



Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/0507739/23

2 February 2023

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your email of 6 January to the Prime Minister about the Afghanistan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). Your email has been forwarded to the Home Office and I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration.

I share your concerns for those who remain in Afghanistan and would like to assure you that we continue to examine our response to this crisis. The Government maintains its commitment to those eligible under our Afghan schemes.

I would like to address the claim that the Government has broken promises.

The UK has made an ambitious and generous commitment to help relocate some of the most at-risk people in Afghanistan and, so far, we have brought almost 23,000 vulnerable people to safety. This includes the over 15,000 people successfully evacuated from Afghanistan during Operation Pitting, which was the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War.

In response to the claims in your email, we do have legal routes for Afghan nationals at risk. The Government maintains its commitment to those at-risk in Afghanistan and the broader region to those eligible through the ACRS and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). We have brought around 6,000 people to the UK under the schemes in the period since the end of Operation Pitting.

Turning to your specific concerns over targets, more than 6,300 eligible people have already been granted leave through ACRS Pathway 1. We have been clear from the outset that this will include some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme. We have also seen individuals beginning to arrive in the UK through Pathway 2, where we are continuing to work with the UNHCR who are referring vulnerable refugees who have fled Afghanistan for resettlement in the UK. The Government continues to work, including with likeminded partners and countries neighbouring Afghanistan, on resettlement issues and to support safe passage for eligible Afghans.

Addressing your concerns over Pathway 3 of the ACRS, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is acting as the referral partner for the three cohorts which Ministers agreed should be prioritised in the first year of Pathway 3. In the first year, we will offer up to 1,500 places to eligible at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni, including their eligible family members. The FCDO received over

11,400 Expressions of Interest (EOI) under ACRS Pathway 3 and have a dedicated case management team working through these cases. Staffing of this effort is under constant review. The FCDO is notifying people of the outcome of the EOI eligibility assessments, sending names to the Home Office for initial security checks and providing advice on next steps. To date, we have informed over 200 people that they are eligible in principle. Including their family members, this accounts for over 900 of the 1500 available places in the first year under Pathway 3.

We are pleased that, for many, initial security checks have now been completed, which allows us to notify them of the outcome and provide advice on next steps, including on travel to a Visa Application Centre (VAC). Once in a third country, those eligible are offered accommodation and support – paid for by the UK Government through our development budget – whilst they continue to be processed for resettlement and undergo biometric visa checks. A number have been referred to the International Organisation for Migration, who provide the majority of third country support including medical care, food and accommodation.

We are continuing to work at pace to allocate the remaining places under Pathway 3 and will notify those who expressed interest of the outcome as quickly as we can.

Those who are resettled under the ACRS will be granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK and will be able to apply for British citizenship after five years in the UK. They will also have the right to work, access to education and healthcare and be able to apply for public funds.

We recognise that there are many vulnerable people who remain in Afghanistan and the region, including those who submitted EOIs under Pathway 3. We are working hard to progress cases and to deliver on our commitment to resettle up to 1,500 people in the first phase of Pathway 3. We are doing everything we can to bring the first Pathway 3 arrivals here as soon as possible, and we look forward to welcoming them to the UK.

The pace of resettlement will depend on a variety of factors, including local authorities' capacity to support them. It is right that we are able to provide people with suitable accommodation and support upon arrival, and we are working closely with local authorities and other partners to make sure this happens.

I trust that this letter has addressed your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration