

His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg
Secretary General
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Boulevard Léopold III
B-1110 Brussels
Belgium

1 June 2021

Re: Protection of Afghan Locally Engaged Civilian Staff

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

Time is running out to protect NATO's local Afghan allies. In 100 days, on the 11th of September 2021, NATO's full withdrawal should be completed. The current acceleration of the process could leave as little as 30 days. We call on NATO member states to act immediately to evacuate Locally Engaged Civilians (LECs) and their families to ensure that those that protected our lives will themselves be safe from reprisals.

NATO's Afghanistan mission assembled one of the largest international coalitions in history. It also assembled the efforts of local Afghan staff, including interpreters, security guards, and cultural advisors, who provided crucial support to NATO-led forces.

While NATO countries have been united in their combat and non-combat missions, they have been divided in their protection of Afghan locally engaged civilians. In the absence of a coordinated resettlement programme to protect local staff at risk due to their work for member nations, LECs have faced arbitrary barriers to protection with each NATO partner applying different criteria and reasons for exclusion.

The undersigned are acutely aware of the realities on the ground. Our organisations are in daily contact with former and current Afghan LECs whose lives are at risk. They fear that they are excluded from NATO's ambition to be "united in leaving together". They are afraid that they will

be left behind not only due to inconsistent criteria, but also because the deteriorating security situation makes it impossible to travel to interviews and obtain documents in time.

With the ongoing withdrawal, NATO member states must act urgently to guarantee the safety of present and past Afghan LECs through evacuation and resettlement:

Firstly, governments must take a flexible and generous approach without arbitrary exclusions, in the recognition that the targeting of current and past local staff will be indiscriminate, irrespective of length or date of service, direct employment or subcontracting.

Secondly, with only 100 days left before full withdrawal, governments must substantially increase capacity to process relocation requests *in situ*. Where the volume of requests makes it necessary, governments must immediately extract LECs to safe locations for processing. Without a coordinated effort to guarantee the protection of the Afghan local staff that supported its partner nations, NATO risks betraying its own promise that the “drawdown will be orderly, coordinated, and deliberate”.

We are copying this letter to the heads of state/government of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Sincerely,

Forsaken Fighters Australia Inc., **Australia**

Afghan-Canadian Interpreters, **Canada**

The European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL), **Europe**

L'association des Anciens Interprètes et Auxiliaires Afghans de l'Armée Française, **France**

Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskräfte e.V., **Germany**

Algemene Federatie van Militair Personeel (AFMP, The General Federation of Military Personnel, **the Netherlands**

Vakbond voor Defensiepersoneel VBM (VBM, Union for Defence Personnel), **the Netherlands**

The Sulha Alliance, **United Kingdom**

Association of Wartime Allies, **United States**

Human Rights First, **United States**

International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), **United States**

Red T, **United States**

Veterans for American Ideals, **United States**

International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), **International**

International Federation of Translators (FIT), **International**

Language Resource Centre, International Secretariat, Amnesty International, **International**

World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), **International**

Copy to:

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister of Australia

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau PC MP, Prime Minister of Canada

Mr. Emmanuel Macron, President of France

Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Hon. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Italian Republic

The Hon. Mark Rutte, caretaker Prime Minister of The Netherlands

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Mr. Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States