

Divided in Leaving Together:

The resettlement of Afghan locally employed staff



A comparison
between Australia,
Canada, Denmark,
France, Germany,
the Netherlands,
the UK and the US

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Executive summary

This report presents and analyses the national resettlement policies aimed at former Afghan staff, who are under threat due to their employment with Western armies, organisations and Governments. It compares 8 countries - Australia (AUS), Canada (CA), Denmark (DK), France (FR), Germany (GER), the Netherlands (NL), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) - which were part of the multinational NATO-led military mission in Afghanistan and employed local staff in the past two decades (2001-2021).

It provides a comparative analysis of resettlement policies and support in three phases:

Phase 1: Resettlement Schemes Prior to the Taliban Take-over in August 2021

Phase 2: The Evacuation Phase, 14-29 August 2021

Phase 3: Ongoing Resettlement Policies and Support post-August 2021

Despite the multinational nature of the mission, an overarching international resettlement scheme for Afghan local staff was never developed. Instead, the responsibility for protection and resettlement of local staff was left to each individual nation-state. Counter to NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's claim that "[*we are united in leaving together*](#)", even the planned withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 did not result in comprehensive international coordination regarding the protection of Afghan local staff.

Overall, this lack of harmonisation resulted in **unequal treatment of local Afghan staff, who faced a similar degree of risk and worked in the same capacity**, albeit for different nations. It also **constitutes a missed opportunity** in terms of learning from best practices concerning the protection of former staff.

The comparative analysis offered in this report uncovers:

- a) **Collective Failures** in the protection and support for Afghan local staff, including Governments' reactive rather than proactive approach to protection through resettlement.
- b) **Country-Specific Shortcomings**, such as arbitrarily narrow eligibility criteria for resettlement, limited travel support from Afghanistan, and precarious, temporary legal status for local staff.
- c) **Country-Specific Best Practices**, including right to appeal for rejected applicants, permanent residency status for resettled local staff, and resettlement pathways for extended family members.

The recommendations below address the identified **collective failures**. They also draw on the **country-specific best practices** - often the outcome of sustained civil society advocacy and media pressure - which demonstrate the potential for positive change. This provides an opportunity to inspire other Governments to improve their policies and practices to benefit their former Afghan local staff, in partnership with civil society. With many former staff still left behind in Afghanistan and with future conflicts on the horizon, the need to learn from past failures and aspire to future change cannot be more pertinent.

Recommendations

Relocation from Afghanistan for former staff left behind

- **Proper resourcing of resettlement assessment teams**, both in terms of capacity and expertise, to ensure timely and fair processing of resettlement applications.
- **Remove arbitrary eligibility criteria** that bear no relation to the actual threat and ground reality in Afghanistan.
- **Offer the right to appeal to applicants against negative decisions on resettlement applications** with transparent procedures.
- **Extend safe passage route options** by negotiating with all neighbouring countries and coordinating with other NATO countries, especially for Afghan former local staff left behind without adequate access to identity and/or travel documents.
- **Assist former staff with reaching third countries safely**, including issuing financial support to obtain passports and visas.
- **Provide support for Afghan local staff stuck in or in transit through third countries**, including accommodation on location, expedited visa processing and coverage of flight fares, especially for those who are undocumented or with precarious legal status in e.g. Pakistan and Iran.
- **Coordinate 'burden-sharing' between states, potentially through quotas**, to ensure full coverage of staff, including those who worked under (rotational) multi-national command, who risk falling between the cracks. This also prevents applicants receiving multiple resettlement offers from several countries.

Reception of former Afghan locally employed civilians in the host country

- **Grant permanent – rather than temporary – legal status on arrival** in the host country to allow Afghan locally employed civilians to rebuild their lives.
- **Offer dignified reception conditions with bespoke access to education, employment and health support** (including trauma-related, where necessary).
- **Provide relocation pathways for extended family members** (beyond spouse and children) and family members of deceased principal applicants, in particular those at risk through association. These pathways need to be attuned to culturally-specific definitions of 'family' and 'dependants'.
- **Award symbolic recognition through honours and commemoration ceremonies** of local interpreters' work, including operational and general service medals.
- **Collaborate closely with civil society organisations and community leaders** with relevant expertise and networks to facilitate the process from relocation to integration.

Future engagements

- **Learn Lessons from Governmental Inquiries, Civil Society Reports and Media Reconstructions** on the (failed) protection and resettlement of Afghan local staff to fulfil the duty of care for future local staff.
- **Register the details of local civilian employees in a permanent, secure database** during any future military and stabilisation engagements.
- **Engage in multinational pre-planning, coordination and harmonisation** of future protection and/or resettlement schemes to ensure that local civilian staff working in the same capacity, albeit employed by different nations, and facing the same degree of risk, receive equal treatment in their protection.
- **Communicate the details of the protection measures and resettlement schemes in a clear and timely manner** (including in the local language(s)) to potentially eligible locally employed civilians.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a holistic understanding of the resettlement policies of 8 countries and to assist policy makers, journalists and civil society actors with comparing, monitoring, analysing and influencing the level of protection and support offered to former Afghan locally employed staff. This includes criteria for resettlement as well as resettlement support and residency rights from 2009 (when these policies were gradually implemented) up to the present.¹

This comparative report charts the differences between national resettlement programmes with the aim to a) highlight the unequal treatment of local Afghan staff with comparable employment records and similar exposure to threats and b) inspire learning from best practices in other countries. When NATO announced the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan in April 2021, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg claimed that “[we are united in leaving together](#)”. This aspiration for unity was absent, however, when it came to the protection and resettlement of Afghan local staff that had supported the NATO mission. NATO indeed [explicitly refused coordination and leadership](#) on the protection of its local staff both during the mission and after the withdrawal announcement.

Despite [early evidence](#) that former locally employed staff were under threat, including testimonies by locally employed civilians themselves, national protection programmes for local Afghan staff were only put in place slowly. Various reports (for example see: [UNHCR, 2018](#), [European Asylum Support Office, 2019](#), and more recently [Human Rights Watch, 2022](#), [Amnesty International, 2021/2022](#)), have identified locally employed staff among those with potential risk profiles, because they face targeted threats from insurgents based on their association with Western troops, in addition to the indiscriminate violence endemic to conflict zones. Historical and recent examples of threats against (former) local staff, for instance in [Vietnam](#) and [Iraq](#), add weight to the need to develop a pro-active and harmonised approach to their protection.

Prior to the evacuation of Kabul in August 2021, delays in resettling former local staff resulted in some local employees being [injured or killed by the Taliban](#). Also, since the end of the evacuation, [several former locally employed civilians](#) who were left behind in Afghanistan, [have reportedly died in targeted attacks](#). During the evacuation operation, more than [123,000](#) civilians were evacuated by the coalition partners after the Taliban took control of Kabul on 14 August. However, this figure includes nationals from Western countries and the exact proportion of Afghan nationals and former employees remains unclear. Following the end of the evacuation in August 2021, some [countries have initiated alternative resettlement pathways for Afghans left behind](#), though these have been beset with challenges. [Civil society actors](#), including many volunteers, have stepped into the gaps left by Governments and have played a key role in the evacuation and resettlement of former Afghan staff and continue to engage actively in advocacy and support.

The ‘Main Findings’ section below offers a comparative overview of the 8 focus countries’ resettlement policies and practices. This section is followed by a country-by-country detailed account of the policies and practices of each country, in each of the three respective phases.

¹ The data provided per country may differ depending on the availability of information. This is due to the limited publicly available information in most of the countries covered.

Methodology and Structure

This report is based on research conducted from January 2017 to May 2022. Media sources, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) reports and government documents have been reviewed and analysed. Information has also been verified with experts, advocates and resettled Afghan former local staff in the countries concerned; Australia (AUS), Canada (CA), Denmark (DK), France (FR), Germany (GER), the Netherlands (NL), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).²

The report is structured into three sections reflecting three phases:

- Section 1 provides an overview of the resettlement schemes that existed *prior to* the Taliban take-over in August 2021, starting as early as 2009 in some cases.
- Section 2 focuses on the policies and practices *during* the evacuation of Kabul in the second half of August 2021 (14-29 August).
- Section 3 covers subsequent resettlement policies as implemented by the 8 countries *after* the large-scale evacuation ended in August 2021. It also provides information about resettlement procedures and support on arrival.³

Each section highlights **Best Practices** as well as **Shortcomings** characterising the various resettlement schemes.

² We would like to thank all those who provided information for this report. More details can be found in the Acknowledgments.

³ Please note that some of the policies and practices referred to may have been updated or changed since the publication of this report.

Key Findings – A Comparative Analysis

Phase 1: Resettlement Schemes Prior to the Taliban Take-over in August 2021

The table below offers a comparative overview of countries' policies and practices in Phase 1. The 'Shortcomings' column refers to policy failures and the 'Best Practices' column lists countries with policies and practices, which set a (comparatively more) positive example.

Phase 1: Resettlement and protection prior to August 2021	Countries - Shortcomings	Countries - Best Practices
Late and uneven introduction of resettlement routes	FR 2014, NL 2014, DK 2013, GER 2013, AUS 2012, UK 2010 ⁴	CA 2009, US ⁵ 2009
Exclusion of non-interpreters from protection resettlement	CA ⁶ , DK, FR, NL, UK ⁷	GER, US, AUS
Exclusion of indirectly employed and subcontracted staff from resettlement	AUS, CA, FR, GER, NL, UK ⁸	US, DK
Limited information on application procedure available for applicants	CA, GER, NL	UK, US
Protection time-limited: temporary residency status	CA, DK, FR, GER, NL	AUS, UK ⁹ , US
High rejection rate due to strict 'good character' requirement	DK, FR, US	AUS, CA, GER, UK
Early expedited evacuations after April 2021 withdrawal announcement	AUS, CA, DK, GER	FR, NL, UK, US ¹⁰

⁴ Resettlement and protection schemes differ. For instance, the UK's first programme, the Intimidation scheme, used international relocation only as a last resort. Instead, it supported interpreters with internal relocation within Afghanistan.

⁵ While the US SIV programme allowed non-interpreters to apply, in practice [the prioritization scheme](#) that was required in the spending bill prioritized interpreters, effectively other applicants else to the bottom of the queue. For several years, the statute included only translators, interpreters, and those in a "sensitive and trusted" position. The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) continued to see [Afghan SIV applicants denied solely on the basis](#) that they did not work in a "sensitive and trusted" capacity, even after that requirement was repealed.

⁶ From the 23rd of July 2021, [cooks, drivers, cleaners, construction workers, security guards and locally engaged staff](#) employed at the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan became eligible for resettlement under new special immigration measures.

⁷ From April 2021 non-interpreters became eligible for resettlement in the UK.

⁸ Policy changed in late July 2021 and [subcontracted staff can now be resettled](#) in the UK.

⁹ Changed in 2019.

¹⁰ These four countries carried out earlier small-scale evacuations.

Late Introduction of Resettlement Programmes

Even though from 2001 onwards various countries had employed local staff during their operations in Afghanistan, the earliest protection and resettlement policies were only implemented in 2009 by the [US](#)¹¹ and [Canada](#), with the [UK](#) introducing a limited programme one year later, which mainly focussed on in-country protection. [Australia](#) implemented a programme in December 2012, followed by [Germany](#) and [Denmark](#) in 2013. In 2014 [France](#) launched a resettlement programme, while the [Netherlands](#) opened a programme for people who cooperated with the Dutch military in Afghanistan in the same year. However, there was often a gap between official policy and practice, and Afghan former interpreters who were forced to flee and apply for asylum continued [to receive rejections on their asylum claims](#), leading to risk of deportation.¹²

Because of the late introduction of resettlement schemes, from 11 August 2003 – when the [International Security Assistance Force](#) (ISAF) started its operations in Afghanistan – and at least until 2009, locally employed staff who were exposed to [danger of persecution and at risk of harm](#), mainly by the Taliban, could only use (dangerous and irregular) asylum routes to flee, “[[forcing former local staff seeking refuge to risk their lives in order to save their lives](#)”]. Moreover, while most resettlement schemes covered earlier periods of employment when they were finally introduced, this was not the case for Canada. To be eligible for resettlement interpreters must have worked for Canada between October 2007 and July 2011, excluding those who had worked for Canadian troops when they [began their work in Afghanistan in 2006](#).

Exclusion of other Locally Employed Civilians and Subcontracted Staff

Most countries (with the exception of the US) stipulated that interpreters must be directly contracted to be eligible for resettlement. In fact, subcontracting of local staff, for instance by Denmark, was [a deliberate effort](#) to abdicate responsibility, despite there being no evidence that the threat faced by subcontracted interpreters was different to that of directly employed interpreters.

While the [Australian](#), [German](#) and US programmes were open to former staff in different roles, the other schemes (UK; CA; DK; FR; NL) were initially open only to translators and interpreters, excluding other local staff at risk, such as security guards. This was despite their exposed role and the fact that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) had highlighted (e.g. in [2015](#) and [2018](#)) that security guards, cooks and others who have been employed by foreign governments are priority targets for insurgent groups.

In December 2012 Australia announced a [programme](#) offering humanitarian visas to Afghans, in a range of roles including interpreters and drivers. However, Australia’s resettlement scheme solely focused on [direct employees](#) and [excluded](#) thousands of contractors. Also Germany’s 2013 [Admission programme](#) was for former local staff [directly employed](#) by German ministries in Afghanistan, and extended beyond

¹¹ The first US program [actually started in 2006](#), though it provided a total of 50 visas for primary applicants (so 50 plus their spouses and kids) for Iraqis and Afghans.

¹² In 2014 former interpreter Abdul Ahmadzai who had worked for the Dutch and US army, who applied for asylum in the Netherlands, [was threatened with deportation](#), because he had initially applied for asylum in Norway (where he was rejected). In 2017, the [UK High Court eventually halted the deportation](#) of a former Afghan interpreter, while [in 2018 a UK lawyer managed to prevent the deportation](#) of another interpreter.

interpreters. The US scheme was inclusive of subcontracted interpreters and of non-interpreters¹³, but [excluded](#) local staff who had worked under grants, or for NGOs. Until the evacuation in August 2021, the Netherlands *de facto* only allowed interpreters to apply for resettlement. The UK resettlement scheme was [tightly restricted](#) to interpreters until April 2021 when the new Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy ([ARAP](#)) was introduced. ARAP initially continued to exclude any subcontracted staff, even subcontracted interpreters. Hence, interpreters at the British embassy in Kabul and special forces interpreters (and anyone after 2014) were not eligible for UK resettlement, because they were hired through an outsourced contractor.¹⁴ However, there is much [evidence indicating](#) that locally employed staff like embassy staff are known by the Taliban and have been forced into hiding, since their lives were in danger. The Danish reluctance to take responsibility was evident from the fact that from 2013 until 2015 [only 8 of 151](#) Afghan interpreters were been granted asylum in Denmark. Those working for Danish companies and private organisations were also [excluded](#).

Variations in Length of Employment Requirements

In general, only staff, who had worked for a specific time period, were eligible to apply for resettlement with various arbitrary deadlines. There is, however, no evidence that the Taliban differentiates between their targets on the basis of length of employment. The US [Special Immigrant Visas](#) (SIVs) were initially available to those who had worked [“by or on behalf of”](#) the US government [for a at least 12 months](#).¹⁵ For applicants who applied [after October 1, 2015](#), a 24-month period employment was required; this was changed back again to 12 months on [July 31, 2021](#). The UK’s initial resettlement scheme, the [Ex-Gratia redundancy scheme](#) required a minimum of 12 month employment ‘outside the wire’. This changed with the introduction of the [ARAP scheme \(April 2021\)](#), which lifted any requirements regarding the duration of employment. Eligibility for Canada’s [Special Immigration Measures Programme](#) was equally restricted to interpreters who had worked for Canada for [12 consecutive months](#), for a specific period of time (October 2007 – July 2011) and had to prove extraordinary risk as a result of their work with Canada. Denmark’s 2013 Programme focused on locally employed staff in Afghanistan, who had assisted the Danish military units in Afghanistan, [for more than 12 months since 19/12/2012](#).

The resettlement programmes of a few countries included additional barriers, by requiring former staff to apply within a certain time frame. For instance, Germany required staff to apply for relocation *within* two years of ceasing their employment. [This was only changed in mid-June 2021](#), when Germany announced that Afghan local staff who worked for German troops and other German agencies in Afghanistan from 2013 onwards may apply to relocate to Germany. The Australian scheme required that applications be lodged within six months of completing service, or before 30 June 2013 or “where the relevant agency Minister is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply”. As a result, many applicants were refused for [not meeting these arbitrary deadlines](#).

¹³ There were [three years during which the SIV yearly statute only included only translators, interpreters, and those in a "sensitive and trusted" position](#).

¹⁴ Policy changed in late July 2021 and [subcontracted staff are eligible for resettlement](#) in the UK.

¹⁵ The 2006 program required a recommendation from military or chief of mission.

Impossible or High Burden of Proof concerning Security Threats

Some resettlement programmes put an extremely high burden on applicants to submit evidence of threats faced and [reason to fear persecution](#), which led to high rejection rates. As a result in Canada [two of every three](#) Afghan interpreters have been turned away mainly because they could not prove that they had faced extraordinary risk as a result of their work, while under the UK's [Intimidation Scheme](#), 99% of applications for resettlement were refused. Similarly, in Denmark there has been an [unfairly high burden of proof](#) that interpreters' lives are in danger. In Australia applicants [had to be assessed](#) by their employing Australian agency against specific threat criteria. In the case of France [eligibility](#) to apply focused on those who were subject to an immediate, evidenced and urgent threat. In the US, this was also a serious problem, until this requirement was lifted by the US Congress in 2014.

Until 2019, the Netherlands [required applicants to prove individually](#) that they would be in danger in Afghanistan. This changed as a result of a parliamentary motion in 2019 [following from collective civil society pressure by refugee organisations and military trade unions](#), after which the Government agreed that interpreters who worked for the Dutch army or other NATO forces, should be considered a [‘systematically persecuted group’](#). This meant that in principle they would have the right to refugee status, if their employment record was credible (without having to demonstrate individual persecution). This positive policy change was not formally adopted by any other European country and hence obtaining protection through asylum claims remained a lottery for Afghan former local staff, as there was no consistent approach among destination countries.

‘Good Character’ Requirements

Some countries excluded a high number of applicants for security reasons or even minor disciplinary issues, often based on spurious evidence. In the US applicants underwent various security checks and so-called blacklisted applicants had [no right to appeal](#). This led to absurd and tragic situations including one where an Afghan [interpreter was rejected by the State Department on terrorist grounds, while he continued](#) to be employed by the US military. [Furthermore](#), any termination for cause, which was often a paperwork mistake, or inaccurate evidence of a for-cause termination, or an unresponsive supervisor blocked former employees from SIV eligibility. In the UK, where [one third of the interpreters](#) had been dismissed for disciplinary issues during their employment (without any right to appeal), the ARAP resettlement programme initially excluded this entire group from the relocation option. This [only changed in August 2021](#) for those dismissed for “minor offences” after [intense lobbying by former Afghan interpreters, the civil society organisation Sulha Alliance and a collective of senior military veterans](#). In Canada, all applicants had to meet standard immigration requirements, including [criminal, medical and security screening](#). In Australia, applicants were also required to meet various criteria including health, character and security requirements. The implication of not meeting these requirements was that a visa could not be issued; thus, failure to provide a [letter of good conduct](#) from an employer could lead to exclusion from resettlement.

France was the only country that not only considered security issues but also carried out a [“severe sorting”](#) by expecting applicants to meet a cultural, linguistic and religious – arguably anti-Muslim – requirement of [“expected ability to assimilate into French society”](#). Whether applicants met this bar was decided through a short questionnaire filled out by French soldiers, some of whom commented on applicants' religious

beliefs, [linking Muslim identity to an assumed incompatibility with French norms](#). As a result, by the end of 2014 [only 73 Afghan interpreters \(and 106 members of their families\)](#) were approved out of 258 applications submitted to the French Government.

Incomplete Employment Records

Countries that did not have a central database of those Afghan local employees put the onus on the applicant to demonstrate their employment, disadvantaging those who had lost or destroyed their contracts or whose employer was no longer reachable. The requirement to produce employment records is especially burdensome given the security implications of having [to hold such copies](#), with many Afghan former staff [burning their documents](#) out of fear of the Taliban. The US, which has employed the vast majority of local staff, is the most characteristic example, due to the absence of any [central database to track contractors](#) who have worked for the US. Notably, in the US programme there were significant difficulties in [securing documentation](#) from employers – a requirement that stemmed from the fact that the US mainly worked through contractors. The US therefore did not have a comprehensive database of employees, in contrast to the UK where until 2014 locally employed staff were directly employed and registered with the Labour Support Unit, which later facilitated the resettlement application procedure. The United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Minority Report¹⁶ from February 2022, which evaluated the failures of the evacuation, noted that “[the inability to properly account for people who served alongside our military and diplomats is a stain on both departments](#)”.

Bureaucratic Delays

In general, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequate staffing levels across various offices, complicated application processes and delays in processing visa applications and issuing decisions was a common shortcoming for most of the countries. This frequently led to large backlogs of applications and most importantly put at risk many Afghan nationals who remained stranded in Afghanistan. In the US the SIV process has been plagued by [bureaucratic inefficiencies](#) and [delays](#). Between 2016-2020 [staffing levels](#) across various offices that process Afghan SIVs were insufficient to reduce the SIV applicant backlog. This situation continued despite a congressional mandate [to process in 9 months or fewer](#), and ongoing litigation to address those delays to meet the statutory mandate. A review conducted in 2015-2016 regarding the UK intimidation policy concluded that there had been [administrative errors](#), notably in recording the basis for decisions taken, but these had not invalidated the decisions and the cases were not reopened. In Canada there have been significant [delays in processing applications](#). In the Netherlands, there were reports regarding [enormous bureaucratic procedures](#). In France [administrative processes have been unclear and subjective](#), and there has also been long wait times (average [three and a half years](#)). Australia has been criticised for the [lengthy and complicated application process](#) and many applicants were refused for [not meeting various arbitrary deadlines](#), despite them being at risk, demonstrating an “[unduly inflexible, bureaucratic approach](#)”. In Germany, interpreters [were initially not even informed](#) whom to turn to for protection (similar to the Netherlands), with migrant advocacy groups arguing that there should be a designated office to which local staff can turn.

¹⁶ The report was produced solely by the minority party (the Republicans) and is hence a highly political document. While we find it useful to cite this source among the many other sources included in this report, it has to be noted that its credibility and impartiality has been disputed.

Phase 2: The Evacuation Phase, 14-29 August 2021

The table below offers a comparative overview of countries' policies and practices in Phase 2. The 'Shortcomings' column refers to policy failures and the 'Best Practices' column lists countries with policies and practices, which set a (comparatively more) positive example.

Phase 2: Evacuation, 14-29 August 2021	Countries - Shortcomings	Countries - Best Practices
Late start of evacuation	AUS CA DK GER	FR NL UK US ¹⁷
Adherence to narrow eligibility criteria	DK FR NL ¹⁸	AUS CA GER UK US
Unclear criteria for the evacuation	FR GER ¹⁹	AUS CA DK NL UK US

Lack of Advance Planning

Despite [many early warnings by civil society groups](#) that [time was running out](#) following the US and NATO withdrawal announcement in April 2021 and also [intelligence reports](#) about the potential for a speedy Taliban takeover of Kabul, governments failed to act proactively. This resulted in a rushed and urgent evacuation of thousands of people. Nevertheless, some countries, had begun small-scale evacuation efforts before August 2021. France was among the countries that started the evacuation earlier, [between March and July 2021](#), when 624 Afghans were evacuated, casting doubt on the claim by other countries who in principle [should have had access to the same intelligence](#), that they had not anticipated the swift Taliban take-over. Other more limited examples include the [American Operation Allies Refuge](#) and [the British ARAP resettlement scheme, which launched in April 2021 with the first 'Freedom flight' leaving on 23 June](#). Also, by 15 August 2021, [111 interpreters with their family members \(total approximately 500 individuals\)](#) had been resettled to the Netherlands, though it has to be noted that this number includes those who were forced to flee and [claim asylum](#) in earlier years without any support by the Dutch Government [\(with refugee status only granted following pressure by civil society groups\)](#).

The evacuation of Kabul was chaotic, with countries failing to help people get through Taliban checkpoints to the airport or negotiate safe passage. The evacuation was characterised by a [lack of planning, coordination, and communication](#). Also, [the route to Kabul airport was fraught with uncertainty](#), with those reaching the airport perimeter [waiting hours or days to enter](#). Consequently, many evacuation efforts were [facilitated](#) by civil society actors via Google Forms, WhatsApp and private social media groups, trying to fill the void left by their governments, [as well as](#) by civil servants and foreign service officers, who helped mitigate a number of issues. It was the initiative taken by these groups/ individuals [that prevented the evacuation from being even more disastrous](#) than it could have been. Many [eligible applicants were still ultimately unsuccessful in leaving the country](#), despite carrying proof of their eligibility for relocation.

¹⁷ These four countries carried out earlier small-scale evacuations.

¹⁸ The parliamentary [motion Belhaj](#), broadened the eligibility criteria on 18 August 2021 (see section 2).

¹⁹ The evacuation criteria were not made public.

Late Expansion of Resettlement Programmes and Ad-hoc Policy Changes

The announcement of the [NATO withdrawal](#) in April 2021 did little to accelerate or expand the resettlement programmes. It was only during the Taliban take-over in mid-August 2021, that most countries finally expanded their resettlement schemes. In August 2021 the US [broadened](#) the eligibility requirements to those working for US- and Afghan-based NGOs or American media under the Priority 2, or P-2, refugee program.²⁰ In the UK, the [Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS), first announced in mid-August 2021, claimed to [prioritise](#) Afghans who had assisted the UK in Afghanistan and “stood up for values such as democracy, women’s rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law [as well as] vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk”; however, the ACRS programme is by referral only and does not allow individual applications. In August 2021 Denmark [expanded](#) its relocation scheme to include employees from Danish NGOs and from UN, the EU and NATO. Furthermore, as part of special measures for Afghanistan, effective from 23 August 2021, [Canada announced prioritisation of](#) family reunification for Afghan nationals under the following categories: family class applications, applications from protected persons in Canada and their dependents overseas, and applications from dependents of resettled Afghan refugees.

The criteria for the evacuation differed and were changed on an ad-hoc basis with new criteria for in/exclusion being developed during the operation due to civil society, media and political pressure. Most evacuations of Afghan nationals focused on local embassy staff, interpreters who worked for national armies, civil society staff including human rights defenders, journalists/ fixers related to Western media, EU and NATO employees, and their immediate families. Some policies even changed during the evacuation of Kabul. For example, late August 2021 Australia [backflipped](#) on its decision to deny visas to more than 100 former security guards who worked at the Australian embassy in Kabul as contractors rather than direct employees. Similarly, [the UK Government only decided on the 20th of August that subcontracted British Embassy Kabul security staff](#), initially [excluded because they were subcontractors](#), would be eligible for relocation after civil society pressure. In Germany, several subcontracted staff who had been told that they did not qualify for relocation, [were subsequently added to the evacuation list, while the airlift was ongoing](#). In the Netherlands, [under great pressure by civil society](#), security guards (who had worked for Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) bases) were eventually included under the resettlement programme on [18 August](#), while the Dutch Embassy had still rejected their application [on the day that Kabul fell, 15 August 2021](#). Due to the lateness of these decisions, only a limited number of those included in resettlement programmes at the 11th hour were actually evacuated, with for instance several Afghan PRT Guards left behind by the Netherlands and only 1 of the [183 GardaWorld Security staff](#) of the British Embassy Kabul able to reach Kabul Airport for evacuation.

In many instances, the eligibility criteria for evacuation were unclear and not made public or explicit. To illustrate, while Denmark’s criteria for evacuation were laid out in an August 2021 [political agreement](#), the special law stemming from that agreement specified the eligibility criteria three months later, on 18 November 2021. In France and Germany, the criteria for evacuation were never even published.

²⁰ However, this P2 program has been criticised as it required applicants to relocate to a third country where their applications are processed, which by [January 2022 only just over 1% of applicants](#) had reported to have managed to do.

Numbers of Evacuees

During the official evacuation operation, more than [123,000](#) civilians were evacuated, but it is unclear exactly how many of those were Afghan nationals and former employees:

AUS: Australia evacuated [2,984](#) Afghan nationals with approved visas and overall [4,168](#) individuals. During the evacuation phase at the end of August 2021, Australia invited 6,294 persons to apply for Humanitarian Stay (Temporary) (subclass 449) visas, of which a total of 5,317 subclass 449 visas had been granted. Of those granted subclass [449 visas](#), [2,844](#) people had arrived in Australia.

CA: Canada evacuated [2,000](#) Afghans with their family members [who had helped Canadian soldiers and diplomats](#) in the past. Overall, Canada evacuated [3,700](#) individuals.

DK: A total of [1,077](#) Afghans were evacuated to Denmark, including [236](#) under the category 'interpreters and their family members'.

FR: France evacuated [2,600](#) Afghans and overall around [3,000 individuals](#).

GER: Germany evacuated [3,849](#) Afghans. Separately, the US evacuated people through Germany, meaning that they fall under US responsibility, [however](#) some of them expressed the desire to apply for asylum in Germany, mostly due to family links.

NL: The Netherlands evacuated [436](#) interpreters and high-profile defence and police mission personnel (family members are included in this figure), 217 local staff from the Dutch Embassy and 49 local staff from international organisations (EU, UN, NATO) and 370 people falling under the parliamentary [motion Belhaj](#) (18 August 2021), named after MP Selma Belhaj who led and submitted this motion during the evacuation, which included other former staff such as [security guards working for the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team](#) base (these figures all include their families).

UK: The UK evacuated a total of [891](#) local staff, of whom 495 were civilians who had been locally employed by the Ministry of Defence, and 242 principal applicants employed by the Foreign and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. 43 were British Council staff and 111 fell under the category 'All Other Personnel'. The total number of Afghan evacuees was [close to 5,000 Afghans](#) along with their dependents (including 2,000 children) and around 500 special cases of vulnerable Afghans.

US: The US [evacuated more than 82,015 Afghans of whom 24,000 had arrived in the U.S \(by September 2021\), 23,000 were on US military bases abroad, and 20,000 were waiting in other countries](#). However, they failed to establish clearly [how many of those were former staff members](#) at risk due to their employment history.

Phase 3: Ongoing Resettlement Policies and Support post-August 2021

The table below offers a comparative overview of countries' policies and practices in Phase 3. The 'Shortcomings' column refers to policy failures and the 'Best Practices' column lists countries with policies and practices, which set a (comparatively more) positive example.

Phase 3: Ongoing Resettlement post-August 2021	Countries - Shortcomings	Countries - Best Practices
No or limited continuation of evacuations of remaining staff	DK	CA FR GER NL UK US AUS
Protection for local staff time-limited: temporary residency status	DK ²¹ FR ²² GER ²³ NL ²⁴	AUS UK US ²⁵
Exclusion of extended family members (beyond nuclear family)	AUS FR GER NL ²⁶ US DK UK ²⁷ CAN	

Latest Resettlement Figures

Direct evacuations and airlifts from Afghanistan ceased on 29 August 2021. Since then, some countries have continued indirect relocations either through Pakistan and Iran, or via Qatar. Denmark has not continued their evacuations. All countries have seen a general surge in resettlement applications, since the end of the evacuation. However, the Netherlands introduced an arbitrary cut-off date for application (before 17 September 2021) without any prior warning in contrast to the United Kingdom, which continues to accept new applications to their Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), a scheme that [remains open indefinitely](#).

²¹ Two-year temporary status with no right to extension.

²² <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/12/22/barriers-facing-some-Afghans-seeking-protection-FranceEntitlement> to a 10-year renewable visa and then the possibility of applying for French citizenship.

²³ [Residency permit](#) for up to three years on the grounds of 'urgent humanitarian reasons'.

²⁴ Five-year temporary residence permit; if there is still need for protection, then [permanent](#) status.

²⁵ Temporary [Humanitarian Parole](#) was granted to most evacuees [for two years](#). On 29 April 2022, the White House sent a request to Congress for legislation [offering Afghan refugees a path to legal permanent residence](#).

²⁶ While this is the general Dutch policy, during the evacuation local staff of the Dutch Embassy were given the opportunity to also bring additional dependants. The [justification provided by the Dutch Government for this differential treatment](#) was that the local Embassy staff "was needed until the end to keep the Embassy open as long as possible; they therefore did not have the opportunity to bring their additional dependants to a safe location elsewhere". The implicit suggestion that other former local staff did have the time and opportunity to find safety for their dependants, and that this justifies unequal treatment, is highly questionable.

²⁷ In Denmark and the UK extended family members might be eligible, but only in exceptional cases. UK guidelines allow applications for [additional family members who are proven to be at risk through association or exceptionally vulnerable](#).

AUS: According to the Australian [Department of Home Affairs and Trade](#) (DFAT), by the [11 February 2022](#), [4,927 Afghans with subclass 449 visa holders](#) had arrived in Australia. When compared with the numbers reported as arriving during the evacuation, this means that just over 2,000 449 visa holders have arrived since the evacuation period ended. In April 2022 a [Senate inquiry](#) called on the Australian government to reinstate 1,398 lapsed humanitarian visas (known as subclass 449 visas) originally granted after Taliban takeover.

CA: Between August 2021 and 5 May 2022, 6,230 Afghan nationals arrived through the [special immigration programme for those who assisted the Government of Canada; but this number includes those who were evacuated in August](#).

DK: [By 7 February 2022](#), 631 individuals had received a residence permit in Denmark, 29 have been rejected and 48 cases have been closed. Denmark [has not continued its evacuations](#) post-August 2021.

FR: French evacuation operations have [resumed](#) since the beginning of September 2021. Up to 14 February 2022 the total number of Afghan nationals evacuated in ten evacuation flights carried out from Kabul via Qatar was [396](#).

GER: On 11 October 2021, [830 visas](#) for local staff and Afghans at risk had been granted via embassies in countries neighbouring Afghanistan. On 10 November 2021, [a direct charter flight](#) left Afghanistan and on 15 November, a second flight evacuated [148](#) people, including local staff, Afghans at risk and German citizens from Kabul to Islamabad. By November 2021 [7,033](#) Afghans had arrived in Germany (1,319 local Afghan staff who worked for Germany and 5,711 family members). Resettlement also continues through private initiatives, with the German private aid groups, [Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskraefte \(Afghan Local Forces Sponsorship Network\)](#), [having relocated 300 people](#) by February 2022, and the Kabul [Luftbrücke already more than 1000 individuals](#) by the 6th of December 2021.

NL: Since the evacuation ended, from 26 August 2021 until 21 March 2022, [1,239 individuals were transferred to the Netherlands, including](#): 240 Dutch and Afghans with a right of residence in the Netherlands, 161 falling under the parliamentary [motion Belhaj](#) (18 August 2021. Also see phase 2), 257 NGO staff and 92 Defence/ EUPOL personnel, 432 interpreters and high-profile defence & police mission personnel, 14 members of local staff from the Dutch embassy, 43 Local staff from international organisations (EU, UN, NATO).

