

Dear FRUN members,

In response to recent developments in Afghanistan and the rapidly deteriorating security and human rights situation, the FRUN Secretariat is sharing this message on behalf of a collective of concerned members of the FRUN. Signatories to this statement jointly call on FRUN members to consider family reunification procedures in their priority response to the situation.

Many family members of refugees, and holders of other forms of international protection status, currently in Afghanistan or host countries in the region, have serious protection needs compounded by recent events, as outlined in the recently updated [UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan](#). There are credible reports of ongoing human rights abuses including, among others, summary executions of civilians and hors de combat members of the Afghan national security forces; restrictions on the rights of women – including their right to move around freely and girls' right to attend schools; recruitment of child soldiers; and repression of peaceful protest and expression of dissent (statement by [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)). History of serious violations also gives rise to fears for other minority groups in society including persons with disabilities, inter alia.

Many, including States, regional bodies and international organisations, have expressed concern at the evolving situation and urged stakeholders to act with urgency to protect civilian lives (See [IOM](#), [RefugePoint](#) and [ICMC](#) statements). In a [Statement on Afghanistan](#) European Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson stressed the global nature of the challenge and the need for all partners to act together on a global level, calling on European Member States to offer complementary legal pathways.

Noting some States have committed to fast-tracking/prioritising reunification procedures for Afghan families (announcements by [Ireland](#) and [Canada](#)) we call on all States to expedite family reunification applications, flexibly apply eligibility requirements with particular consideration to the typically larger family unit in Afghanistan and increased dependency resulting from Taliban restrictions on certain freedoms, use facilitated innovative processing methods such as remote interviews, approach documentary requirements pragmatically, apply procedural flexibility, and cooperate with each other and non-governmental Partners to overcome practical obstacles preventing access to family reunification procedures.

Considering our global reach and diverse membership, the FRUN is uniquely positioned to respond to this emerging situation by providing a space for information sharing, collaboration, troubleshooting and finding creative solutions by connecting partners in pursuit of pragmatic solutions. Many actors have already shown admirable creativity and flexibility in their response to the humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan, including bilateral evacuation programmes, processing resettlement applications mid-flight and sharing resources on the ground; solutions which could equally apply to family reunification processing. We encourage all FRUN members to continue sharing examples of innovation and pragmatism for the benefit of other actors. We further urge all FRUN members to make use of the expertise, experience, and operational roles of respective FRUN members to collectively seek solutions as the situation in Afghanistan evolves.

To share thoughts, ideas and examples of good practice, and for general inquiries, problem posing and requests for assistance, kindly email the FRUN Secretariat mailbox at FRNetwork@unhcr.org. The FRUN Secretariat will collate and disseminate this information. In coordination with the Advisory Group, the FRUN Secretariat will also convene targeted and/or global FRUN meetings, as appropriate, to promptly consider and troubleshoot situations as they arise. For bilateral discussions with other FRUN members, kindly refer to the participant lists shared following each global FRUN meeting.

We, the signatories to this letter, wish to urge all actors to make use of the FRUN as a valuable collective of global family reunification focal points, to expeditiously reunite and protect Afghan families.

Signed:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
RefugePoint
International Catholic Migration Committee (ICMC)