

Joint Press Release – Tuesday 5 October 2021

25 humanitarian organisations and NGOs urge EU leaders to “provide a lifeline” to Afghan refugees at the Forum on providing protection for Afghans at risk

25 humanitarian organisations and NGOs are jointly urging EU leaders to expand safe and legal pathways from Afghanistan and the region. The call reiterates recommendations outlined in a [joint statement](#) released on 16 September that called on the EU and its Member States to live up to their commitments to refugee protection and humanitarian leadership, and share responsibilities with countries neighbouring Afghanistan. The upcoming Forum on providing protection for Afghans at risk, planned for Thursday 7 October, provides a key chance for them to do so.

The organisations are pressing leaders to seize this opportunity to:

1. **Make ambitious pledges** to resettle at least 36,000 refugees identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement across different regions in 2022. This must be in addition to launching a dedicated scheme to resettle Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries, including those in a protracted situation.

Resettlement can provide a durable solution for refugees in need, while strengthening the capacity of states in the region to continue offering protection.

2. **In addition to resettlement, use all available legal pathways to immediately bring people in need of protection to safety** from Afghanistan and the region, with predictable and secure protection upon arrival. This includes, for instance, an expanded and flexible use of family reunification, humanitarian visas, community sponsorships, as well as higher education scholarship and work visas.

Such pathways will provide a lifeline to people with urgent protection needs, and prevent them from making dangerous border crossings in search of safety. It remains crucial, however, that evacuations and humanitarian admissions remain additional to resettlement and are not counted towards annual resettlement quotas.

3. **Uphold access to a fair and full asylum process for Afghan and other nationals in Europe, while supporting their inclusion, integration and participation in society.** These pathways to safety cannot replace the right for Afghan and other asylum seekers to seek protection in Europe, no matter how they reach the territory. Among others, all rejected asylum cases of Afghan nationals must be urgently reviewed, deportations to the region must be formally suspended in line with the principle of non-refoulement, and any pushbacks or denial of access to asylum or reception for asylum seekers in Europe must be promptly investigated and sanctioned by EU institutions.

In recent weeks, the European Commission, European Parliament, regions and cities, and civil society have led the way in showing solidarity with Afghan refugees and calling for significant and urgent pathways to safety. European leaders must now follow suit.

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