UK: In early May 2022, the UK Ministry of Defence declared that [9,000 Afghan nationals](#) have been resettled under the ARAP scheme since 1 April 2021. Alongside ARAP, the UK opened the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in January 2022, which would allow 20,000 refugees to be settled in the UK. However, as [civil society organisations have noted](#) with concern, [it includes under these 20,000 those already in the UK who were evacuated during August 2021](#), but who do not fit the ARAP criteria, including family members of Afghan-British nationals. The government [announced](#) that the first Afghan family had been resettled under this scheme in January 2022. Until 6 May 2022 there have been no further updates on how many individuals have been resettled under ACRS.

US: According to US officials, [by 25 May 2022, about 3,000 Afghans had come to the US since the end of the evacuation](#).²⁸ From 1 October 2021, until 31 December 2021, only [424](#) Afghan SIVs were issued (117 for principal applicants and 307 for derivative applicants). Many evacuees have insecure legal status.

Local Staff Left Behind

Following the evacuation operation, thousands of Afghans at risk have been left behind. According to a February 2022 [report from the Association of Wartime Allies](#), a US non-profit association, some 78,000 people who worked for the US Government and have applications for SIVs pending are still stranded in Afghanistan.²⁹ The report states that close to 30 percent have been imprisoned by the Taliban at some point since the withdrawal, and 20 per cent reported going without meals more than 10 times in the last month. There are also similar concerns regarding Germany; in December 2021 the German Foreign Minister, said that [more than 15,000](#) people whom Germany had promised to take in remain in Afghanistan. By 21 March 2022, [another 999 Afghan former staff](#) whose right to resettlement had been approved were still in Afghanistan waiting to be transferred to the Netherlands. However, these numbers are just indicative, since most of the countries do not publish the numbers of those remaining stranded in Afghanistan and when they do publish them, they tend to quote the numbers of already approved applicants left behind rather than the total number of applicants.

Clarity concerning who is responsible for the resettlement of staff who worked at NATO headquarters, regional headquarters or other locations under the command of several nations, is still lacking. Due to the lack of adequate planning and coordination concerning the resettlement of local staff between the nations involved in the NATO mission, there are former staff members who do not meet the eligibility criteria for any of the schemes, despite a long track record of employment with ISAF, while other former staff members receive multiple offers for resettlement to several countries.

Variations in Residency Status Granted to Local Staff

There is no consistency in the immigration or protection status offered to former Afghan local staff, with a few countries, such as the Netherlands, using the generic refugee status (following the Refugee Convention) and most others granting a bespoke legal status to their local staff. Some countries offer their former staff legal certainty in the form of indefinite leave to remain, while other countries leave their resettled former staff in limbo with temporary residency status.

Those relocated to the UK under the [ARAP](#) scheme get Indefinite Leave to Remain automatically, which means that they will not have to wait for the usual five years to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. [Australia](#) and [Canada](#) also provide pathways to permanent residence for Afghan evacuees. Those admitted to the US under the Special Immigrant Visa programme are [immediately eligible for a green card](#). Former local staff who are not eligible for an SIV, whether because they worked under a cooperative agreement,

²⁸ Post Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) relocation flights have been minimal <3,000. (Information shared by Christopher Purdy, 12 May 2022). See also: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/05/26/afghan-refugees-biden-administration/>

²⁹ Tens of thousands of applications for humanitarian parole have been submitted and millions in fees paid, but only a tiny fraction have been adjudicated, most denied, while the US opens a similar program with relaxed criteria to Ukrainians, as it should do for Afghans as well. (Information shared by Betsy Fisher, 10 May 2022).

for insufficient periods of time, or simply lack relevant paperwork, are only eligible for parole³⁰, which does not lead to a green card or permanent status. Many may apply for asylum, though not all will qualify, and advocates have raised concerns that these persons will fall through the cracks and may face deportation.³¹

In Denmark the residency permit will [only last 2 years](#) and cannot be extended (the only option available is to subsequently apply for asylum). Afghans who served as interpreters for the Dutch armed forces [were given](#) an entry visa for the Netherlands and are then granted asylum providing a temporary residence permit for five years and then, if there is still need for protection, a [permanent residence permit](#). The [asylum procedure was shortened](#) for Afghans arriving to the Netherlands and the authorities in France also expedited the asylum procedure. Originally, France offered their local staff a status called '[functional protection](#)', which included an entry visa of 2 months and a residence card for 10 years. Since the evacuation, local staff have to apply for protection through regular asylum procedures. In [France](#) those with refugee status become candidates for naturalisation – which includes a range of criteria - as soon as they are granted asylum.

The majority of Afghan local staff arriving in Germany receive a residence permit for humanitarian grounds under Art. 22 (2) Residence Act, [initially valid for three years](#). [However](#), the residence permit cannot be extended if the humanitarian ground no longer applies. There are also reports of some evacuees [being forced to claim asylum](#) on Geneva convention grounds.

Post-Resettlement Challenges

Many of those who have been resettled have been living in emergency accommodation for months and experience enduring uncertainty about their final destination, hampering, for instance, their ability to seek employment. Evacuees arriving to the US were housed in military bases for months. This situation raises some [human rights questions](#) in light, for example, of reports of restrictions on freedom of movement for Afghan evacuees in US military bases and detention and transfer to third countries of Afghan evacuees who have not cleared the US security checks. Evacuees arriving to the Netherlands have been living in [substandard emergency reception centres for months](#), with many having to move from one emergency reception centre to another because of the closure of these temporary emergency facilities. Also, in [Australia](#) and the [UK](#) there are various challenges regarding shortage of appropriate housing, access to health and financial services, and employment. The evacuated Afghans in Denmark were staying at asylum centres and were only [transferred to municipalities](#) in the beginning of 2022. They faced the additional challenge that the Danish Government only granted them 2 year temporary residency status, without the possibility of extension; by February 2022 [already 48 of the evacuees](#) who had the opportunity for relocation elsewhere, had left Denmark due to their uncertain future.

Post-Resettlement best practices include bespoke integration support for former Afghan local staff, such as the UK's recently launched [Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme](#) to support 300 eligible individuals in the UK with links to Afghanistan to access university education. Another important contribution is made by military charities in the UK who have extended their support to Afghan interpreters, such as the employment charity [JobOppo](#) offering complimentary employability support to former Afghan interpreters

³⁰ Humanitarian parole' is temporary for two years. However, on 29 April 2022, the White House sent a request to Congress for legislation [giving Afghan refugees a path to legal permanent residence](#) after being in the US for a year.

³¹ Information shared by Betsy Fisher, 10/05/2022

and the mental health care support for physically and psychologically wounded local civilian staff who have worked under British Command provided by military charity [Help for Heroes](#). Other best practices are buddy programmes that connect veterans and former locally employed civilians that exist in [Germany](#) and [the Netherlands](#), for informal support, though these initiatives are highly dependent on civil society leadership and would benefit from more state support. In [France](#), former interpreters resettled in the first phase, have been awarded with medals in recognition of their service.

New Resettlement Programmes, including for extended family of former staff

After the end of the evacuation many countries promised not to abandon the thousands of at-risk Afghans. Nevertheless, Denmark has discontinued resettlement, the United States has only engaged in very limited resettlement efforts post-August 2021, and the [Netherlands](#) tightened its eligibility criteria after the evacuation. EU countries have suspended deportations to Afghanistan, though it is unclear how long this will last.

Australia, Canada, Germany and the UK, have announced additional resettlement and community sponsorship places. The Minister of Migration of Australia made the [announcement](#) on 21 January 2022 that Australia will provide at least 15,000 visas (though this announcement does not exclusively refer to former staff) through the humanitarian and family visa programme over the next four years. In August 2021, the Canadian government [announced](#) plans to resettle up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghan nationals in Canada over an unspecified timeframe. 5,000 places are allocated under the [2009-12 Extended Families](#) scheme, which will facilitate the granting of permanent residence to extended family members of Afghan interpreters who immigrated to Canada under the 2009 and 2012 measures, and their dependent family members including Parents, grandparents, children or grandchildren, siblings (including half-siblings), siblings-in-law. [Germany has committed to resettling 20,000 Afghans at risk](#) (with a yearly quota of 5,000). The UK opened the [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS) on the 6 January 2022 prioritising those who have assisted the UK in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law; however, [the scheme does not accept any individual applications](#) and there is still a lack of detail regarding the referral pathways and timelines.

Phase 1: Country-Specific Overview of Resettlement Policies *prior to August 2021 Evacuation*

This section provides a country-by-country overview of resettlement policies *prior* to the August 2021 evacuation, listing details of:

- a) the **application process**
- b) the details of the **relocation package**
- c) the **legal status** granted
- d) the **numbers** and
- e) the **good practices and shortcomings** for each country.

Australia

In December 2012 Australia announced a [programme](#) (which remains in effect), offering humanitarian visas to Afghans, in a range of roles including interpreters and drivers, who had assisted Australia's mission in Afghanistan and notably [Uruzgan](#). [Direct employees](#) employed with [specified](#) Australian Government agencies in Afghanistan are eligible if they apply within six months of ceasing employment; or in the case of a locally engaged employee who has ceased employment on or after 1 January 2012, before 30 June 2013; or where the relevant agency Minister is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist – at any time. [Spouses, dependent children and other family members](#) who are found to be dependent on the main applicant are eligible for visa grant. In July 2021, a number of veterans across Australia burned their service medals, in protest against Australia's slow response to the withdrawal announcement.

Application process - documents required

Applicants [need to be assessed](#) by their employing Australian agency (Defence, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID and the Australian Federal Police) against specific threat criteria, level of direct support the applicant had provided and period of employment. They are also required to meet various criteria including health, character and security requirements. Applicants can then apply for a visa under Australia's Humanitarian Programme. Evidence of being [in danger of persecution](#) and at [risk of harm](#) due to their employment in support of Australia's mission in Afghanistan is also required.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

[Eligibility](#) for accommodation support, basic assistance to set up a household, English language courses and help to access government, community and health services, as well as the right to work.

Legal Status

[Eligible](#) Afghans may be granted a [Refugee visa](#) or an [in-country special humanitarian visa](#). Partner, dependent children, partner's dependent children and other relative who is a dependant may [also be eligible](#).

Numbers

Approximately 1,480 Locally Engaged Employees (LEE) [visas were granted](#) from 2012 until July 2021, of which around 300 have been granted from April 2021 until July 2021.

Shortcomings

- The scheme [excluded](#) thousands of contractors.
- Humanitarian visas for former local staff [were not in addition](#) to but came out of Australia's existing annual intake quota.
- [Applicants faced a lengthy and complicated application process.](#)
- Many applicants were refused for [not meeting various arbitrary deadlines](#). In particular, the scheme required that applications be lodged within six months of completing service, or before 30 June 2013 or "where the relevant agency Minister is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply". Many applicants were refused for not meeting these arbitrary deadlines, despite them being at risk, demonstrating an "[unduly inflexible, bureaucratic approach by Australia, completely divorced from the fundamental issue of providing safety to those placed at risk due to their service to Australia](#)".
- Shortage of appropriate housing, confusion over health and financial services, and a lack of jobs [being reported](#).

Canada

Canada's [Special Immigration Measures Programme](#) was available from 2009 until September 2011. Eligible were Afghan nationals facing extraordinary personal risk as a result of their work in support of Canada's mission in Kandahar. In 2012, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) implemented a [revised Public Policy](#) leading to a reassessment of some cases that were not approved under the first Public Policy. Eligible were interpreters who had worked for Canada for [12 consecutive months](#) (October 2007 – July 2011). All applicants had to meet standard immigration requirements, including [criminal, medical and security screening](#).

[Spouse and children](#) were also eligible. Whether other close family members were allowed to accompany the interpreters [was decided on a case by case basis](#) by immigration officials. [Spouses \(and their children\) of Afghans killed](#) because of their work with the Canadian government were also eligible.

[On 23 July 2021, the Canadian Government announced](#) new Special Immigration Measures (SIM) for the resettlement of interpreters who worked with the Canadian Armed Forces, cooks, drivers, cleaners, construction workers, security guards and locally engaged staff employed at the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan, and their family members.

Application process - documents required

It took [more than two years](#) for interpreters' applications to be processed. In April 2009 and again in September that year, Canada announced that Afghans who worked as interpreters for Canadian soldiers would be allowed to immigrate to Canada. The announcement allowed 450 interpreters to apply under the special visa programme, but only 60 had been accepted until July 2011.

[Recommendation letter](#) from a senior soldier or diplomat, [testimonies](#) from Canadian supervisors and evidence that the applicant was [at risk](#) in Afghanistan were required.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

[Eligibility](#) for health-care coverage under the Interim Federal Health Programme as well as resettlement services similar to what was offered to government-assisted refugees, including up to 12 months of income support upon arrival in Canada. Resettled Afghan former staff [had the right to work and receive support with income support for 12 months, health benefits and help preparing a CV and finding work](#).

Legal Status

The 2009 and 2012 programmes provided individuals and their immediate family members with [a pathway to permanent residence in Canada](#).

Numbers

[More than 800 Afghan nationals, including family members](#), were resettled to Canada under the 2009 policy and its successor until July 2021.

Good practices

- + [Spouses \(and their children\) of Afghans killed](#) because of their work with the Canadian government were also eligible. This can be considered a best practice, that should serve as an example for other countries' policies.

Shortcomings

- To be eligible interpreters must have worked for Canada between October 2007 and July 2011, but Canadian troops [began their work in Afghanistan in 2006](#), as did many interpreters who worked for Canada.
- Interpreters were not systematically and clearly informed about where to turn to for protection, and information about the application process often depended on word-of-mouth information.³²
- There were significant [delays in processing applications](#).
- [Two out of every three](#) Afghan interpreters who sought refuge in Canada were rejected, mainly because they could not fulfil the strict eligibility requirements; some of them could not demonstrate that they had faced extraordinary risk as a result of their work with Canada and most importantly many had not worked for Canada for 12 consecutive months between October 2007 and July 2011.

³² Interview by Sara de Jong with resettled Afghan interpreters and Canadian advocates, Toronto, Canada, 31 March 2019.

Denmark

In May 2013 Denmark entered into an [Agreement](#) with Great Britain regarding a coordinated Danish-British management of the interpreters and other locally employed staff in Afghanistan, who had been employed by the British military, and who had assisted the Danish military units in Afghanistan, [notably Helmand for more than 12 months, after 19 December 2012](#). The agreement was a Danish adaptation of the British [ex-gratia/redundancy policy](#) (see below). Interpreters who especially assisted the Danish forces had the option of choosing to go to either Great Britain or Denmark. Interpreters who had worked on the front line with UK troops for over a year, could be resettled to the UK, or chose to remain in Afghanistan and sign-up to five years of fully-funded training and education, or continue to receive their current salary for a further 18 months. Furthermore, [applicants must not have committed any serious crime. Only one spouse/ partner \(not under the age of 18\) and unmarried children under the age of 18 are eligible, but spouses under the age of 18 are not eligible. In exceptional cases, additional persons in the household](#) who the locally employed staff member is responsible for maintenance, may also be eligible.³³

Application process - documents required

In addition to the minimum employment of one year, [an assessment was made](#) whether the individual employee has had the closest connection with the British or the Danish forces.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

For those who are resettled to Denmark, their legal status includes the right to work. Applicants are offered [four main options](#): 1) a training package of up to five years' duration or 2) 18 months redundancy package (the last two are local solutions in Afghanistan) or 3) a special interpreters' package, offering settlement in Great Britain for the Afghan interpreters employed by the British forces in the frontline as of 19 December 2012, and who have been employed for more than 12 months. 4) an intimidation policy with various protective measures.

Legal Status

Danish rules for asylum have been tightened and limited every year since 2001. In 2014, refugees were granted a 5-year residence which was extended and in most of the cases automatically granted permanent stay after 7 years of stay. However, since 2015 the maximum [residence permit granted for convention status is 2 years \(Afghan interpreters are granted convention status\), for protected status is only 1 year initially](#), and an extension for up to two years may be granted as long as the risk remains at the same level. Also, a residence permit may be [revoked](#) in accordance with the regulations of the Aliens Act, in case the conditions in Afghanistan have changed fundamentally. The bar to acquire permanent residency is very high, requiring very high scores on Danish language and employment.

Numbers

It is [estimated](#) that Denmark employed 195 local interpreters in Helmand. Of these 158 were employed through the Labour Support Unit of the British military, and 37 by an American firm, called [Mission Essential Personnel](#) (MEP). [Up to June 2021](#) only five Afghan interpreters had been granted asylum out of

³³ In very special cases, for instance in families with a child who is just above the age of 18 and who will potentially be left alone, interviews were conducted with locally employed staff to find out whether the "adult child" has other family networks in Kabul. Typically, the time required to handle cases of family reunification is approximately 10 months while procedures for appeals may take up to 2 years. Information shared by Emma Katarina Andersen and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, 11 May 2022.

139 applications. In 2013, an additional [23 Afghan interpreters](#) who supported Danish soldiers in Afghanistan were granted residence in the UK, for which Denmark paid a financial compensation to the UK.

Shortcomings

- Those working for Danish companies and private organisations were [not included](#).
- [Unfairly high burden of proof](#) that interpreters' lives are in danger.
- [Up to June 2021](#) only five Afghan interpreters had been granted asylum out of 139 applications.
- Military veterans [accused](#) Denmark of breaking its promise to grant asylum to all local interpreters who helped Denmark.
- While the Danish scheme was originally aligned with the UK resettlement policy, when the UK introduced the new resettlement scheme ARAP in April 2021, to remedy shortcomings of the early programme, no similar improvements were made (or even seemed to have been considered) by the Danish Government.

