



OPEN LETTER

April 7, 2026

The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

House of Commons

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Anita Anand, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Foreign Affairs

House of Commons

Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Subject: Urgent Action Required to Prevent the Deportation of Afghans with Approved or In-Process Canadian Immigration Applications

Dear Ministers Diab and Anand,

We write to you as a coalition of organizations across Canada who are deeply concerned about reports that Afghan nationals for whom protection is being sought through Canadian immigration pathways are facing detention and forced deportation to Afghanistan from Pakistan. This includes those with approved or in-process Canadian immigration applications, with an assigned application number (G number in the case of Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) applications, F number in the case of Family Class sponsorship). Some have already been deported while awaiting finalization of their Canadian applications. We are urging swift action to prevent this dangerous and avoidable outcome.

We acknowledge and sincerely appreciate Canada's leadership since August 2021 in providing a safe haven in Canada for more than 55,000 Afghans at risk. That commitment has reaffirmed Canada's longstanding humanitarian tradition. However, the current situation is leaving at grave risk individuals whom Canada has already recognized, in principle, as deserving of protection.



Since October 2023, Pakistan has implemented a phased forced deportation plan targeting Afghan nationals, and millions of Afghans in Pakistan are at risk of deportation.¹ These mass expulsions raise serious concerns under international law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits returning individuals to a country where they face persecution or serious harm. Afghanistan today remains in the grip of a severe humanitarian and human rights crisis. Women and girls are systematically denied education and employment, access to healthcare is severely restricted, poverty is widespread, and more than half the population relies on humanitarian assistance. Large-scale returns risk catastrophic consequences, especially for women, children, ethnic and religious minorities, former government employees, human rights defenders, and others at heightened risk under Taliban rule.²

While we recognize that millions of Afghans in Pakistan are facing uncertainty, displacement, and profound hardship, the focus of this letter is necessarily more specific. We respectfully submit that the Government of Canada bears a distinct and heightened responsibility toward those Afghans who already have approved or in process Canadian immigration applications or are at the initial stages of sponsorship. Some of these individuals have complied with all required procedures, and in many cases have completed biometrics, medical examinations, and interviews.

We have been made aware of cases involving individuals detained despite holding documentation confirming that their Canadian applications are in process, and individuals deported to Afghanistan notwithstanding their active Canadian files. Details of some of these cases are included in the appendix to this letter. Given your roles as Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, we respectfully urge you to:³

Introduce a special initiative to ensure that PSR applications for Afghan nationals in Pakistan are processed within one year, consistent with the approach taken under Canada's Operation Afghan Safety. Urgent cases involving individuals at imminent risk should be identified and expedited on a priority basis. To enable this accelerated processing without disadvantaging other refugee populations, additional immigration levels should be allocated as needed to support this targeted initiative.

- Establish IRCC protocols requiring active communication with sponsors in urgent protection situations and greater procedural flexibility, including re-opening applications due to non-attendance where individuals are hiding, detained, or otherwise unable to safely appear, and continuing to process

¹ Further background information about the forced deportation of Afghans from Pakistan, as well as other countries, is set out in the attached appendix to this letter.

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (8 October 2025): <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/432>

³ Additional recommendations are included in the attached appendix to this letter.



Afghan Women's Organization Refugee & Immigrants Services

www.afghanwomen.org

(and prioritize) cases involving Afghan nationals who have been deported but may re-enter Pakistan. Issue Temporary Resident Permits for those at imminent risk.

- Introduce remote and flexible processing options, including enabling video interviews where in-person attendance is unsafe or impractical, and allowing flexibility in scheduling biometrics, medicals and interviews for applicants facing movement restrictions.
- Deploy officers, or coordinate with trusted partners on the ground, to attend detention facilities to identify pending individuals with Canadian applications and intervene by advocating for temporary legal status and safe-stay arrangements (e.g., access to temporary housing and protection from detention and deportation).

We respectfully call upon you to use the full weight of your offices to prevent further deportations of Afghans with active Canadian immigration applications and to ensure that Canada's humanitarian commitments are upheld in both principle and practice.

Given the imminent risk of detention and deportation faced by those affected, we would greatly appreciate an urgent response.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your offices to share further documentation, case examples, and discuss practical solutions to this urgent matter. Your office may contact Adeena Niazi, Executive Director, Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services (aniasi@afghanwomen.org; 416-588-3585 ext. 222, Mobile 416-899-9770), who is coordinating meetings on behalf of the signatories, to arrange a discussion at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Afghan Women's Organization Refugee and Immigrant Services (AWO)

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Afghan Association of Hamilton

Afghan Canadian Islamic Community

Afghan Literary And Cultural Association

Afghan Network for Social Service

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Afghan Women's Centre of Montreal

