

August 19, 2021

The Honourable Marco Mendicino
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Dear Minister Mendicino,

We are writing on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with some 6500 members across Canada working to improve the lives of women in Canada and abroad. For the past ten years *University Women Helping Afghan Women* of CFUW-Ottawa has been monitoring the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and financially supporting post-secondary education for young Afghan women at Gawharshad University in Kabul. Other members across the country have supported this work.

As the human rights situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate and as the Afghan people experience turmoil and uncertainty, we are pleased that the Government of Canada has broadened its commitment to action to include extending protection and refugee initiatives to at risk groups. Although these groups may not have provided direct support to the Canadian mission, they have been on the front lines of promoting Canadian values such as Education as a Human Right and supporting Women Leaders and Women Human Rights Defenders.

We are deeply concerned for the safety of vulnerable Afghans who may face retaliation and violence perpetrated by the Taliban and its allies, particularly against women and girls. CFUW urges the Government of Canada to take action and protect Afghans seeking safety and refuge who are currently trapped inside the country. These individuals and families will not be able to leave the country to apply for protection as refugees. We ask the Government of Canada to immediately initiate a special program that will address the needs of the identified vulnerable groups announced by the Prime Minister on August 13 who are still in Afghanistan and who may not have passports or visas.

We look forward to additional details about the implementation of the special immigration program which promises to accept and resettle 20,000 vulnerable Afghans, focusing on women leaders, human rights defenders, persecuted religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, journalists, and family members of previously resettled interpreters.

Our members across Canada will continue to monitor the Government of Canada's response and are ready to welcome these newcomers to Canada.



Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Wilkinson,

National President
Canadian Federation of University
Women

Joy Hurst

Vice President, International Relations
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Women