France

During the withdrawal of French troops from Afghanistan between 2012-2014, French authorities carried out a "[sorting](#)" of locally employed staff on the basis of security considerations but also 'ability to assimilate into French society' ([decided through an evaluation conducted by French soldiers](#)). Eligible to relocate were those who were subject to an immediate, proven and urgent threat. Those rejected were classified into two categories: [Those for whom reception in France has been excluded "because of an insufficient risk \[for their security\] or possible difficulties of integration"](#). They were offered a bonus for relocation to another region in Afghanistan. In May 2015, following demonstrations by interpreters at the French Embassy in Kabul and lobbying by l'Association des anciens interprètes et auxiliaires afghans de l'armée française, co-led by lawyer Caroline Decroix and former Afghan interpreter Mr Raziq [a second resettlement process](#) was launched. Applicants had only a month and a half to file their applications, and the process was never officially announced, leaving it to the [Association des interprètes et auxiliaires afghans de l'Armée Française](#) to inform interpreters still in Afghanistan and support them with their applications. [Spouse and children](#) were eligible.

Application process - documents required

Application had to be submitted at the consular services of the [French Embassy in Kabul](#). Applicants had to provide [evidence of an immediate, proven and urgent threat](#). Applicants also had to [prove](#) the period of service rendered to the French army and the quality of this service.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

Resettled refugees receive first [12 months of enhanced assistance](#) and have the right to work. A designated case worker assists each family in its administrative procedures: regularisation of their residency, access to social rights and benefits, assistance with obligations under the Reception and integration contract (CAI), children's schooling, etc. The caseworker also helps them with housing and refers them to training and resource partners for access to employment.

Legal Status

Afghan interpreters who were resettled through the resettlement programme received 'functional protection' (*La protection fonctionnelle*). Functional protection is not the same as international protection (asylum or subsidiary protection), but [instead a state obligation to protect state employees who are at risk because of their employment \(such as French police officers\)](#); in the case of the Afghan interpreters, the protection granted was an entry visa of 2 months and a residence card for 10 years. Until 2018-2019, several former interpreters who had come through irregular routes and applied for asylum in France were rejected. In a landmark ruling in 2018, the France's Conseil d'Etat Council of State, the country's highest administrative court, ruled for 6 rejected applicants that they should be granted '[Functional Protection](#)'. In 2019, the Council of State decided to extend this to all interpreters who had previously been rejected. In contrast to refugee status, functional protection does not prevent someone from having contact with the Afghan embassy or travelling to Afghanistan. Moreover, compared to the family reunification process, those with functional protection are allowed to bring more family members to France.

Numbers

A total of [1,067 Afghans worked for the French army and 538](#) out of them were interpreters. [From 2013 until 2019](#), France resettled 225 Afghans with 500 women and children accompanying them.

Good practices

- + In 2018 a [court case](#) forced the French government to extend protection under the 'Functional Protection' law, to reconsider the visa applications of 6 previously rejected applicants. As Caroline Decroix, vice-president of a group of former Afghan interpreters, [said](#) "all those whose requests have been refused will have the right to appeal."
- + Resettled interpreters received [medals](#) in recognition of their work.

Shortcomings

- [Administrative processes have been unclear and subjective.](#)
- Applicants only had 1.5 [months](#) to apply for the re-opened 2015 scheme and information was not pro-actively made available by the French Government, leaving it to civil society to encourage applicants to re-apply.
- Low recognition rates: [According to data from 2020, less than a third](#) of those who applied received a visa. In September 2021 it was reported that [170 auxiliaries asked in vain](#) to be resettled before the fall of Kabul.

Germany

Germany implemented an [Admission programme](#) in 2013, for former local staff [directly employed](#) by German ministries in Afghanistan (Interior, Foreign, Defence, Development). The programme is based on [Art. 22 \(2\) Residence Act](#) which provides temporary residence permission, [initially valid for up to 3 years](#). It is a requirement that the German Minister of Interior declares that relocation [serves the political interest of Germany](#). Only with the consent of the Aliens Department will a visa be granted. According to the German NGO [ProAsyl](#), there is no legal claim to a Visa. The authorities decide on discretion; this means that they weigh all arguments for and against granting a visa.

Former staff are covered by the programme with their [Spouses and minors, unmarried children](#).

[In mid-June 2021](#), Germany announced that Afghan local staff who worked for German troops and other German agencies in Afghanistan from 2013 onwards may apply to come to Germany. Previous regulations had limited that time frame to the past two years only.

Application process - documents required

Locally employed staff [had to apply](#) for a Visa at the Embassy in Kabul. The Embassy then forwarded the application to the Aliens Department responsible for the future place of residence the applicant stated in his/her application. Applicants had to describe their [special emergency situation](#) and file a [risk report](#) detailing the threats they were facing due to their work with the German troops. [Security checks](#) were also carried out by the German authorities. Applicants had to [prove that employment was ongoing](#) in the last two years.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

Successful applicants have the [right to work and receive a \(renewable\) residence permit for three years](#). [They can become German citizen after eight years if they have sufficient language skills, a job and have left social housing](#).

Legal Status

Locally employed staff [are issued](#) with a residence permit according to section 22 sentence 2 of Germany's Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz, AufenthG). This residence permit is valid for up to three years and may be renewed, if the reasons for which it was issued still apply.

Numbers

Between 2011 and 2020 there were at least [1,750](#) local staff employed in Afghanistan. From 2013 until June 2021, nearly [3,394](#) Afghans resettled to Germany, including 798 former local staff with 2,596 family members.

Good practices

- + The German Programme included not just interpreters, but local staff in general.
- + There is a mentor/buddy [project](#) for Afghan local staff after resettlement run by the [Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskräfte e.V.](#), a mentorship initiative, led by a German soldier.

Shortcomings

- Up until June 2021, only those who had worked for a German institution in the last two years were qualified. [In June 2021, the German Government changed this to include](#) anyone who had worked since 2013.
- [Campaigners argued](#) that the eligibility time-frame restrictions had to be lifted or extended.
- There are reports that interpreters who filed a threat report [were simply fired, which dissuaded others from filing such report, which later prevented them from applying for resettlement](#).

- Interpreters [were not informed](#) whom to turn to for protection. Migrant advocacy groups like ProAsyl have criticised the fact that there is [no transparent procedure nor a designated office](#) to which people can turn.
- Only those [directly employed](#) by Germany were covered. [In particular](#), those who have worked with the German Bundeswehr directly were considered. Those who worked for subcontractors or on independent terms were not eligible to apply.
- Those deemed eligible had to arrange and [pay for their own travel after being issued a visa](#).
- Residence permits were often only extended for one year, making integration difficult.

The Netherlands

In 2014 a [programme](#) was launched for interpreters who cooperated with the Dutch military in Afghanistan, which allowed representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Defence to submit an asylum claim of a local Afghan interpreter to the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service. In a letter the representative had to document the employment activities of the interpreter and the threats they faced. If the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service considered that there was sufficient ground for an asylum claim, the interpreter was granted an entry visa. The interpreter could then apply for asylum. There was no collective arrangement and each asylum claim was assessed individually. Despite this programme's existence, several interpreters were rejected. In 2019, after significant civil society pressure, the [Parliament agreed](#) that interpreters who worked for the Dutch army should automatically be given a visa and be allowed to apply for asylum once in the Netherlands. Also, former interpreters who claimed asylum in the Netherlands, even if they came from other countries, were recognised [as systematically persecuted, which means that evidence of their employment is sufficient to be granted asylum and that they do not need to prove that they are individually under threat](#).

[Spouse and unmarried children under the age of 18](#) are also eligible to apply.

Application process - documents required

Applicants have to [submit](#) an application for inclusion in the special immigration procedure for interpreters, or other Afghan employees who have performed 'high-profile duties' for the Netherlands. The following information is required: information about the duties performed, the period in which those duties were performed and the military or police unit for which the applicant worked; if possible the application should be supplemented with the certificates issued by the international military or police mission, the interpreter's pass issued to the applicant, photographic material and [references](#) by their employers. Applicants also had to present official translations of Tazkiras (Afghan IDs).

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

[Refugees have access](#) to social welfare for beneficiaries of international protection under the same conditions as nationals. Regarding the right to work, [specific requirements](#) need to be met. In particular, an asylum seeker is allowed to work for 24 weeks over a period of 52 weeks. His/her asylum application must be pending for at least 6 months. If an asylum seeker receives a residence permit for a definite period, they can then work as an employee or as a self-employed person.

Legal Status

Afghans who served as interpreters for the Dutch armed forces [are given](#) an entry visa to the Netherlands and are then granted asylum providing a temporary residence permit for five years and then, if there is still need for protection, a [permanent residence permit](#). [Other individuals](#) who have been employed by the Dutch armed forces or police mission to carry out 'high profile activities' could also submit a request to the embassy in Kabul, but must still demonstrate that they are personally in danger.

Numbers

According to the Dutch Ministry of Defence, the Dutch army employed [273](#) interpreters in the 20 years the Dutch army has been active in Afghanistan. From 2013 and up to [June 2021](#) only 68 interpreters had made it to the Netherlands and 83 were still waiting for a visa. Until 15 August 2021, prior to the evacuations, [111 interpreters with their family members \(total approx. 500 persons\)](#) had made it to the Netherlands from Afghanistan, but this figure included those who were not provided with entry visas and had to come through precarious irregular routes to claim asylum. 101 applicants had their application rejected, for instance because their work was not considered as constituting "[high-profile activities](#)" or [because they had worked longer for other nations, which meant that the Netherlands did not want to take responsibility for their protection](#). Neither of these criteria was officially communicated. For instance, rejection letters stated "[you have not worked for a substantial amount of time in a high profile position](#)" without providing information on what constituted a "substantial amount of time" or "high profile position".

Good practices

- + [Parliament agreed in 2019](#) that interpreters who worked for the Dutch army should automatically be granted asylum. They were seen as prima facie refugees, so applicants only had to prove they worked as an interpreter for the Dutch army to get protection.
- + In July 2021, the [Dutch Ministry of Defence added a serving soldier and outspoken critic of the slow resettlement process](#) to their application assessment team.

Shortcomings

- Only interpreters, who had worked for the ministry of Defence were eligible. Staff that had executed 'high profile activities' could also apply, but what constituted 'high profile activities' remained opaque and the burden of proof that they needed protection was so significant that non-interpreters were *de facto* excluded.
- High rates of rejection without clear justification, for instance, the rationale that interpreters should apply elsewhere for protection if they had worked longer for another state. This criterion, which was never officially communicated [was only dropped in June 2021](#).
- The interpreter policy and application guidelines were not made available online with the Dutch Government citing the risk of an increasing number of fake applications as a reason to refuse to make the policy and application procedure publicly available.
- [Challenging bureaucratic procedures](#) in the application process, including for instance, a 20-page form with questions such as 'how do you know you are in danger because of your work for Dutch soldiers?' and 'could you live safely in another part of Afghanistan?'
- Lengthy processes (some applications took more than one year to be processed) and three ministries (Home Office/ Foreign Affairs/ Defence) working alongside each other instead of working together.

- Applicants had to supply official translations of Tazkiras (Afghan IDs), which the Dutch Government claimed was a requirement of the Afghan government. However, the fact that this demand was ultimately dropped after [parliamentary questions in June 2021](#), and not common practice in other countries, suggests otherwise.

United Kingdom

Locally employed staff in Afghanistan and notably [Helmand](#) had access to two resettlement schemes: the Intimidation Scheme and the Ex-Gratia scheme.

The [Intimidation Scheme](#) (established in 2010, revised in 2013) was open to all current or former locally employed from 2001 onwards. The Scheme offered support to all locally employed staff (regardless of length of employment, location, or role), who were concerned about their safety because of their previous employment with the UK in Afghanistan. [The Intimidation Investigation Unit \(IIU\) in Kabul](#) assessed the security needs and could offer one of the following responses: 1) security advice 2) funded relocation within Afghanistan or 3) relocation to the UK. Nevertheless, [no-one has been successfully relocated to the UK as part of the scheme](#). Only one LEC was brought to the UK under an offer of education as it was judged that the risk was too great for him to remain in Afghanistan.

[The \(Ex-Gratia\) Redundancy Scheme](#) was introduced in 2013, [as a result of legal pressure](#), and will close in November 2022. It is available for those employed in frontline roles on the date that the UK Government announced the drawdown of British forces in Afghanistan (19 December 2012) and who had worked for 12 months or more. The rules of this scheme [changed](#) a few times (see also [the Sulha Alliance](#) website). Initially, the Scheme was only open to locally employed staff who were made redundant as a direct consequence of the UK's military drawdown from Afghanistan. [In 2018](#), the Scheme was expanded to include those who were made redundant on or [after 1 May 2006](#) with 12 months or more continuous service outside the wire on the frontline mostly in Helmand. In December 2020, the relocation scheme was expanded again to include those locally employed who had [resigned](#) on or after 1 May 2006 with at least 12 months service outside the wire on the frontline (mostly in Helmand).

In 2018 the [UK Defence Select Committee published a Report](#) that assessed the effectiveness of the resettlement schemes. It characterised the Intimidation Scheme as '[hitherto useless](#)' due to the fact that no one had been relocated to the UK.

In April 2021 the UK launched a new Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy ([ARAP](#)) to replace the Intimidation Scheme with an initially anticipated uptake of about 850 locally employed staff. [Under the ARAP scheme](#), any current or former locally employed staff directly employed by HMG assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life will be eligible to apply for ARAP regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. There are four categories under the ARAP:

Category 1: High risk / imminent threat: Urgent relocation

Category 2: Eligible for relocation by default: Routine relocation (*excluding terminated staff*)

Category 3: Not eligible for relocation: Other support offered

Category 4: Special cases: Case-by-case basis

Spouse and children are eligible.

Application process - documents required

The (Ex-Gratia) Redundancy Scheme – with its narrow eligibility criteria – [does not require applicants to demonstrate evidence of intimidation or persecution](#). Under the Intimidation Scheme applicants have to [prove they are at risk](#). However, the bar was impossibly high with the [Defence Select Committee Enquiry](#) finding in 2018 that there were zero international relocations. Under the ARAP scheme which replaced the Intimidation Scheme, the application process was eased significantly for most interpreters who were considered eligible for relocation by default. Applicants were asked to submit their Labour Support Unit (LSU) number, so their employment record could be checked.

What was offered as part of the relocation package?

[Redundancy Scheme](#): i) a finance package equivalent to 18 months' salary, or ii) a training package of up to five years funded education or training in country, accompanied by a living stipend equivalent to the final salary. A third option, is relocation to the UK, and is available to former interpreters and other locally employed staff who served in a 'frontline' role in Helmand for a minimum of 12 months.

[Under the \(Ex-Gratia\) Redundancy Scheme](#), the responsibility for the provision of accommodation and integration support was referred to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, which could work independently or provide services together with 'delivery partners' (e.g. private housing associations, refugee third sector organisations, and arms-length management organisations). See for more information on the relocation package under ARAP in the sections on Phase 2 and Phase 3 in this report.

Legal Status

[Limited leave to enter the UK and a visa that granted five years Leave to Remain in the UK](#), with an opportunity after five years to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). In 2018 the fees to apply for ILR [were waived for those resettled under the Ex-Gratia scheme](#), following pressure by resettled Afghan interpreters. In September 2021, it was announced that those relocated to the UK under [ARAP](#) would be [granted indefinite leave immediately](#).

Numbers

During military [Operation Herrick 2003-2014](#), the UK employed approximately 7,000 local Afghans to assist British forces. Of those 7,000 locally employed civilians, 2,850 worked as interpreters and translators for British forces on the frontline, largely in Helmand province. After 2014, the UK employed its LECs through private contractors, such as [The Big Word](#). Up to [29 December 2020](#), about [450 principal applicants](#) (14,000 with families included) had relocated to the UK under the Ex-Gratia scheme, while hundreds more received funding for education and training in Afghanistan. From April 2021 until the beginning of the Kabul evacuation approximately [213](#) individuals were relocated under the new ARAP scheme.

Good practices

- + In December 2020 the Redundancy scheme was expanded (see: [Sulha Alliance](#) and [ARAP](#)).
- + In April 2021, the Intimidation Scheme was replaced by the ARAP scheme. Anyone directly employed is eligible to apply, regardless of employment status, length of employment.

- + People relocated to the UK under [ARAP](#) can apply free of charge to convert their temporary leave into indefinite leave. (From August 2021 this was changed and Indefinite Leave to Remain was granted automatically).
- + Subcontracted interpreters were initially excluded, but policy changed in late July 2021 when [subcontracted interpreters became eligible for resettlement](#) in the UK, after pressure from veterans in a campaign coordinated by [the Sulha Alliance](#).

Shortcomings

- [In 2017](#), the Intimidation Scheme had already received more than 400 claims and [not one single applicant](#) was successfully relocated to the UK until 2018.
- In 2018, [a report by the House of Commons Select Committee](#) already concluded: “The Intimidation Scheme, in its current form, has dismally failed to give any meaningful assurance of protection.” Still until April 2021, the UK schemes remained tightly restricted with only minimal changes.
- [A third of the interpreters](#) employed by the British Army were dismissed for disciplinary or administrative issues, which meant that initially they were excluded from relocation under ARAP.
- [The profile of the local authorities involved](#) in the Ex-Gratia and ARAP scheme varied widely: rural/urban; no to ample experience with relocation of refugees; and number of locally employed staff hosted. This impacts the experience of former LECs in terms of differential access to employment and educational opportunities, culturally-appropriate food, and religious services.
- Key revisions to the ARAP policy, such as including contracted interpreters and allowing the resettlement of applicants who had been dismissed for ‘minor offences’, [were only reactively introduced after civil society, political and media pressure](#).
- [At least 25 applicants who had received confirmation by the Ministry of Defence that they were eligible for resettlement under ARAP](#) and should prepare for travel and sell their belongings, subsequently received a rejection based on national security grounds from the Home Office, without any further details.