Amnistie internationale Canada francophone

Anglican Diocese of Calgary Refugee Support Group - Sponsorship Agreement Holder

Anglican Diocese of Huron

Anglican Diocese of Toronto

Association for New Canadians SAH

AURA - Anglican United Refugee Alliance

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Outlook, Saskatchewan

Bromley Road Baptist Church, Ottawa

Canada Humanitarian Initiatives

Canadian Afghanistan Business Council

Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada

Canadian Council for Refugees/ Conseil canadien pour les refugies

Canadian Council of Muslim Women

Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Service (CHHS)

Canadian Women's Empowerment Association

City Church of Winnipeg SAH

City of Refuge

Community Matters Toronto

Cross Cultural Settlement Service of BC

Danby SAH

Diocese of Hamilton

Diocese of Ontario Refugee Support



Afghan Women's Organization Refugee & Immigrants Services

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Diocese of Saint John

Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada

Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church - Refugee Support Team, Surrey, BC

Fredericton Christian Reformed Church

Fugug Heritage and Relief Association Corporation

Gateway Church, Caledonia ON (The Alliance Canada)

HABESHA Legal Professionals Association of Canada

Hebron Christian Reformed Church, Whitby, Ontario

Holy Rosary Parish, Guelph

12CRC (Interculturel Iranien Canadian Resource Centre)

Ibrahim Jame Mosque, Hamilton

Karwaan e shear

Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto

MCC Toronto

McDougall United Church, Calgary AB

Mennonite Central Committee Canada/Comite Central Mennonite

Muslim Association of Hamilton

New Life Community Church, Burnaby

New Westminster Christian Reformed Church

Paiwastoon Community Organization

Remember Ministries

Right to Learn Afghanistan

Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation-Halifax



Afghan Women's Organization Refugee & Immigrants Services

www.afghanwomen.org

Scarboro United Church, Calgary

Service jesuite des refugies Canada

Settlement in Antigonish For Families From Everywhere (SAFE)

St Stephen's on-the-Hill United Church, Mississauga

St. George's Church, Hamilton, Ontario

Synod of the Diocese of Kootenay

Tenth Church, Vancouver

Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax SAH

Vancouver Unitarians Society Sponsorship Agreement Holder

Women and Children Research and Advocacy Network (WCRAN)

World Renew



APPENDIX

Deportation Plans Targeting Afghan Nationals

Since October 2023, Pakistan has implemented a phased forced deportation plan targeting Afghan nationals who are undocumented, those holding Afghan Citizen Cards, and those with Proof of Registration cards issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Millions of Afghans in Pakistan are at risk of deportation. According to the UNHCR Afghanistan 2025 Cross-Border Monitoring Report, Afghanistan experienced one of the largest return movements in recent decades in 2025 alone, with approximately 2.9 million Afghans returning or being deported from Iran and Pakistan. When combined with returns from Tajikistan, India, Azerbaijan, and Indonesia, the total number of Afghans who have returned since September 15, 2023, exceeds 5 million people, representing roughly 10 percent of Afghanistan's estimated population. The UNHCR reports that these returns have been driven primarily by restrictive policies and worsening conditions in host countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran, and many occurred under abrupt and adverse circumstances.

Case Examples

We have been made aware of cases involving individuals detained despite holding documentation confirming that their Canadian applications are in process, and individuals deported to Afghanistan notwithstanding their active Canadian files. Below are a few examples to highlight the humanitarian dimensions of these deportations.

A family of four (parents and two adult children) has been separated by successive detention and deportation actions in Pakistan. After the adult son was detained and forcibly returned to Afghanistan, the adult daughter was similarly detained. In an attempt to protect her from being deported alone, the father surrendered himself to authorities; both he and his daughter were subsequently deported and are now in Afghanistan, attempting to find a way back to Pakistan. The mother remains in Pakistan under constant threat of raids, detention, and removal due to expired visas and precarious housing. The mother suffered severe psychological trauma culminating in a heart attack requiring emergency surgery, while the sponsoring family in Canada is under considerable stress since they must cover the cost of unexpected expenses (including visa fees, accommodation costs, cost of flights). These costs have placed the sponsors in substantial debt, now amounting to several thousand dollars.

- **A woman who is four months pregnant has already been deported.** Her sponsor's family reports that Pakistani authorities have indicated that physicians will not treat Afghan nationals, or, if they do, they must report them to authorities, raising serious concerns about access to essential prenatal care.



