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An urgent call for creative action: we must not abandon Afghan interpreters in danger

Dear Friends,

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan is putting individuals and their families in imminent danger and it is crucial that every option is explored to find them safety after their service to our military. With the level of danger that these families are under, the window of opportunity is very short and action is required urgently to save lives.

During the initial scheme that brought Afghan interpreters and their families to the UK, Students and Refugees Together (START) supported 14 families and 4 single men to resettle in Plymouth from November 2014 to October 2016. These families went on to establish their lives in the UK, with many of them now living and working in the local area. One family has started a business in a local town. Some of the families remain in contact with START and have told us about the dire situations that interpreters in Afghanistan find themselves in. We are turning to you, to ask if you can assist us in finding creative housing solutions that might be available in our area.

We are aware that the situation is changing daily and that the government is putting schemes in place to resettle people and offer them a place of safety. Plymouth and the surrounding area have a proud record of welcome and support to people fleeing conflict around the world. As an organisation we are keen to build on this to the benefit of all.

We understand that this comes at a difficult time, the housing crisis has stretched the resources of public and private sector housing and the challenges to provide appropriate housing for anyone are considerable. However, at START we believe that with creative thinking and collaboration a response can be found to bring these families to safety. We ask that alternative housing is considered outside of the usual sources - can you help us find this? Do you have the resources to provide housing through vacant military estate for example, or under-occupied student accommodation in the city?

It is vital that we look for a creative solution to show solidarity with the individuals who worked alongside the military and with others in danger. START would be keen to collaborate with any organisation able to offer safety to those who are now in mortal danger.

Please contact Susie Dent sdent@start.co.uk (07841 370593) with any ideas. We thank you for your time and anything that you can do.

Kind regards

Avril Bellinger

Founder and Chair of Trustees - Students and Refugees Together (START)

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