United States

[The Afghan Allies Protection Act](#) passed in 2009, provided Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for former local staff. It had an initial yearly quota of visas and required annual legislation to allocate visas thereafter. Congress [amended the Act in 2013](#) to improve the efficiency of the visa issuance process. There are two SIV programmes: [The SI visa class category](#), which applies to [translators or interpreters](#) who have worked with US military forces and [the SQ visa class category](#), available to any other [Afghan national who was employed](#) by or *on behalf of* the US in Afghanistan (including subcontracted staff). The [Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act](#), enacted on 30 July 2021, authorised 8,000 additional SIVs for Afghan principal applicants.

SIVs are available to those who have worked with US military [for at least 12 months](#). For applicants who applied between 1 [October 2015](#) and 31 [July 2021](#) a 24-month employment record was required. Applicants must have experienced or be experiencing an [ongoing serious threat](#) as a consequence of their employment. Applicants may be excluded due to [failure to establish providing “faithful and valuable service”](#) to the US government (e.g. not having positive recommendation letter, being terminated,

blacklisted, having failed Counter Intelligence (CI) screening, having left the job without giving proper resignation). [Derogatory information associated with the applicant](#) can also lead to exclusion (if a background check revealed engagement in an unlawful, unethical, criminal, or terrorism-related activity). [A spouse and immediate dependents under 21 are eligible to join the primary applicant.](#)

Application process - documents required

For the SQ visa category a first step is to apply for Chief of Mission approval. Then, there are [three main segments](#): (1) gathering petition documents, (2) collecting additional family records, and (3) scheduling a visa interview.³⁴

[A credible sworn statement describing dangerous country conditions, together with official evidence](#) of such country conditions from the US government are required.

[If employed by or on behalf of the US government](#), the applicant must submit a letter from a direct US citizen supervisor who knew the applicant personally. [If employed by the International Security Assistance Force](#) (ISAF), or a successor mission, the applicant must submit a letter from a member of the US military who personally supervised the applicant. [Employee contract number and badge number are also required if available.](#)

Ongoing Resettlement Policies and Support post-August 2021

[Eligibility](#) for cash assistance, medical assistance, employment preparation, job placement, English language training, and other services offered through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Applicants may also be eligible for federal “mainstream” (non-ORR funded) benefits, such as cash assistance through Supplemental Security Income or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, health insurance through Medicaid, and food assistance through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme.

Legal Status

[SIV programmes provide a direct pathway to a green card.](#) A [green card](#) gives its holder the legal right to live and work in the US on a permanent basis. Green card holders can also apply for government jobs – though some are reserved for US citizens – and are also eligible to receive various health, educational, and other benefits. Eventually, SIV recipients’ official green cards are mailed to them after they are admitted to the US and [allow them to live and work](#) in the US. However, average processing times for adjustment of status applicants have been between [6-12 months](#). It has also been [reported](#) that SIV recipients in the US have often been shocked by the lack of social safety net and the difficulties with social and economic integration. In the most extreme cases, this has resulted in some recipients actually moving back to Afghanistan.

Numbers

[Approximately](#) 50,000 translators and interpreters have worked with the US military. As of 31 March 2021, 2,139 out of them ([748 principal applicants and 1,391 dependents](#)) had received Special Immigrant Visas, under the SI programme. Until March 2021, 73,628 Special Immigrant Visas had been issued, [under the SQ](#)

³⁴ Note that the process takes on average roughly 4 years (information shared by Betsy Fisher, 10 May 2022).

[programme](#), for Afghans who worked for the US Government ([20,829 principal applicants and 52,799 dependents](#)), bringing the total number of those having received visas to approximately 75,700.

Good practices

- + The SIV programme was one of the earliest resettlement programmes.
- + The resettlement programme was open to non-interpreters and contractors.
- + The SIV provides a direct pathway to a Permanent Resident Card (green card).

Shortcomings

- The SIV process was plagued by a large [backlog of applications, of over 18,000 cases](#). This was partially due to understaffing. For instance, in 2019, the State Department [only had one analyst conducting security checks](#). The vacancy of senior coordinator was unfilled between 2017 and 2020. Security checks further contributes to [delays](#) in processing the Afghan SIVs.
- [Bureaucratic inefficiencies](#) and [delays](#), even recognised by the Joint Department of State/ Department of Homeland Security.
- The [staffing levels](#) remained unchanged from 2016, despite the backlog indicating that there were resource issues.
- Difficulty in [securing documentation](#) from employers.
- [There was no central database to track contractors](#) who have worked for the US. The onus was on applicants to get proof of employment and there were difficulties in [securing documentation](#) from [employers and supervisors](#).
- Those who have worked under grants, cooperative agreements or for NGOs were [excluded](#) for many years and only on the 3 August 2021 the US [broadened](#) the eligibility requirements to those working for US- and Afghan-based NGOs or American media.

Phase 2: Country-Specific Overview of Policies during the Evacuation Phase, 14-29 August 2021

This section provides a country-by-country overview of policies during the Evacuation Phase, 14 – 29 August, listing:

- a) The **numbers** of individuals evacuated
- b) **Reception** after evacuation and
- c) **Good practices and shortcomings** for each country

Australia

Australia's [military evacuation plan](#) took place between [18 and 26 August 2021](#) and included more than [250 troops](#), sent as part of the mission to Afghanistan, Canberra and the United Arab Emirates. Eligible for evacuation were [Afghans](#) who had worked with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Afghan visa holders. On the 19 August 2021, Australia [asked its citizens and Afghan nationals](#) with visas to travel to Kabul airport. While some Australian families were told to wait at a [designated pick-up point](#) for a bus, [it has been reported](#) that some Afghan families with visas had not been given the opportunity to board.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

During August 2021, a total of [4,168](#) people were evacuated (on [32 flights from Kabul](#)), [including](#) 2,984 Afghan nationals with approved visas.

Reception after evacuation

Some evacuees were transferred to Australia's military base in the [United Arab Emirates](#) before being transferred to Australia. In Australia, they were first brought to a 14 day mandatory hotel [quarantine](#).

Good practices

- + In August 2021 Australia [backflipped](#) on its decision to deny visas to more than 100 former security guards who worked at the Australian embassy in Kabul as contractors rather than direct employees.

Shortcomings

- The January 2022 interim report of a [Senate inquiry](#) found that the delay in relocating staff earlier meant that some were subsequently injured or killed by the Taliban.
- It took 5 days (until 22 August) before the Government decided to offer [emergency subclass 449 visas for those who had applied for the LEE program but were not certified](#), which meant that some did not manage to leave Afghanistan during the evacuation.
- The April 2022 final report of the [Senate Inquiry](#) also identified that it was not just locally employed staff who could not get onto busses who missed flights out of Kabul airport but many locally

employed staff with 449 visas³⁵ were rejected at the airport gates because of the wording of the emails from Home Affairs/Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Significant communication failures were found between and across departments.

- The Australian Embassy guards were initially mass-rejected as locally employed staff via a templated letter emailed to them but after extensive media and lobbying, as described in [evidence submitted by GAP Veteran and Legal Services to the Senate](#) (Submission 18), this was changed such that they were considered on a case-by-case basis and many were accepted. There are still some guards who were refused with no explanation given and whose circumstances are identical to many who were accepted as LEEs.
- [The names of family members were left off applicants'](#) Emergency 449 visas because of a lack of communication between Home Affairs and Australian consular staff.

Canada

The Canadian evacuation [Operation AEGIS](#) took place between 4 and 26 August 2021. [Military aircraft/civilian chartered flights](#) transported evacuees. [Eligible](#) were Afghans with significant and/or enduring relationships with Canada, in particular interpreters who worked with the Canadian Armed Forces and local staff who currently or used to work at the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan (and their accompanying family members). The ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) was [responding](#) to requests for information via email and phone calls.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

Canada evacuated over [3,700](#) people from Afghanistan. More than 3,000 evacuees had arrived in Canada by 3 September 2021. [2,000](#) of those were Afghans (with their family members) [who had supported Canadian soldiers and diplomats](#) in the past. Canada also [agreed to accept up to 5,000 Afghans](#) whose evacuations were facilitated by the US, and these evacuees would be part of the number of Afghans who would be resettled in Canada.

Reception after evacuation

Out of the 3,700 evacuated more [than 3,000 had arrived in Canada](#) until September 2021. A 12 month [Resettlement Assistance Programme](#) for Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) provided support for basic needs, and temporary housing along with a 12 month Interim Federal Health Plan. The Canadian relocation schemes (see previous section on Phase 1) provide individuals and their immediate family members with [a pathway to permanent residence in Canada](#).

Those who came under the new Canadian Special Immigration Measures, announced on 23 July 2021 all arrived with Permanent Resident (PR) status, although given the speed of evacuation and Covid quarantine, the Confirmation of PR (COPR) was at times delayed by a few weeks as they needed to complete some of the needed protocols in Canada. Once evacuees were handed their PR, they could

³⁵ Emergency visas, known as [subclass 449 visas](#), have been issued during the Kabul evacuation in order for Afghans to [quickly](#) flee Afghanistan. Subclass 449 Humanitarian Stay visa is for people who are forced to flee their country, or they are likely to be displaced, and there is fear to their safety because of their personal circumstances.

obtain a SIN (Social Insurance Number) and were granted all the rights (other than voting rights) that a Canadian citizen can access.³⁶

Good practices

- + As part of special measures for Afghanistan, effective from 23 August 2021, [Canada is prioritising](#) family reunification for Afghan nationals under the following categories: family class applications, applications from protected persons in Canada and their dependents overseas, and applications from dependents of resettled Afghan refugees.

Shortcomings

- The evacuation process was characterised by a '[procedural confusion](#)' and there was [insufficient information](#) for those trying to reach the airport.
- The Canadian Government was [criticised](#) for failing to help interpreters and their families get through Taliban checkpoints to the airport or negotiate safe passage, including by former senior Canadian military commanders.

Denmark

Between [19 and 27 August 2021](#) Denmark carried out an evacuation 'Operation Alamo' with [military aircrafts](#) on the basis of a [political agreement](#) among Denmark's [political parties](#) from 11 August 2021. The political agreement from August led to the proposal of a special law, presented in October 2021 (see next section). [Eligible](#) were former military interpreters and employees at the embassy in Kabul with their families, agreed on by 11 August, and [two days later eligibility expanded](#) to include employees from Danish NGOs and [locally hired EU and NATO staff](#). The evacuation scheme also covered individuals who have applied under the [2013 Interpreters' Agreement](#). A final group categorised as "[others](#)" were evacuated based on a humanitarian assessment at the Kabul airport, despite not fulfilling the criteria of the political agreement.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

A total of [1,077](#) Afghans were evacuated to Denmark, including [236](#) under the category 'interpreters and their family members'.

Reception after evacuation

The evacuees [arrived in Denmark after many days spent in airports](#) and started their stay with a Covid-19 quarantine. Most of the evacuees were then transferred to asylum centres in Denmark and were [expected](#) to be transferred to municipalities at the beginning of 2022. Afghan evacuees will obtain [a two-year residence permit \(see also section 1\)](#). There were evacuations from Afghanistan of [people who had no passport](#) but who did have other travel documents, like laissez-passers or Afghanistan's National identity cards (tazkira). As stated in the [Danish Joint Evaluation of the Evacuations from Afghanistan](#), in early August 2021 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered 500 "visa stickers" to be placed in passports as well as 500 urgent passports for interpreters and other locally employed staff who had applied via the interpreter

³⁶ Information provided by Wendy Long, 12 May 2022.

agreement and who were not in possession of travel documents. However, there were still various challenges related to the process of getting documents and passports during the evacuation.³⁷

Applicants must have a temporary stay of 8 years in total before being eligible to apply for permanent residence.

Good practices

- + Denmark [suspended deportations of rejected asylum seekers](#) to Afghanistan (But also suspended the assessment of Afghan asylum cases, see below).
- + On the 27 August 2021, the [Danish government mandated an evaluation](#) of the course of events leading up to the fall of Kabul on 15 August 2021 and the subsequent evacuation from Afghanistan.

Shortcomings

- The evacuation was [chaotic](#). [Access to the airport](#) was limited, even if someone had managed to get on the Danish list.
- According to the Danish authorities' [joint evaluation](#) of the evacuation from Afghanistan, during the evacuation, Danish NGOs and partner organisations were challenged "by the ambiguity and lack of transparency regarding the selection criteria for evacuation" used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The residency permit will [only last 2 years](#) and cannot be extended. The only route available is to apply for asylum afterwards, or before the permit expires. It is hence noteworthy to mention that 48 of the Danish evacuees left Denmark again (mostly to the UK and US) because of this limitation. DK has a record of extremely low recognition rates for Afghans. From January 2021 until August, it was [3%](#), in 2020 it was [17%](#), while the EU average was 58%.
- On 16 August 2021, the Refugee Appeals Board [suspended](#) the examination of Afghan asylum cases. The Danish Immigration Service also put the examination of Afghan asylum applications on hold. However, Dublin III cases regarding Afghan asylum seekers were still being processed.
- [The main applicant can apply for family reunification](#) with their nuclear family members, but family members who were evacuated with the main applicant do not have the same rights. According to [ECRE](#), for them family reunification with other family members will only be possible in very special cases. For principal applicants who only included minors or nuclear family in their application, it is very difficult to now apply for reunification with additional family members and the chances for these members to be accepted are very meagre, while the process takes a long time.

France

Between [17 and 27 August 2021](#) France started "[Operation APAGAN](#)" and carried out evacuation flights with [air force transport planes](#). France organised at their base in the [United Arab Emirates](#) the capabilities to receive evacuees. [Operational contacts](#) also took place with Taliban representatives to facilitate evacuation operations. The eligibility [criteria](#) for the selection of evacuees were unclear, but [in general](#), translators, drivers, cooks, other former employees, and French citizens were eligible.

³⁷ Information shared by Emma Katarina Andersen and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, 11 May 2022.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

France committed to resettling [2,500](#) individuals and evacuated some [3,000](#), including more than [2,600](#) 'at risk' Afghans. [Between March and July 2021](#), 624 Afghans were evacuated. However, these numbers do not specifically refer to Afghan former local staff. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 30 families of former local staff working for the French military have been evacuated (including family members, the total number was [110](#)).

Reception after evacuation

Evacuees arrived directly to France and some through [Qatar \(Doha\)](#), and the French military base in [Abu Dhabi](#) with their arrival in France being coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior. After a Covid-19 quarantine period, [evacuees had access to a specific single-desk contact point](#) to register their asylum claim which was [fast-tracked](#). Evacuees were accommodated in [reception centres](#) for asylum seekers.

Good practices

- + In August 2021 France [suspended deportations](#) of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan. However, [France still returns Afghan asylum seekers to EU countries](#) that have already rejected their asylum claim.
- + After Kabul evacuation a [special one-stop shop opened in Paris](#), where evacuees could register asylum applications.
- + France started the evacuation of local staff earlier than some other countries. [Between March and July 2021](#), 624 Afghans (mostly current Embassy staff and staff of French secondary schools in Afghanistan) were evacuated.

Shortcomings

- Former staff working for the French army were left behind, despite the fact that there was [a decision of the Administrative Court ordering to evacuate them](#) (12 March 2021, Administrative Appeal Court of Nantes N° 19NT04741).
- Eligibility criteria for those evacuated were [unclear](#).
- According to information provided by a legal expert, all the "operation APAGAN" individuals evacuated were admitted under the asylum process. However, this constitutes a reduction of former local staff's rights since they were not treated under the "Functional Protection" law (see section 1), which had been the case prior to the evacuation.

Germany

Between [17 and 27 August 2021](#) Germany used [military aircrafts](#) for the evacuation efforts. It [seems](#) that the Minister of External Affairs created a list outlining the evacuation criteria, but this was not made public. [In general](#), former employees and others deemed in need of protection, including human rights defenders, women's rights activists and journalists were supposed to have been included, but it is not clear how evacuees were selected. Germany also [contributed to the US](#) evacuation by providing transit to at-risk Afghans via the US Air Base at Ramstein.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

In August 2021 the German authorities initially identified only [174](#) locally employed staff with their nuclear family as eligible for evacuation, resulting in a total of 886 people being evacuated. At the end of the evacuation Germany evacuated [5,374](#) individuals in total, including 3,849 Afghans and 403 Germans and people from a lot of other countries. [According to a declaration](#) by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior by the end of August 2021 only 138 former German local employees and 496 of their nuclear family members (spouses and minor children, in total 634 people) had been evacuated during the evacuation mission. Separately, the US evacuated people through Germany, meaning that they fall under US responsibility; [however](#) some of them expressed the desire to lodge their asylum claim in Germany, mostly due to family links.

In September 2021, Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior announced that [more than 40,000](#) Afghan nationals, who in the past have worked for German authorities and military in Afghanistan (including their close family members) are still stuck in the country after evacuation flights have ended.

Reception after evacuation

Afghan evacuees landed at the [Ramstein US Air Base in Germany](#). Prior to that, at the airport, they were all given an [entry visa](#) valid for 90 days. Those most likely entitled to German protection who manage to reach neighbouring Pakistan are also granted the same visa there. That visa is not, legally speaking, a visa, but rather a [special permit](#). This grants a temporary residency so that the authorities can check the eligibility for a residency permit for up to three years on the grounds of 'urgent humanitarian reasons'. The majority of Afghans arriving in Germany receive a residence permit for humanitarian grounds under Art. 22 (2) Residence Act, which is bespoke for former locally employed staff (see section 1). In cases where Afghans have not received this, they can apply through the [regular asylum procedures](#).

