

COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER UPDATE

8 September 2021

Last week New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC) hosted a Facebook Live conversation with Sarah Stuart-Black (Secretary General of New Zealand Red Cross), Rachel O'Connor (NZRC General Manager of Migration), and Hamish Low (NZRC Restoring Family Links Coordinator). Thank you to everyone who joined virtually and asked questions. We have included some of the key questions and topics from the session with written answers down below.

For anyone who missed the Live Event – you can view the video recording on our webpage: redcross.org.nz/stories/overseas/afghanistan-humanitarian-crisis/

We will be hosting another Facebook Live session on Thursday 9 September from 1-2pm, Dari interpretation will be provided. Rachel O'Connor, NZRC General Manager of Migration, will be joined by Megan Williams, Law Reform Coordinator from Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, who will provide an overview of what Community Law centres can assist with in relation to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis. Some key topics for the session include:

- Critical purpose visitor visas - partnership
- An update on Refugee Family Support Category
- Other support that Community Law and NZRC can deliver to the Afghan community here in New Zealand.

On Friday 10 September, we will be meeting with some members of the Afghan community and Afghan organisations. At this meeting members from our Migration Advisory Group (MAG) as well as the New Zealand National Refugee Association (NZNRA) will be giving an update on behalf of community members. NZRC will provide an update about what support we can provide, and we will be listening to what advice the community has as to how we can help. We know this meeting won't reach everyone in the community, but we will continue to work to find ways to have communication across the Afghan community.

New Zealand Red Cross actions in the past week:

- The Restoring Family Links service has received 20 enquiries over the past week, including three enquiries directly from Afghanistan. For family members in New Zealand, advice has been provided on avenues for support. Tracing requests have been sent to International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Kabul where appropriate.
- We have been sourcing donations of both cash and non-cash items to be prepared to offer support when people arrive in the community.
- We delivered items to Immigration NZ for the evacuees including phone chargers and equipment for the children. At the moment no other donations are required.
- We have kept our website updated with translated information.
- We ran a Facebook live session to provide both domestic and international updates.
- Our Secretary General attended an international call with other Red Cross national societies around the world, including those working in Afghanistan. This information is used to share with community here in New Zealand and shapes our conversations with Government.
- We have undertaken a small number of media requests where we have highlighted the message that we will need kiwis to support and welcome any new arrivals.
- We have provided Psychosocial Peer Support to Red Cross people who have close connections in Afghanistan. As with many refugee settlement organisations we have numerous staff who are directly affected by events in Afghanistan. We need to look after our people so they can help others in the community.
- On Friday, we met with a representative of Community Law Centres of Aotearoa to determine how we can support their efforts to keep the community both connected and informed.

Latest News Update

- Community advocates within New Zealand continue to seek a government decision on welcoming an emergency intake of Afghan nationals as refugees. For more see ['This is a humanitarian crisis. New Zealand has the capacity to accommodate more'](#) - Afghans in Aotearoa (Monday 6 September)



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- The United Nations is responding to the crisis by seeking large scale donations from members to prevent a humanitarian crisis. For more see [UN plans aid conference to raise funds for Afghanistan - \(Saturday 4 September\)](#)
- Former Prime Minister Helen Clark and others have pushed for both more aid for Afghanistan and suggests the public keep contacting MPs to seek these commitments. For more see [Former PM Helen Clark calls on public to pressure MPs about Afghanistan \(Friday 3 September\)](#)

Key Questions & Answers

TOPIC 1 – Evacuees from Afghanistan & Family Remaining in Afghanistan

QUESTION: Is there anything New Zealand Red Cross can do to help bring people from Afghanistan to New Zealand?

ANSWER: New Zealand Red Cross cannot influence decisions made by Immigration New Zealand on individual visa applications or the immigration status of individuals or families. New Zealand Red Cross is also not involved with the evacuation mission led by the New Zealand Defence Force and can therefore not assist in bringing individuals or families to New Zealand from Afghanistan.

However, our organisational mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity and enhancing community resilience. As part of this work, we advocate regularly on behalf of vulnerable people including vulnerable migrants and refugees. We will continue to listen to Afghan community needs and concerns in relation to the unfolding humanitarian crisis and advocate where and when possible with relevant stakeholders and government agencies.

QUESTION: If New Zealand Red Cross cannot help bring individuals from Afghanistan to New Zealand, what support can NZRC provide?

ANSWER: As the primary provider of community refugee settlement programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand and as requested by the New Zealand Government, New Zealand Red Cross is ready and able to provide resettlement support to newly arrived evacuees from Afghanistan. We have already been asked to provide material goods to evacuees as people start to arrive in the country.

NZRC has also launched a special appeal to assist people impacted by this crisis. Donations made to the [Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis Appeal](#) will go to where the need is greatest, whether that be helping evacuees from Afghanistan settle into Aotearoa New Zealand, or on the ground in Afghanistan, where the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),

working closely with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, is on the ground providing urgent health and humanitarian assistance.

