



Afghan-Canadian Community Expresses Dismay over Evacuations and Calls on Afghanistan to be Discussed at Leaders' Debate

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This month, we have seen the most horrifying and heartbreaking images of Afghans clinging to moving airplanes in a desperate bid to escape; a U.S. military cargo plane with more than 800 people on board; babies handed out over to U.S. soldiers over barbed wire fences, injured and dead Afghans laying in pools of blood, and people in tears. Yesterday, the final U.S. military flight left Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, officially ending the United States's 20-year war in Afghanistan which will be remembered in history books for its failures, unfulfilled promises, and a chaotic evacuation effort that cost the lives of innocent Afghans, including women and children.

As Canadians, especially Afghan-Canadians, we will never forget how our own nation abandoned thousands of our Afghan allies, their families and Canadian citizens, many now being targeted by the Taliban. Canada not only failed to act fast to rescue innocent lives, but the government also abandoned its evacuation ahead of the August 31 deadline, without any assurances to those left behind. The Afghan-Canadian community is disappointed because we know that Canada could have done more to fulfil its moral obligation to Canadians, to Afghans who risked their lives to support and stand by us, and to those seeking refuge in Canada.

The Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace has been vocal from day one that the crisis in Afghanistan is extremely time-sensitive. However, our calls for Canada to help and act fast have fallen on deaf ears. This deadline must not mean that the world and Canada should turn a blind eye to the escalating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. With shocking reports circulating online of Taliban executing ethnic minorities in Afghanistan, specifically targeting Hazaras -- Canada's pledge to accept 20,000 Afghan refugees over several years is not enough.

We urge the government to accept 40,000 resettlements this year and 95,000 over the next two years. There are an estimated 558,123 internally displaced people, of which 80 percent are women and children. Leaving the country has been made impossible with neighbouring countries limiting their borders and reports of the Taliban blocking those attempting to flee from leaving. Canada must expand the eligibility criteria of its resettlement plan to include those within Afghanistan and waive the requirement that an applicant must be recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR or a foreign state. Canada must continue to call on the Taliban to allow Afghans and Afghan-Canadians to exit the country on their free will. Canada ought to provide timely communication and access to diplomatic channels for those still within Afghanistan and those who choose to stay.



The New Democratic Party of Canada and the Green Party of Canada have met with CCAP organizers and they have endorsed our four solutions outlined in our open letter. The Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace is calling on all leaders of Canada's federal parties to commit to making the situation in Afghanistan their number one foreign policy priority and part of their election agenda. The occupation of Afghanistan was Canada's longest war and will be remembered as a tremendous failure that cost the lives of many Canadian soldiers and thousands of innocent civilians.

The election must not take away attention and resources from Canada's response to the crisis in Afghanistan. To this end, today the Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace will release a letter to The Debate Broadcast Group and Leaders' Debate Commissioner calling on them to ensure that Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis a key topic of the upcoming leaders' debate.

We call on all political parties to stand with our proposed solutions and to urgently present their plans for how they will address Afghanistan's humanitarian catastrophe. We are looking forward to hearing that Canada will step up to do more and support Afghan-Canadians and the people of Afghanistan, beyond the August 31 deadline.

#Canada4Afghanistan