[There are two ongoing procedures to resettle people](#) from Afghanistan: First, an admission programme for local staff who have worked with German ministries (Interior, Foreign, Defence, Development) (see section 1). The eligibility criteria depend on the status of the former employee. Only former staff (and their close family members) who had been directly employed by German government organisations after 1 July 2019 are covered by the programme. In August 2021, the procedure for admission changed. [Since then](#), so-called admission commitments have been issued if a notification of risk to the federal government was successful. Secondly, [a programme for the evacuation of Afghans at very high risk \(human rights defenders, journalists\)](#), with exact details still to be released.

Good practices

- + Germany [suspended deportations](#) of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan.

Shortcomings

- [The admission and evacuation procedures were not clear and](#) there were issues about consistency and speed.
- Germany prepared lists of people at very high risk of persecution, such as human rights defenders, who would be eligible for admission under Article 22, but these lists were open only for a [limited time](#) until the end of August 2021.

- More than 4,000 Afghans who have a right to family reunification are on the waiting list to submit an application, while visa processing sites in the region had only processed around [100 applications per month](#) from January until September 2021.

The Netherlands

Between [18 and 26 August 2021](#) evacuation flights took place with [military aircrafts](#). Some of the evacuees [were called to assemble](#) at a location and then departed in a convoy for the airport (these were mainly Afghans with Dutch nationality). According to the [Minister of Defence](#), all interpreters had been contacted; however, this is unlikely given that administrative records were incomplete. The Government [conceded that they had not managed to evacuate 22 out of the 67](#) interpreters and other local staff they had registered as eligible for relocation on 15 August 2021. The number of local staff left behind further increased when more people became eligible for relocation after 18 August 2021 (see below) [following the parliamentary motion led by MP Selma Belhaj, such as employees of Dutch NGO projects, activists and fixers of Dutch journalists](#). The multiple failures in the run-up to the fall of Kabul and during the evacuation of Kabul prompted [two ministers to resign](#) in its wake.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

Following [a parliamentary motion led by MP Selma Belhaj](#), on 18 August, after the fall of Kabul [new eligibility criteria were agreed for](#) the evacuation which included Afghans who had worked for the Netherlands or for international military/ police missions as part of the Dutch contributions, such as employees of Dutch development projects, human rights defenders, women's rights defenders, and (fixers of) journalists. Between 15 to 26 August 2021, [1,860 individuals were evacuated, including](#) 370 individuals with their families falling under the parliamentary [motion Belhaj](#) (18 August 2021), a total of 436 under the category 'interpreters and high-profile defence and police mission personnel and family members', 217 local staff from the Dutch Embassy and 49 local staff from international organisations (EU, UN, NATO). *NB: each of these figures already include family members.*

Reception after evacuation

[Accommodation](#) is at reception centres and a military base, where the initial steps of the asylum procedure take place, following which people will be housed in reception centres or permanent accommodation. However, in May 2022, many are still in temporary accommodation in less-than-ideal conditions. Evacuees are eligible to [apply for asylum](#) in the Netherlands.

Good practices

- + After the fall of Kabul, the Netherlands [extended the policy to include PRT \(Provincial Reconstruction Team\) security guards and other local staff](#), who were initially excluded and even rejected as late as 15 August 2021, [under pressure from civil society and opposition politicians](#).
- + The Netherlands [suspended deportations](#) of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan.
- + The [asylum procedure was shortened](#) for Afghans.

Shortcomings

- The fact that the eligibility criteria were only extended *during* the evacuation phase, meant that a significant number of eligible staff were not able to reach the airport on time before the evacuation ended.
- There was a lack of professional crisis team staff managing the evacuation; the Netherlands instead [used placement students](#) to help evacuate Afghan interpreters.
- [The approaches of the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs were misaligned](#) concerning several key decisions and procedures regarding the evacuation, leading to unequal treatment of local staff.
- Evacuees have been living in [substandard emergency reception centres for months since their evacuation](#).

United Kingdom

[Operation Pitting](#) took place between [15 and 28 August 2021](#). [The operation consisted](#) of more than [1,000 troops](#) to secure Kabul airport, military aircrafts and establishing a [command and control centre](#) beyond Kabul airport. The evacuation implemented commitments made by the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy ([ARAP](#)). Eligible for evacuation were [Afghans who served the UK](#) and their dependents and particularly vulnerable Afghans, as well as British nationals.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

The UK evacuated in total approximately [15,000](#) people, [including](#) close to 5,000 Afghans along with their dependents (including 2,000 children), around 500 special cases of vulnerable Afghans and over 8,000 British nationals. In total in the month of August 2021 (including the evacuation), [891 locally employed staff were resettled under ARAP](#). Further breakdown shows that these 891 comprised of 495 staff locally employed by the Ministry of Defence; 242 by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 43 British Council staff and 111 in the category 'all other personnel'.

Reception after evacuation

[The UK established an airbridge](#) between the UK and Afghanistan with stop-overs taking place in the United Arab Emirates. The UK Home Office [announced](#) on 1 September 2021 that those coming to the UK through resettlement routes would receive immediate indefinite leave to remain (instead of the original 5 year unlimited entry visa). This would apply to Afghans who worked closely with the British military and UK government in Afghanistan and who were resettled under ARAP, as well as those who would come under the [newly launched ACRS scheme](#).

Good practices

- + From August 2021, both those resettled under ARAP and ACRS were granted Indefinite Leave to Remain automatically.

Shortcomings

- According to a [House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee report](#) (24 May 2022), "the UK Government did too little to lay the groundwork with countries in the region to secure their help for an evacuation effort."

- The [capacity of the ARAP application assessment team](#) did not reflect the urgent and rapidly evolving situation. Staff turn-over led to a lack of situational awareness.
- [311 individuals whose eligibility for ARAP had already been established before the evacuation commenced](#) were nevertheless not evacuated. As of 10 December 2021, 166 of those people still remained in Afghanistan. However, this is only the number of those whose applications were already approved and not evacuated, and there are many more who were eligible but whose applications were not completely processed yet. According to a May 2022 report by the [Foreign Affairs Select Committee](#) 1,500 Afghans who worked for the UK were eligible for ARAP and called forward to Kabul airport, but were not evacuated on time.
- Nearly [three million calls](#) were made over the evacuation period, of which government officials answered only 28,000.
- A [testimony](#) by a whistle-blower who worked for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in December 2021 reveals that under 5% of the between 75,000 and 150,000 people who applied for evacuation under the Leave Outside the Rules scheme received any assistance. Another whistle-blower from the FCDO [revealed in March 2022](#) that “There was confusion within the Crisis Centre as well as externally as to which cohorts of people were eligible to be considered for evacuation under which mechanism [...] this lack of clarity on policy positions compounded confusion, chaos, and risk to lives.”

United States

[Operation Allies Refuge](#) took place between [14 and 30 August 2021](#) with [6,000 troops](#) and the US [anticipated to resettle 95,000](#) Afghans to the US by the end of September 2022.

The first phase of [Operation Allies Refuge](#) (OAR) started on 14 July and ended on 15 August 2021. This first phase was primarily focused on late stage SIV applicants and was intended to last months, if not over a year. The second phase took place between [15 and 30 August 2021](#) with [6,000 troops and](#) was the airlift of those in the proximity of Kabul airport. During the evacuation [military and diplomatic efforts](#) took place to pressure the Taliban to ensure safe passage to the airport.

State-civil society collaboration was instrumental during the evacuation. The State Department reached out to the [Evacuate Our Allies civil society coalition](#) on the evening of 14 August to provide a list of travel ready evacuees in Kabul. The coalition worked to create the primary portal which Afghans on the ground could communicate to the State Department for departure. This coalition and sister coalition (#AfghanEvac) were directly responsible for working with the State to identify and manifest on flight thousands of evacuees. It also coordinated with other governments to allow private charters to land in places like Macedonia, the Philippines, Uganda, and other countries. While this effort was primarily a US government mission, it would not have been nearly as successful without the thousands of civil society actors involved.³⁸

The US airlifted Afghan nationals not only to its own territory, but also to US military facilities abroad and to third countries. Evacuees had to get approval from the US and then fly to a military base in Qatar, Bahrain, Italy, Spain, Germany, Kuwait, or the United Arab Emirates. On 20 August 2021 the US Secretary

³⁸ Information provided by Chris Purdy, 13 May 2022.

of State stated that 14 countries had allowed or would be allowing the transit of American evacuees and evacuees of other nationals, [including](#) Afghans, through their territories: Bahrain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. The US administration refers to some of these transit sites as “lily-pad sites”.

In August 2021 the US broadened the eligibility criteria to those working for US/Afghan-based NGOs or American media. In particular, the Department of State announced on 2 August 2021 [a Priority 2 \(P-2\)](#) designation granting US Refugee Admissions Programme (USRAP) access for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members. This designation expanded the opportunity to permanently resettle in the US³⁹ to Afghans and their immediate family members who may be at risk due to their US affiliation but who are not eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) because they did not have qualifying employment, or because they have not met the time-in-service requirement to become eligible. More specifically, eligible were Afghans who:⁴⁰

- i. Do not meet the minimum time-in-service for a SIV but who work or worked as employees of contractors; locally-employed staff, interpreters/translators for the US Government, United States Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), or Resolute Support.
- ii. Afghans who work or worked for a US government-funded programme or project in Afghanistan supported through a US government grant or cooperative agreement.
- iii. Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a US-based media organisation or non-governmental organisation.

Furthermore, the Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021, enacted on 30 July 2021, authorised 8,000 additional Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Afghan principal applicants, for a total of 34,500 visas allocated since 19 December 2014.

Numbers of individuals evacuated

A Washington Post article of May 2022, citing US officials, states that [about 76,000 Afghans](#) were evacuated during the airlift. About [24,000 had arrived in the US \(by September 2021\), 23,000 were on US military bases abroad, and 20,000 were waiting in other countries](#).

The vast majority of Afghans (70,192) evacuated to the US were granted [Humanitarian Parole](#) because they had no other status (completed SIV, legal permanent residence, citizenship, etc.). Humanitarian parole [is a temporary status](#), usually granted for one to two years, that enables individuals without a visa to enter the US for humanitarian reasons. However the adoption of Humanitarian Parole has been criticised as being problematic, because it is [temporary](#), for two years, during which time people would need to adjust their status; most would need to apply for asylum, a system that presently has a backlog of 1.4 million cases.⁴¹

³⁹ However, there are serious deficiencies in the programme. It is overly restrictive and there has not been any meaningful processing of P2 applications, which wait times averaging over a year where people must be waiting outside the US. (Information shared by Christopher Purdy, 12 May 2022).

⁴⁰ The experts we spoke with expressed grave concerns about this programme, not because it shouldn't exist but because they did not think it was likely to result in meaningful safety for the overwhelming majority of applicants.

⁴¹ On 29 April 2022, the White House sent a request to Congress for legislation [giving Afghan refugees a path to legal permanent residence](#) after being in the US for a year (see section 3).

Those who qualified for some sort of protective immigration pathway given their affiliation with the US or other Western governments can be divided into the following subcategories: [P1 referral – 1,941; P2 referral – 2,109; SIV completed – 3,290; SIV applicants – 36,821](#). As expert Chris Purdy from Human Rights First noted⁴², the number of people in the ‘SIV applicants’ category is remarkably high and his organisation’s estimate of who would be actual SIV applicants is much lower; this reading seems to be confirmed by anonymous US government officials quoted in the Washington Post who suggested that [“more than 30,000 of these people, and their families, are associated with the CIA” \(rather than being actual SIV applicants\)](#). A remaining 36,433 have no pathway and must apply for asylum. A Washington post article describes this group (about 40% of the total evacuees) as [“the most opaque category \[...\] who could not claim any direct US government service but managed to get on the planes anyway”](#), and suggest that some may have US family or are extended family of SIV applicants.

Reception after evacuation

[Many Afghans](#) temporarily moved to at least eight countries that agreed to take people who may ultimately reach the US or will be resettled elsewhere. In [February 2022](#), advocates and protesters estimated that there were approximately [12,000 housed across two facilities in Abu Dhabi](#), living in tightly controlled facilities.

[Prior to their arrival to the US](#), Afghans were subjected to biometric and biographic screenings conducted by intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism officials – mostly taking place outside the US territory, in transit countries abroad. [After arriving in the US](#), Afghan nationals were moved to one of eight US military bases charged with temporarily housing people while being processed. [Media reported](#) that as of 14 September, approximately 82,000 Afghans had arrived in the US, of which 49,000 remained on domestic military bases.⁴³

In terms of legal status granted, the US maintained the same policies as before the fall of Kabul (see section 1): [Special Immigrant Visas](#) (SIVs) for [translators or interpreters](#) and [the SQ visa class](#) for any other Afghan employed by/ on behalf of the US. [These programmes provide a direct pathway to a green card](#). Furthermore, as mentioned above, the [Emergency Security Supplemental Appropriations Act](#), enacted on 30 July 2021, authorised 8,000 additional SIVs for Afghan principal applicants.

Good practices

- + The ability of the US to organise in a few weeks an [extra-territorial transit and processing system](#) for Afghan evacuees spanning several regions.
- + The US [broadened](#) the eligibility requirements to those working for US- and Afghan-based NGOs or American media.
- + Strong lobbying [by collectives of civil society organisations](#) and, eventually, state cooperation with these collectives enabled more Afghan local staff to leave the country.

⁴² Expert input 13th of May 2022.

⁴³ Military bases were cleared in early 2022, with Afghans relocated around the country (see also section 3).

Shortcomings

- According to a report by the [United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations \(February 2022\)](#)⁴⁴, the failure of the US to act proactively resulted in a rushed evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Americans, third-country nationals, and Afghans. It left behind tens of thousands of Afghan partners. The US government also ignored numerous intelligence reports about the potential for a speedy Taliban takeover of Kabul.
- Despite their direct employment by the US government, the US National Security Council (NSC) only tasked Embassy Kabul with notifying interested locally employed staff about the need to sign up for relocation to the United States [mere hours before the fall of Kabul](#).
- The evacuation was marred by a [lack of planning, coordination, and communication](#). The US failed to establish a clear system of how to contact evacuees and processes to allow them into the airport.
- [The route to Kabul airport was fraught with uncertainty](#). Those who reached the airport perimeter have [reported](#) waiting hours to enter with the US Embassy advising that “due to large crowds and security concerns, gates may open or close without notice [...] Please use your best judgment and attempt to enter the airport at any gate that is open.” But these efforts [created their own set of risks](#) to the safety and security of people’s vital personal information.
- Following the evacuation a total of [60,000](#) Afghan interpreters and others who have applied for visas to seek shelter in the US after working alongside American forces remained in Afghanistan.
- The model of Operation Allies Welcome raises some serious [human rights questions](#) in light of reports of restrictions on freedom of movement for Afghan evacuees in US military bases and detention and transfer to third countries of Afghan evacuees who have not cleared the US security checks.
- [According to various immigration advocates](#), years of [budget cuts to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) have left some government-funded resettlement agencies struggling to find resources and staffing to support Afghan evacuees.

⁴⁴ The report was produced solely by the minority party (the Republicans) and is hence a highly political document. While we find it useful to cite this source among the many other sources included in this report, it has to be noted that its credibility and impartiality has been disputed.

Phase 3: Country-Specific Overview of Ongoing Resettlement Policies and Support *post-August 2021*

This section provides a country-by-country overview of ongoing resettlement policies and support *post-August 2021*, listing:

- a) **reception conditions**
- b) **numbers** and
- c) **good practices and shortcomings** for each country.

Australia

On 21 January 2022, Australia [introduced changes](#) to the migration legislation to support Afghan nationals evacuated from Afghanistan to undertake permanent visa processes in Australia. All Afghan evacuees in Australia with a subclass 449 visa have had their visas automatically extended for another 12 months (as they were initially only valid for three months). However, the temporary humanitarian visa (subclass 449) issue remains unresolved for those who did not make it to Australia, as their 449 visas did not get extended and they are now on ‘the pile’ of applications for humanitarian visas.

On 21 January 2022 the immigration minister also [announced](#) that Australia will provide at least 15,000 places, through the Humanitarian and Family Stream Programme for Afghan nationals. This allocation includes 10,000 offshore Humanitarian Programme places over four years to Afghan nationals. This number includes 5,000 places in the 2021-22 programme year. This is 2,000 more than the 3,000 places [announced](#) on 18 August 2021. Furthermore, on 29 March 2022 the Australian Government [announced](#) 16,500 places for Afghan nationals (over the next four years) [on top of the existing Humanitarian Programme](#). The increased humanitarian intake for Afghans is expected to cover all Afghans and not just locally employed staff. Refugee advocacy services have, however, indicated that the quota of Afghans has been reached for 2022, which explains why no further visas have been received since the initial 3500 (inclusive of family members).

Australia [gives priority](#) in the Humanitarian Programme to: former Locally Engaged Employees and their immediate family members; subclass 449 holders (current and former) and their immediate family members; those with enduring links to Australia, such as Afghans who were employed by Australian non-government organisations or who worked on Australian Government funded projects, and Coalition partner LEE and their immediate family; and women and girls, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ and other identified minority groups.

Reception Conditions

Afghan nationals are [entitled](#) to continued access to Australian government services while they undertake the permanent visa process. The Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alex Hawke [said](#), in January 2022, that [more than 4,300](#) Afghan evacuees have been brought to Australia and are in the process of securing permanent visas over coming months. He also said that due to an unprecedented level of visa applications from Afghanistan for the Humanitarian and Migration visa

programmes, teams within the Department of Home Affairs have been established to undertake priority processing.