- **A couple expecting a child imminently has not yet been deported, but the wife is in her ninth month of pregnancy, and the husband has informed their Canadian sponsors that he remains awake at night fearing sudden removal.** This and the previous case both reflect the acute vulnerability of pregnant women facing uncertainty, lack of medical access, and the constant threat of deportation.
- **A single mother and her four children (three daughters and one son) living in hiding in Pakistan after their visas expired with no available renewal pathway.** The family faces repeated harassment and threats of detention by authorities, while financial support from relatives in Canada has been obstructed due to their irregular status. They endure severe food insecurity and are unable to access even basic services, including medical care. The risks upon deportation are acute: the mother previously escaped a Taliban raid on her workplace and would face likely detention or punishment if returned, while her daughters are at serious risk of gender-based persecution, including denial of education, forced confinement, and loss of autonomy. One daughter, now 18, has already had her education curtailed at Grade 7. The family has been warned of imminent enforcement action, leaving them in a state of constant fear and psychological distress.
- **A family of seven (two parents and five young children under the age of 15) whose sponsorship application has been pending since March 2025 despite repeated requests for urgent processing on medical grounds.** The mother suffers from a severe and chronic bleeding condition that has significantly worsened over the past year and now requires urgent surgical intervention. However, due to the family's lack of valid visas in Pakistan, she is unable to access hospital care or be registered for surgery. Confined to a small apartment to avoid detection, the family lives in constant fear of arrest while witnessing the mother's deteriorating health. The father must care for the children alone as she grows increasingly weak and incapacitated. Despite multiple medical reports submitted to the visa office, including confirmation of the need for urgent surgery, their request for expedited processing was denied.
- **An Afghan applicant was arrested by Pakistani police while on his way to attend a scheduled biometric appointment in February 2026.** He was detained for 17 days, during which his phone was confiscated, preventing communication with Canadian officials. Although an IRCC officer reportedly attempted to contact him, he was unreachable due to his detention. He was subsequently deported to Afghanistan, where he was imprisoned.

We have also received reports of Afghan refugees in Pakistan presenting official letters from IRCC confirming that their applications were in process, only to be told by local authorities that the letters were insufficient because they did not contain a specific departure timeline. In some instances, individuals have been detained despite pending procedural steps, further compounding confusion and vulnerability.



Enforcement measures against Afghans in Pakistan

These cases are unfolding against a broader context of escalating enforcement measures in Pakistan. Afghans report that visa extensions are no longer being granted, rendering them undocumented and unable to maintain lawful residence. They face constant risk of deportation, home-to-home searches, and eviction notices, with landlords refusing to rent to Afghans. Many are denied access to education, healthcare, employment, banking services, and SIM cards due to their lack of legal status. Severe economic suppression and the inability to legally work leave families destitute. There are also credible fears that deportees will be targeted by the Taliban or barred from future movement once returned.

Impact of Deportation Measures

The cumulative impact of these measures has created an atmosphere of acute distress, particularly for women and children. Co-sponsors in Canada report extreme psychological strain and financial hardship as they attempt to support family members who have been deported or forced into hiding. The prolonged uncertainty and mounting costs are beginning to affect family stability and mental health within Canadian communities as well. At the same time, individuals abroad are experiencing significant stress due to prolonged delays, uncertainty, and the constant threat of detention or deportation. Addressing these situations in a timely manner would mitigate these pressures, support family reunification, and facilitate smoother settlement and integration upon arrival in Canada, reinforcing the importance of prompt and effective protective measures now.

Recommendations

Canada's credibility as a protection-oriented state depends not only on the number of people it has already resettled, but also on its willingness to safeguard those who remain in danger while awaiting promised protection. Failure to act risks not only irreparable harm to vulnerable families but also erosion of trust in Canada's private sponsorship and family reunification programs.

We recognize the complexity of diplomatic negotiations and regional dynamics.

Nevertheless, the scale and urgency of this crisis demand decisive leadership. The international community, including Canada, bears a measure of responsibility for ensuring that Afghans are not abandoned to persecution, destitution, and instability.

We respectfully urge you to:

- Engage urgently with the government of Pakistan to seek formal assurances that Afghans with active Canadian immigration applications will be protected from detention and deportation while their cases are processed.
- Introduce a special initiative to ensure that PSR applications for Afghan nationals in Pakistan are processed within one year, consistent with the approach taken under Canada's Operation Afghan



Safety. Urgent cases involving individuals at imminent risk should be identified and expedited on a priority basis. To enable this accelerated processing without disadvantaging other refugee populations, additional immigration levels should be allocated as needed to support this targeted initiative.

- Establish IRCC protocols requiring active communication with sponsors in urgent protection situations and greater procedural flexibility, including re-opening applications due to non-attendance where individuals are hiding, detained, or otherwise unable to safely appear, and continuing to process (and prioritize) cases involving Afghan nationals who have been deported but may re-enter Pakistan. Issue Temporary Resident Permits for those at imminent risk.
- Introduce remote and flexible processing options, including enabling video interviews where in-person attendance is unsafe or impractical, and allowing flexibility in scheduling biometrics, medicals and interviews for applicants facing movement restrictions.
- Deploy officers, or coordinate with trusted partners on the ground, to attend detention facilities to identify pending individuals with Canadian applications and intervene by advocating for temporary legal status, and safe-stay arrangements (e.g., access to temporary housing and protection from detention and deportation).
- Create a 'high-risk' triage category that identifies and prioritizes applicants facing acute vulnerability, including pregnant women and others at imminent risk of harm.
- Ensure meaningful communication with all private sponsors. Lack of meaningful communication undermines both protection outcomes and the integrity of the private sponsorship system.