability of these organizations to function operationally within Afghanistan, as well as hindering the work of international humanitarian organizations.

The current mobilization of aid for Afghanistan is focused primarily on food and other essential immediate life-saving measures, a priority we strongly support. We are also concerned that the present closing of secondary education for girls in Afghanistan risks imposing a loss of education which, if missed in youth, could be lost for their life-times.

- **We urge the Government of Canada to make the necessary legal adjustments to allow trusted humanitarian organizations to deliver aid to the people of Afghanistan.**
- **We encourage the Government of Canada to create a matching program for donations to humanitarian aid for Afghans in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries.**
- **We urge the Government of Canada to take the further step of advocating for and supporting girls' secondary education in Afghanistan.**

THE SPECIAL HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM FOR RESETTLING VULNERABLE AFGHANS

Canadians throughout the country and the Government of Canada have actively welcomed vulnerable and at-risk Afghans through the past year and 9,800 have arrived as of 27 July 2022 through the special humanitarian program.³ We propose that this program be urgently expanded and expedited.

There are steps that can be taken to provide safety for the applicants, all of whom are vulnerable or at-risk persons. The locations in which they are living and through which they may have to pass in order to reach Canada are dangerous. There are also identified obstacles that could very helpfully be addressed to expedite and expand the application process.

- **We call for an extension of the present eligibility guidelines to include women and girl activists and targets of gender-based violence.**
- **We urge that study permits be granted to Afghans without assessing intention to return to their country of origin.**
- **We urge that the extended family reunification stream be expanded.**
- **We urge that the caps on Sponsorship Agreement Holders for Afghan refugees be removed.**
- **We urge that applicants be allowed to apply while still within Afghanistan, and not only from third countries. We further call for Canada to provide single journey travel documents for eligible applicants and that Canada work to ensure safe passage for them, in collaboration with neighbouring countries.**
- **We urge that the requirement for UNHCR refugee status determination be waived and that biometric documentation be waived or facilitated through biometric collection in third countries.**

NEXT STEPS

We encourage you to write to your Member of Parliament⁴, to visit the WILPF Canada website for updates and resources, and contact your local organizations working for the people of Afghanistan and welcoming Afghans to Canada.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Afghanistan Analysts Network

<https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/>

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

<https://unama.unmissions.org/>

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Afghanistan

<https://www.wilpf.org/focus-countries/afghanistan/>

¹ <https://unama.unmissions.org/human-rights-monitoring-and-reporting>

² <https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/afghanistan/reasons.aspx?lang=eng#a3>

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/afghanistan/special-measures/about-humanitarian-program.html>

⁴ Contact information is available at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/search>

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Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Canada

Email: wilpf.canada@gmail.com

Web site: wilpfcanada.ca

  [@wilpfcanada](https://www.instagram.com/wilpfcanada)