Numbers

Australia initially committed to resettle [3,000](#) individuals. More than [26,000](#) applications were made by Afghans to settle in Australia since the fall of Kabul. By November 2021 the Department of Defence had processed more than 1,600 applications and [677 out of them were deemed eligible](#), more than 500 applications were deemed ineligible, more than 350 were closed when applicants pulled out and 70 were outstanding.

Good practices

- + In November 2021 Home Affairs [announced](#) it would extend the 449 visas for 12 months.
- + In January 2022, Australia announced they will provide at least [15,000](#) places through the Humanitarian and Family Stream Programme for Afghan nationals, over four years. On 29 March 2022 the Australian government also announced 16,500 places for all Afghan nationals (over the next four years) on top of the existing Humanitarian Programme.

Shortcomings

- The Australian government warned Afghan nationals not to come to Australia [by boat as they will not be resettled](#). Practically, Australia blocked the normal right to apply for asylum based on the method of arrival.
- The decision process for refugee and humanitarian visa can [take many months, or even years](#).
- In October 2021, [a former Afghan interpreter for the Australian Defence Force](#), whose family had tried to apply for a humanitarian visa for him, was killed.
- According to evidence provided to the Senate ([Submission 18](#), received by the Senate Committee on 9 October 2021), the family of an interpreter who was killed whilst working for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and who have family members already in Australia are now languishing in a refugee camp in Texas, because of a lack of communication and non-responsiveness by DFAT.

Canada

On 13 August 2021 the Canadian government [announced](#) plans to resettle up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghan nationals in Canada and a month later, on 27 September, the government [doubled that number](#) to 40,000.

Canada currently has 3 specific Programmes for Afghanistan:

- I. [SIM](#) (Immigration program for Afghans who assisted the Government of Canada). Eligible are interpreters who worked with the Canadian armed forces and other local staff who currently or used to work at the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan.
- II. [SHP](#) (Humanitarian program for Afghan nationals in need of resettlement). Eligible are Afghan nationals outside of Afghanistan who do not have a durable solution in a third country and are part of one of the following groups: Women leaders; human rights defenders; persecuted religious or ethnic minorities; LGBTI individuals; journalists and those who helped Canadian journalists.
- III. [2009-12 Extended Families](#) (5000 spots allocated). Eligible are Afghan nationals, outside of Canada who were in Afghanistan on or after 22 July 2021. Applicants must have a completed and signed statutory

declaration from their Afghan family member who immigrated to Canada under the 2009 or 2012 special immigration programs. The family member in Canada must be one of the following:

Parent, grandparent, child or grandchild, sibling (including half-siblings), sibling-in-law.

Reception Conditions

Government-assisted refugees (GARs) resettle in [communities](#) where there is an IRCC-funded resettlement service provider organisation. [The Province of Quebec](#) receives separate funding to provide similar services as part of the Canada-Quebec Accord. Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) settle in the same community as their sponsor.

Former interpreters and other local staff who came under the Canadian Special Immigration Measures

announced in July 2021, all receive Permanent Resident (PR) status, which gives access to a SIN (Social Insurance Number) and all the rights (other than voting rights) that a Canadian citizen can access. Permanent Residents are eligible to apply for Canadian Citizenship after a minimum of 3 years of residency.

Afghan nationals [receive](#) priority processing for family reunification (sponsorship) applications, permanent and temporary residence applications. Those with valid confirmations of permanent residence, who were outside Canada when their permanent resident visa was approved, will have their biometrics fees waived, along with the requirement to have a valid passport or travel document. Afghan nationals who are immediate family members of Canadian citizens or permanent residents and are traveling to Canada with that family member from Afghanistan or another country on the way to Canada will also have those waived along with their temporary resident permit application fees.

[The Calgary Catholic Immigration Society](#) is coordinating volunteers and donations throughout the country on behalf of Resettlement Assistance Programme service providers. Through these networks and organisations, refugees can get information find housing and jobs, improve their language skills, get involved in the community, gain critical cultural knowledge and receive psychological and other support.

Numbers

On 27 September 2021, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister announced that Canada would double their initial promise (which was 20,000) and resettle up to [40,000 Afghans](#) to Canada. In December 2021, the Immigration Minister Sean Fraser said [it could take two years](#) to fulfil the Canadian government's promise of bringing 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada.

In October 2021 veterans [said](#) they were in contact with more than 10,000 Afghans who had applied to come to Canada under the federal government's special immigration programme, but were still in Afghanistan. Either they lacked approval from Canadian immigration authorities, or they could not leave Afghanistan because they did not have a passport, a requirement for entry into Pakistan.

From August 2021 until 5 May 2022 [12,605](#) individuals had arrived in Canada, under all streams. In particular, for Afghan nationals arriving through the [special immigration programme for those who assisted the Government of Canada](#) 14,905 applications were received, 10,315 applications were approved and 6,230 individuals arrived in Canada. 6,375 Afghan nationals have arrived in Canada through the

[humanitarian programme](#) and fall under the government-assisted refugee and privately sponsored refugee programmes.

On 9 May 2022 the opposition New Democratic Party (NPD) demanded from the Immigration Minister [urgent answers](#) about what has happened to the applications of 2,900 Afghans who helped the Canadian military and [whose credentials were checked and verified](#) by the Department of National Defence (DND), but whose applications to come to Canada had not yet been approved. The Defence chief Gen. Wayne Eyre stated in a [testimony on 9 May 2022](#) that the Defence Department had checked and verified the credentials of 3,800 Afghans, including interpreters, who supported the Canadian military. However, the committee heard from the deputy defence minister that only 900 of them have had their applications to come to Canada accepted so far by the Immigration Department (it is likely that 900 principal applicants corresponds to the total number of the 3,700 Afghans who were evacuated as this number includes family members⁴⁵).

On the [9 May 2022, a motion led by New Democratic Party caucus chair Jenny Kwan was accepted](#) asking Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to confirm that they have received the 3,800 applications referred by DND, advising how many have been processed with an invitation and assigned a reference (G) number, how many have arrived in Canada and when could the rest of the 2,900 applications expect to be processed.

Good practices

- + In December 2021 the House of Commons passed a motion to establish a committee to investigate Canada's handling of Kabul evacuation. [The scope of this investigation](#) is focusing on the events surrounding the Taliban takeover in August 2021, and how Canada failed to prepare for that eventuality. One focus of the parliamentary probe will be Canada's failure to have a plan in place to evacuate those Afghans who had assisted Canadian troops.

Shortcomings

- In May 2022, it was still unclear what [has happened to the 2,900 SIM applicants verified by DND who have not been evacuated to Canada](#).
- By the end of March 2022, dozens of Afghan interpreters that worked with Canada's military [initiated a hunger strike](#) on Parliament Hill, to demand that the federal government do more to help their endangered families left behind in Afghanistan. As they argued, the process is very slow; the government promised they would bring their families in the first two or three months of 2022, but they did not see any results.
- By May 2022 many Afghans are still hiding in Afghanistan, as they wait for "[long-promised travel documents](#)" from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), or for Afghan passports. [IRCC requires applicants to provide biometric data before being issued travel documents](#), which is impossible to do within Afghanistan, forcing individuals to travel to third countries such as Pakistan.
- On 14/15 May 2022, an Afghan man hoping for resettlement in Canada was [shot dead by the Taliban](#), an advocacy group reported.

⁴⁵ Information provided by Wendy Long and Amanda Moddejonge, 12th of May 2022.

Denmark

Denmark has [no provision for humanitarian visas](#). It is still possible to apply for a visa to Denmark under the 2013 Interpreters' Agreement, which grants access to Denmark and the possibility to apply for asylum. The basis of residence will be temporary with a time limit of two years without the possibility of extension. Those who are covered by the special and temporary residence basis will, however, be able to apply for a residence permit pursuant to the Aliens Act after arrival in Denmark and on that basis obtain the status and rights that follow from the rules, including in relation to family reunification.

The local employee's spouse / cohabitant and unmarried children under 18 are generally included. In very special cases, other persons in the household for whom the local employee is responsible for maintenance can also be considered. Only one accompanying spouse will be able to join the immediate family, just as no spouse under the age of 18 will be accepted. [Furthermore](#), family members who were evacuated with the main applicant do not have the same rights. For them, family reunification with other family members will only be possible in very special cases.

Reception Conditions

The evacuated persons have to participate in [security interviews](#) with the Danish authorities after arrival in Denmark. This is a condition for the right to the two-year stay in Denmark that the evacuated persons are not considered to pose a danger to Denmark's security.

The evacuated Afghans are staying at asylum centres in Denmark and were expected to be [transferred to municipalities](#) at the beginning of 2022. However, by February 2022, [only 256 out of 907](#) evacuated Afghans (those without Danish residence permit) had left the asylum centres and been transferred to municipalities. This prolonged waiting time has resulted in at least 48 Afghans [leaving Denmark to go to other countries](#) instead. Also, [by 7 February 2022](#), 631 individuals had received residence permit under the special law.

When the evacuees arrived in Denmark, they were neither given status as asylum seekers, nor did they have a visa or residence permit. They were simply "[registered](#)" and under the support of the Danish Immigration Service. On 18 November 2021, when the [special law](#) entered into force, Afghan evacuees would not get refugee status, and they would only get 2 years of residence without the possibility of extension. The only apparent advantage was the prospect of a particularly fast case processing. The [special and temporary residence basis](#) is available for employees at the Danish embassy in Kabul, as well as former employees who have been employed during the previous two years. Those who are covered by the special and temporary residence basis will, however, be able to apply for a residence permit pursuant to the Aliens Act after arrival in Denmark and on that basis obtain the status and rights that follow from the rules, including in relation to family reunification.

Numbers

[By 7 February 2022](#), 631 individuals have received a residence permit under the special law, which is valid for 2 years. 29 individuals have been rejected, 438 have applied for asylum at the same time, but none have received an answer yet, 48 cases have been closed (likely because they have since left Denmark) and for family reunification cases the process has just started.

Good practices

- + Denmark was the first country to [publish a public evaluation](#) of the evacuation from Afghanistan.
- + According to the “special law” (see above), the definition of family during the evacuation was [broader](#) than the definition used for refugees.

Shortcomings

- [The main applicant can apply for family reunification](#) with their nuclear family members, but family members who were evacuated with the main applicant do not have the same rights.
- Afghan evacuees are only granted a legal residence permit [for two years](#) in Denmark, after which they have to apply for asylum with uncertain outcomes.
- The special law implies that [applicants are not guaranteed](#) the same protection under international conventions as with asylum.
- The special law was made with the purpose of being a faster and less bureaucratic procedure with better rights for Afghan nationals. It turned out to be even slower than a normal, fast asylum application (both the legal part and the administrative part took months, so applicants waited up to 8 months in the camps). The process included long interviews and the outcome was a much less favourable status than regular asylum.⁴⁶
- [Long waiting times and confusing rules](#). Also, many administrative processes due to parallel applications for asylum.
- The expiration of the ‘Interpreter Agreement’ (the Danish Agreement on the Management of the Situation for Interpreters and Other Locally Employed in Afghanistan’ leaves uncertainty about future arrangements.
- The group of eligible applicants for resettlement included those who had worked for NGOs and international organisations, but former staff people was not aware that they could apply and hence did not meet the deadline. Negotiations to open a follow-up programme for those individuals was turned down in parliament. The organisation Refugees Welcome DK still receives emails from people in urgent need of protection due to their human rights work⁴⁷ and calls upon the Danish Government to allow a pathway for them to apply via the Danish Embassy in Pakistan, for protection through resettlement.

France

French evacuation operations [have resumed](#) since the beginning of September 2021, bringing the total number of Afghans evacuated in ten evacuation flights carried out from Kabul to 396 up to 3 December 2021. After August 2021, evacuees arrive in France after a [transit through Doha](#) in Qatar. Before the Kabul evacuation, France had also [expanded its criteria](#) to increase eligibility for asylum, including to “[endangered civil society persons](#).” [Priority](#) is given to journalists identified by the NGO Reporters Without Borders, but also to trade unionists and family members of interpreters who worked for the French military. The current evacuation scheme only concerns [people with passports](#). Applicants have to [prove](#) “the period of service rendered to the French army, the quality of this service, and the level of the

⁴⁶ Information shared by Michala Clante Bendixen, 15 May 2022.

⁴⁷ Information received from Michala Clante Bendixen, 15 May 2022.

threat.” Afghans are [interviewed](#) at the French embassy in Islamabad, Teheran and New Delhi, and French authorities deliver entry visas valid for three months.

Several former staff members are still left behind. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has continued evacuating local staff working for the former French Army. They contact them via WhatsApp, ask for their documents and give them an appointment at the Serena hotel to give them visas and boarding passes to Qatar. They require a passport for each family member; however, a lot of new-born and toddlers do not have passports, and it is complicated (and risky) to apply for one.

Reception Conditions

Those who have a visa confirmation from the French embassy must pay for their own flights and find accommodation in France themselves and someone in France has to sponsor them, otherwise their visa will be rejected.

Arrivals have their asylum claims [fast-tracked](#). [Once recognised as refugees](#) they are entitled to a 10-year renewable visa, the right to work, and the possibility of becoming a French citizen. According to the [Asylum Information Database](#) (AIDA), refugees are not bound to the five years of residence requirement (see: the [1993 Decree on Citizenship and Civil Code](#) which lists the necessary steps to obtain French citizenship). They are candidates for naturalisation as soon as they are granted asylum. [However](#), those under subsidiary protection must wait for five years before they can try to obtain citizenship. They can reduce this time to two years if they graduate from a French college, if they provide “exceptional service” to France or if they can prove they are incredibly well integrated.

Numbers

French evacuation operations have [resumed](#) since the beginning of September 2021. 120 people arrived since the beginning of October 2021 in a temporary accommodation. On 3 December 2021, a flight evacuated [258](#) Afghan men and women from Kabul via Qatar. Up to 14 February 2022 the total number of Afghan nationals evacuated in ten evacuation flights carried out from Kabul is [396](#).

Good practices

- + After the Kabul evacuation a [special one-stop shop, opened in Paris](#), where evacuees could register asylum applications.
- + Applications of evacuees [were not treated under the accelerated procedures rules](#).

Shortcomings

- Visas are granted conditionally upon applicants arranging their own flights and accommodation as well as a sponsor in France. This puts up a huge barrier for applicants and puts the onus on family or civil society members in France to act as sponsors.
- Up to December 2021 there was a backlog of more than 3,500 family reunification cases with an average wait time of [three and a half years](#).

Germany

Following Kabul evacuation, local employees of German agencies and Afghans who have been identified by the German government as being particularly at risk, and who have already received approval for admission to Germany from the German Government, are [eligible](#) to enter Germany via a neighbouring country of Afghanistan. The immediate family members (normally spouse and minor, unmarried children) of these persons are also included.

Reception Conditions

In Germany, there are two procedures to admit / evacuate certain people from Afghanistan (see sections 1 and 2). Following the evacuation of Kabul, [flights via Doha and the land-route to Pakistan were used](#). The majority of Afghans arriving in Germany receive a residence permit for humanitarian grounds under Art. 22 (2) Residence Act. In cases where Afghans have not received this, they [can apply](#) through the regular asylum procedures.

Numbers

Germany committed to resettling [25,000](#) individuals. By early May 2022 and since the Taliban takeover of power, [more than 3,000](#) local Afghan staff and their families had entered Germany, totalling 13,863 individuals. On 10 November 2021, [a direct charter flight](#) left Afghanistan for the first time since August 2021. The civil society initiatives [Kabul Luftbrücke](#) (Kabul Airbridge) and the [Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskraefte](#), which already carried out evacuations before the end of August 2021, [continue their activities](#). On 15 November 2021, they carried out their second flight since August, bringing [148](#) people, including local staff and Afghans at risk and German citizens from Kabul to Islamabad. On 31 May 2022, it was reported that the Foreign Office is [currently bringing about 200 Afghans per week from Pakistan to Germany](#), alongside transferring some to Germany via Iran.

[Up to December 2021](#), Germany accepted applications to resettle around 25,000 local Afghan staff and their family members. That figure includes 4,590 local Afghan staff and 19,966 dependents. Of these, 7,033 Afghans had arrived in Germany and the majority were still waiting to be evacuated. The figure includes 1,319 local Afghan staff who worked for Germany and 5,711 family members. In December 2021 the German Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, said that [more than 15,000](#) people whom Germany had promised to resettle still remain in Afghanistan. More recently, in May 2022 it was [reported](#) that more than 10,000 people who have been granted admission by Germany continue to remain in Afghanistan with their families.

Good practices

- + In December 2021 Germany's foreign minister pledged to [speed up efforts](#) to get thousands of former local employees and other endangered people out of Afghanistan. She said there will be new talks with Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, to open up new routes out of the country. Germany has also been working with Pakistan and Qatar to continue resettlements.
- + Germany will work to cut down on bureaucracy and will be more flexible in defining the "core family" of people it is taking in, [the Foreign Minister](#) said.
- + In early 2022, within a 2-month period, [about 5000 Afghans without passports](#) were supported with leaving Afghanistan across land borders and subsequently transferred to Germany.

Shortcomings

- While German authorities have expressed their commitment to continued resettlements, they require security clearance for Afghans. [This poses a major obstacle for Afghans at risk](#), as the process requires applicants to present themselves to German authorities, a condition that cannot be met in Afghanistan due to the absence of diplomatic representation in the country.
- On 15 September the Federal Ministry of Interior [informed](#) that 2,600 Afghans at risk, plus their families, could be expected to get residence permits (*Aufenthaltstitel*) in Germany. According to the same report, however, many of them were still outside Germany as of 15 September 2021.
- Family reunification is restricted to members of the “core family” and procedures at the German embassies are subject to [delays](#). More than 4,000 Afghans who have a right to family reunification are on the waiting list to submit an application, while visa processing sites in the region had only processed around [100 applications per month](#) until September 2021.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands evacuated around 2,000 individuals from Afghanistan in the last two weeks of August 2021, but hundreds of local staff and people who had worked as interpreters with Dutch troops were [left behind](#). The Netherlands continue implementing the [Special programme](#) (since 2014) for those who cooperated with the Dutch military in Afghanistan. The special programme is for members of groups who are in danger as a result of a link with the Netherlands or their high public profile, and [who submitted their application before 17 September 2021](#). Spouse and [unmarried children under 25](#) may be eligible.