QUESTION: What are the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) doing to help people in Afghanistan?

ANSWER: The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been supporting the people of Afghanistan for over 30 years. Afghan Red Crescent relief operations and health services continue in all provinces. With the support of IFRC, Afghan Red Crescent mobile health teams are delivering primary health services in remote districts, staff and volunteers are providing livelihoods support to drought-affected families, and life-saving relief is reaching displaced communities.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is responding by assisting the wounded and disabled, helping detainees maintain contact with their families, supporting hospitals, preventing violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and supporting the Afghan Red Crescent.

QUESTION: Who should I contact for immigration information and support to help family members trying to leave Afghanistan?

ANSWER: UNHCR have a protection hotline and advice for those inside Afghanistan. Please see the following pages for more information:
<https://help.unhcr.org/afghanistan/>
<https://help.unhcr.org/afghanistan/support/>

You can also check the latest advice and information being released by MFAT here: [MFAT - Current Situation in Afghanistan](#). If your family member already holds a visa to enter New Zealand due to association with NZDF or other New Zealand Government agencies in Afghanistan, or has questions about relocating to New Zealand, you can email the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade at: VisaHoldersAfghanistan@mfat.govt.nz

Individuals and families living in New Zealand can also make contact with relevant Members of Parliament about their specific circumstances. A full list of New Zealand MPs can be found here: www.parliament.nz/en/mps-and-electoralates/members-of-parliament/

Information on how to contact a New Zealand MP can be found here:
www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/have-your-say/contact-an-mp/

QUESTION: What will happen to evacuees after they exit MIQ in two weeks? What support will be available for individuals and families?

ANSWER: Immigration New Zealand is currently assessing what settlement needs evacuees will have as they leave MIQ and come into the community in New Zealand. Support will look different depending on the needs of each individual or family. We know that many evacuees are New Zealand citizens and permanent residents while others will be arriving to New Zealand for the first time. Immigration New Zealand will be working with other government agencies to address needs of evacuees. New Zealand Red Cross stands ready to provide support if and when we are asked to.

QUESTION: Some individuals and families who were evacuated on an emergency basis from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul will be in New Zealand on Visitor Visas. What next steps will be taken for this group of people? What will happen after their temporary visas expire?

ANSWER: New Zealand Red Cross has not been involved in discussions with Immigration New Zealand around their intentions for Afghan citizens who arrive on short term visas. It is worth noting, however, that any foreign national on New Zealand soil can make a claim for asylum if they have a well-founded fear of persecution if they were forced to return home. We know that Immigration New Zealand is currently meeting to discuss these cases. NZRC has not had an indication yet about what path Immigration New Zealand intends to pursue with Afghans who have arrived on temporary visas.

QUESTION: What support can be given to Tier 1 and Tier 2 individuals and families?

ANSWER: Tier 1 and Tier 2 refer to the different paths for family members being eligible for the Refugee Family Support Category (RFSC). This visa category allows for a small number of family members to be resettled in New Zealand each year, but it has been on hold since March 2020. At present Community Law is offering legal support to New Zealand citizens who were in the process of applying for and welcoming RFSC family members.

TOPIC 2 - Restoring Family Links (RFL)

QUESTION: What should I do if I have lost contact with family members in Afghanistan?

ANSWER: If you have lost contact with family in Afghanistan please contact the New Zealand Red Cross Restoring Family Links service via the online form on <https://www.redcross.org.nz/> Alternatively, you can email familylinks@redcross.org.nz and the team will respond to your query as soon as possible.

Please note: We are unable to assist with visa applications or to advocate directly to Immigration New Zealand for permission to bring family members to New Zealand. Please do not send us sensitive personal information and documentation unless advised.

QUESTION: Some people are missing or separated in villages and out in provinces and are not in Kabul, they also do not have a network connection – how can Red Cross help to find them?

ANSWER: People in New Zealand may encounter difficulties in maintaining contact with their families in Afghanistan at this time. Wherever you believe your missing family members may be please contact the Restoring Family Links service.

QUESTION: What happens after I make a tracing request through RFL?

ANSWER: After making a tracing request we will discuss the situation with you in person or by phone. If we are able to accept the case, we will gather further information about the missing family member(s) and the circumstances around loss of contact. We will take time to talk through who you would be happy for us to share information with. We understand that individual situations and protection concerns can be very sensitive. We will then send the enquiry to our colleagues at ICRC Kabul.

If they accept the case, they will begin to search for your missing family member. If the family member is found and wishes to have contact, we will pass on their contact details to you.



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Counselling and Support Services

We know this is an incredibly distressing time for our Afghan communities here in New Zealand. The Ministry for Ethnic Communities has compiled a list of community resources where individuals and families can seek support.

<https://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz/news/counselling-and-other-support-services-for-afghan-communities-in-aotearoa/>