Since the end of the evacuation, the Netherlands has announced it will continue to try to assist individuals who have worked as interpreters for the Dutch troops, and some people in danger (e.g. human rights defenders, journalists) who had already been called forward for evacuation but who did not manage to reach the airport in time. The Netherlands has also been receiving many [new requests](#) from people stranded in Afghanistan and requesting visas to leave the country. Among them are many who have the right to be evacuated but have not been offered the means to do so. The government expressed the intention to hand these cases over to UNHCR and IOM, but it is [unclear](#) whether there has been a real discussion with these organisations on the issue.

From 26 August 2021, [the decision time of ongoing general asylum applications and applications submitted by Afghan asylum seekers has been extended to 18 months](#). The expectation is that after this period there will be decisions on a new policy or extension of the moratorium. During the [moratorium it is still possible to grant asylum status in clear-cut cases](#) (for example interpreters have still been given a status despite the moratorium).

Reception Conditions

All Afghan evacuees brought to the Netherlands in August have gone through the accelerated asylum procedure. It concerns 2,000 people who have [all received a residence permit](#) from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). In particular, a temporary asylum residence permit is granted for five years and then, if there is still need for protection, a [permanent residence permit](#).

Evacuees were [initially accommodated](#) in emergency accommodation centres, where the initial steps of the asylum procedure took place, before being transferred to reception, while the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers/ Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA) announced an increase in the number of reception places. The [main steps for these new arrivals](#) are the registration and identification of persons transferred by the Aliens Police Department, Identification and Human Trafficking (AVIM). These persons will also be screened in the context of public order and National Security, the persons transferred will be informed of the asylum process and they will be allowed to use legal assistance. Also, the evacuated Afghans will be [interviewed](#) by an IND staff member. A decision, and possible issue of residence documents, will follow. Furthermore, resettled Afghans have [access](#) to social welfare for beneficiaries of international protection under the same conditions as nationals.

Numbers

Up to November 2021 [approximately](#) 50 people who had permission to travel to the Netherlands made it to Pakistan independently after the end of the direct evacuations and eventually arrived in the Netherlands. Another group of [35 evacuees](#) were given permission to travel to Pakistan in January and arrived on 18 February 2022 in the Netherlands on a charter flight via Hanover in Germany.

In February 2022, the Netherlands evacuated [294](#) Afghan citizens who arrived in neighbouring Pakistan. The group, consisting of translators, nongovernmental workers, and other people assisting Dutch missions to Afghanistan as well as their families, have been allowed across the Afghan-Pakistani border following “intense diplomatic negotiations,” the ministry said in a statement. The group consists of “persons and families of whom not everyone has valid travel documents,” it added. On 1 March 2022, a new group of approximately [180 Afghans](#) arrived in the Netherlands. According to the [Immigration and Naturalisation Service](#) (IND).

Overall, from 26 August 2021 until 21 March 2022, [1,239 individuals were transferred to Netherlands, including](#): 161 in the category ‘parliamentary [motion Belhaj](#)’, 257 NGO staff and 92 Defence /EUPOL personnel, 432 interpreters and high-profile defence & police mission personnel, 14 members of local staff from the Dutch embassy, 43 Local staff from international organisations (EU, UN, NATO) and 240 Dutch citizens and Afghans with Dutch residency status; *NB: these numbers already include family members of principal applicants.*

Good practices

- + Thanks to civil society pressure, [a buddy programme that connects veterans and former locally employed civilians has been established](#), providing support for resettled former local staff.
- + The [asylum procedure was shortened](#) for Afghan nationals and in October 2021 it was reported that 560 evacuees (25% of all evacuees) had received an asylum decision.
- + On 25 March 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defense and the State Secretary for Justice and Security [ordered an investigation](#), by establishing the Committee of Inquiry for the Evacuation Operation from Kabul. The Committee was established on 1 April 2022 and will submit its final report no later than 31 May 2023, or as soon as possible.
- + The Netherlands resettled 30 interpreters who served with EUPOL (the European Police mission), after [pressure](#) from [Dutch staff](#) for EUPOL and other advocates.

Shortcomings

- In October 2021 one of the EUPOL interpreters who had been eligible for evacuation but was left behind, was [shot dead](#) by the Taliban.
- An arbitrary cut-off date for application (before 17 September 2021) was introduced without any prior warning. The email account used for applications was also suddenly closed.
- After the evacuation, [there was a tightening of the criteria](#) agreed during the evacuation.
- Between September and late December, the composition of the application assessment and relocation team changed every two weeks, leading to a lack of institutional knowledge and continuity.
- [The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs continues to refuse to evacuate Embassy Security Guards](#), despite the contracting company and [embassy security guards themselves appealing to the Dutch Government](#) for relocation.
- 8 months after their evacuation, [Afghan evacuees continue to live in emergency reception centres, including former army bases](#).

United Kingdom

The [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\) scheme](#) (see section 2) remains open and has no end date. The new [Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS) runs alongside ARAP and [prioritises](#) Afghans “who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, rule of law”; “vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT)”; as well those who despite being called forward for the emergency evacuation “were unable to evacuate before the ceasing of operations in Afghanistan”. Anyone who is resettled through the ACRS and ARAP will [receive](#) indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILR) in the UK, and will be able to apply for British citizenship after 5 years in the UK under existing rules.

The UK formally opened the [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS) on 6 January 2022 and [announced](#) they will work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify those eligible to apply. [Spouses, partners, and dependent children](#) under 18 are eligible. Other family members may be resettled in exceptional circumstances.

There is no individual application process for the ACRS. [Prioritisation and referral for resettlement is in one of 3 ways](#):

I. Vulnerable and at-risk individuals who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme will be the first to be settled under the ACRS. Eligible people who were notified by the UK government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place under the scheme.

II. Secondly, from spring 2022, the UNHCR will refer refugees in need of resettlement who have fled Afghanistan.

III. The third referral pathway will relocate those at risk and those who are particularly vulnerable, (e.g. women at risk and members of minority groups). In the first year of this pathway, the UK will offer ACRS places to the most at risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors (including security personnel for the

UK Embassy) and Chevening alumni. Beyond the first year, the UK will resettle wider groups of Afghans at risk.

In March 2022, a collective of refugee organisations expressed their concern about the lack of clarity about the timeline of the scheme, and the '[double counting](#)' by the Government as the target of 20,000 *includes* Afghans who already arrived in the UK, rather than offering 20,000 new places. The collective concludes that "[ACRS offers little or no capacity for those most at risk in Afghanistan to come to the UK in a safe and secure manner](#)".

Reception Conditions

After the evacuation, evacuees were housed in hotels as [emergency temporary accommodation](#). A cross-governmental effort [called 'Operation Warm Welcome'](#) makes at least £12 million available to prioritise additional school places for children and young adults to be enrolled, and to provide school transport, specialist teachers and English language support to assist with learning. Funding will also be provided for up to [300 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships](#) for recently resettled Afghans at UK universities.

Resettled families "[have access to liaison officers who can work with local authorities to help them get set up with a GP, National Insurance number, school place, accommodation and more tailored support, as required](#)".

Numbers

In December 2021, the Ministry of Defence reveals that since the end of the evacuation [Operating Pitting, 674 ARAP eligible people \(families and dependants\) have come to the UK](#).

The [Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme](#) (ACRS), aimed to resettle and relocate 5,000 Afghan nationals in the first year of the scheme's operation and up to 20,000 over the coming years. This is addition to resettlements under ARAP.

The Home Office said in early February 2022 that [4,000](#) Afghans brought to the UK during and since the evacuation had been moved into settled homes – leaving 12,000 still in hotel accommodation (the figures are fluid because more people were evacuated throughout the autumn and early this year). As tourists return to London, some of the hotels initially happy to accommodate refugees have asked Afghans to leave, so families are being uprooted again and transferred to hotels in Leeds, Warwick and Manchester and [many remain stuck in limbo](#) in hotels.

Good practices

- + The ARAP scheme is not time-limited. Those arriving under ACRS and ARAP get [Indefinite Leave to Remain](#).
- + In February 2021, the UK Government announced a [Review Process](#) for applicants whose application has been rejected. Applicants have the right to seek a review if a) they have new evidence or b) they believe the decision was not made in accordance with the policy.
- + The [Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme](#) supports up to 300 eligible individuals in the UK with links to Afghanistan with access to university education, though the actual uptake of the scheme is still unclear.

- + Some military charities in the UK have extended their support to Afghan interpreters, such as the employment charity [JobOppo](#) offering complimentary employability support to former Afghan interpreters and the mental health care support for physically and psychologically wounded local civilian staff who have worked under British Command provided by military charity [Help for Heroes](#).
- + A Home Office's policy document [published](#) on 13 September 2021 states: "[t]he government has suspended enforced returns to Afghanistan and there are currently no commercial flights operating to Afghanistan."

Shortcomings

- However, the UK also [announced](#) a new Migration and Economic Development Partnership on 14 April 2022, which means that "anyone entering the UK illegally – as well as those who have arrived illegally since January 1st – may now be relocated to Rwanda".
- [Two data breaches by the Ministry of Defence's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\)](#) team put the safety of ARAP applicants at risk.
- Processing of ARAP applications remains slow with a continued high turn-over of staff leading to lack of institutional memory. In March 2022, only 15% of applications to the Afghan Relocation and Assistance received a decision [\(451 out of 2,991\)](#) with 85% still kept waiting while fearing for their lives.
- Only a handful of [the 183 security Staff from the British Embassy](#) (GardaWorld company) have been evacuated, caused by a [very late decision of the Foreign Secretary](#) that they were eligible for relocation, and despite the [later promise that they will be resettled under the new ACRS scheme](#).
- Evacuations mainly take place [via Pakistan](#), where Afghans find themselves '[homeless, stateless and broke](#)' and stuck for months. The Ministry of Defence [refused to explain why Pakistan](#) is used as the main ARAP relocation route, rather than broadening to Qatar and Iran.
- Eight months after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, [many resettled Afghans are still in hotels](#), while their wait continues for permanent housing.

United States

The Visas granted for the resettled Afghan nationals after August 2021 remain the same as those before the fall of Kabul. The Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) remains available for interpreters and other Afghans whose service to US forces or government put them and their families at risk.

The US granted the majority of individuals arriving to the US or in transit at a "[lily-pad site](#)" humanitarian parole to enter the US. [Humanitarian parole](#) is a temporary status, usually granted for one to two years, that enables individuals without a visa to enter the US for humanitarian reasons. On 30 September 2021, the US Congress passed a continuing resolution that ensures that Afghans arriving on humanitarian parole [have access to refugee resettlement benefits](#).

Reception Conditions

Most of the Afghans who have arrived in the US were housed on military bases – approximately [74,000](#) evacuees at eight bases around the country – receiving medical treatment, assistance with submitting immigration applications and other services aimed at helping them settle in the US. The US was also

working with non-profit resettlement agencies to resettle the Afghans who arrived in 200 communities across the country. After arriving on military bases, most evacuees were resettled in Texas, California, Virginia, New York, Washington, North Carolina, and Arizona, which are [larger states that have resettlement agencies with greater capacity](#). Other states, like West Virginia, South Dakota, and Wyoming, are [expected to resettle fewer than a dozen evacuees or none at all](#).

State and local US partners [transferred domestic safe haven operations](#) from Department of Defense (DOD) installations to a single non-DOD domestic facility. This is up and running at the [National Conference Center in Leesburg](#), Virginia. At that location eligible Afghans complete processing before being connected with resettlement agencies and partners who help them move to their new communities.

Since August, [numerous federal agencies, resettlement affiliates, and non-profit organisations](#) have worked together to help Afghans complete processing at 'safe havens' and move to their new communities. To help the Afghans integrate into new communities, the US is relying on a network of refugee resettlement agencies in communities across the country. [During their first 90 days](#) in the country, government-funded resettlement agencies cover costs ranging from rent and furnishings to clothing and transportation to job interviews. After that, refugees are expected to be able to cover these basics on their own. Also, through a mixture of federal grants and private donations, resettlement agencies continue to provide services – such as professional development training, language and financial literacy courses, and mental health counselling – to support the integration process. Refugees are technically entitled to this aid for five years, but availability is dependent on the amount of federal funding allocated to service providers.

Numbers

Up to 19 February 2022 more than [76,000](#) Afghan nationals as part of Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) had joined communities across the US. Up to December 2021 about [35,000](#) Afghans were still housed at six US military bases waiting to be matched with resettlement agencies to help them find housing and begin settling in. At the end of January 2022, the number was reduced to around [12,500](#) Afghans and following a push from the administration, that number has fallen in February 2022 to around [4,000](#). Currently there are no Afghans housed at military bases.

According to US officials, [by 25 May 2022, about 3,000 Afghans had come to the US since the end of the evacuation](#). From 1 October 2021, until 31 December 2021, [424](#) Afghan SIVs have been issued (117 for principal applicants and 307 for derivative applicants). Up to April 2022, non-profit organisation [No One Left Behind](#) (NOLB) had evacuated over 700 people since August 2021. There are a few dozen evacuation groups, including NOLB, that work under the banner [#AfghanEvac](#). The exact number of individuals relocated is unknown but estimated between 3,000-5,000. Most of them have gone to third countries.⁴⁸

Good practices

- + The administration of US President Joe Biden has set the refugee resettlement ceiling for fiscal year 2022 (which runs October-September) at [125,000](#). Advocates have praised the target, but are also asking to increase the number to 200,000.⁴⁹ Many also worry that the evacuees and newly arriving refugees won't receive [adequate](#) support. Furthermore, it is unclear whether this number will

⁴⁸ Information shared by Christopher Purdy, 12 May 2022.

⁴⁹ Information shared by Christopher Purdy, 12 May 2022

include any meaningful number of Afghans. This number is not connected to parole/ evacuations or asylum or SIVs, it only relates to Afghans resettled through the new P2 programme - which is not really functional - or through the UNHCR.⁵⁰

- + COM staff [collaborated](#) with the Department of Defense and other government agencies on “Project Rabbit” to more expeditiously verify the employment details of SIV applicants. The Department of State’s National Visa Center (NVC) [increased staffing levels](#) in SIV processing. However, it is noteworthy that “[Project Rabbit](#)” was the brainchild⁵¹ of the International Stability Operations Association, a group of defense contractors who approached DOD and DOS for ways to get their employees out after the initial call for evacuations started.

Shortcomings

- There are still tens of thousands Afghan nationals left behind, according to a February 2022 [report from the Association of Wartime Allies](#), a non-profit association of people such as interpreters who provide support to the US government and military in their home countries. Some 78,000 people who worked for the US government and have applications for special immigrant visas (SIVs) pending are still stranded in Afghanistan, many of them facing increasingly dire circumstances. According to the report, close to 30 percent have been imprisoned by the Taliban at some point since the withdrawal, and 20 percent reported missing a meal more than 10 times in January 2022. Some have gone extended periods of time without reliable communication as they stay on the run in less populated areas.
- In May 2022, the Department of Homeland Security [confirmed that 70 percent of Afghan parole applicants remain in Afghanistan, which means their applications will not be processed because the US cannot vet or interview applicants in person](#). The per-person application fee that exceeds the average yearly income of an Afghan and the requirement for applicants to prove that they’ve been personally targeted by the Taliban sets a high bar.
- Many Afghan evacuees were initially granted [humanitarian parole](#), which is a temporary two year status. On 29 April 2022, the White House sent a request to Congress for legislation [giving Afghans a path to legal permanent residence](#) after being in the US for a year, but Congress refused to take up the request.
- [For evacuees seeking to reunite their families in the US](#), the situation is complicated as there are limited resettlement options provided by the government, and the potential avenues are tricky to navigate.
- Resettled Afghans are [not eligible for federal assistance](#) like food stamps, cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programme for low-income families, Medicaid, or other traditional refugee services until Congress takes action to treat them as refugees arriving in the US.
- To help the Afghans integrate into new communities, the US is relying on a network of refugee resettlement agencies in communities across the country, but [that network was decimated](#) during Donald Trump’s presidency and has yet to fully recover.

⁵⁰ Information shared by Betsy Fisher, 10 May 2022

⁵¹ Information shared by Christopher Purdy, 12 May 2022

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- De Jong, S. (2021) "[Resettling Afghan and Iraqi interpreters employed by Western armies: The Contradictions of the Migration–Security Nexus](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F09670106211050811)", *Security Dialogue*, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F09670106211050811>
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AT THE AIRPORT
THE LADY FROM
THE EMBASSY SAID
SHE IS NOT ABLE
TO ALLOW ME TO
TO BRING MY MOTHER
AND SISTER. SO WE
HUGGED EACH OTHER.
WE CRIED. IT WAS
LIKE WE ARE LIVING
AND THEY ARE DYING.

**WE
ARE
GOING
TO
HEAVEN
AND
THEY
ARE
GOING
TO
HELL**

Photograph and Design by Andy Barnham - Quotes by Sara de Jong

IN MY OWN
SO I'M VERY
LIFE, I CAN'T
HOPEFUL FOR MY
REMEMBER A
KIDS' FUTURE,
SINGLE DAY
THAT THEY WILL
THAT I SPENT
HAVE A VERY
IN PEACE IN
GOOD FUTURE HERE.
AFGHANISTAN

