



February/March 2021

"I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord."
Jeremiah 9:24

Calls for compassion and justice for refugees

The Uniting Church has joined with other churches in expressing disappointment with the Federal Government's latest announcement in response to the plight of refugees from Afghanistan.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke announced that over the next four years 10,000 humanitarian and 5,000 family visas will be set aside for those who have or are fleeing Afghanistan, however, this number is inclusive of Australia's already reduced annual intake of 13,750 people.

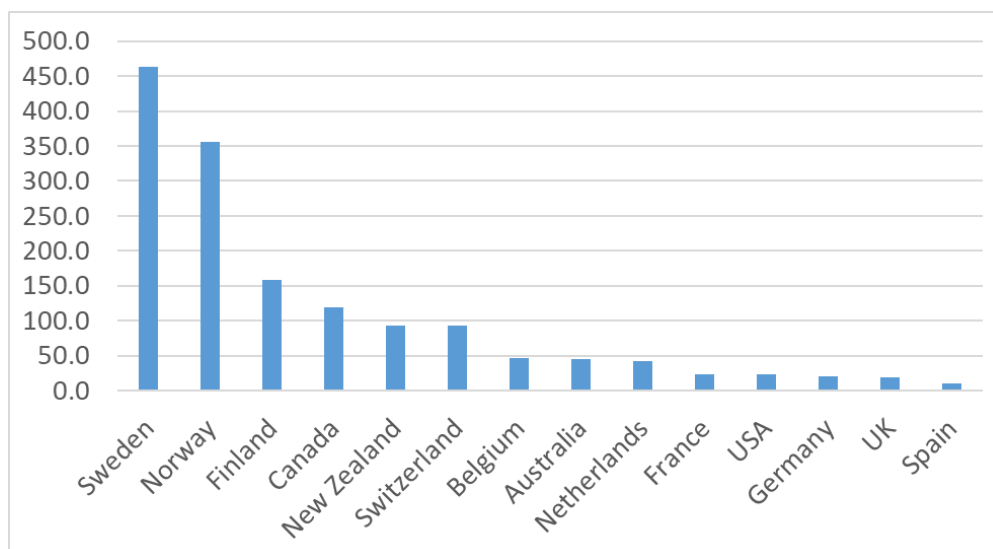
The Uniting Church as part of the Christians United for Afghanistan campaign has described the response as inadequate and far from the generous support that is needed.

"We spent two decades in Afghanistan as part of the military campaign - it is our moral duty to bring as many people to safety as we can," said Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

"Christian leaders have consistently called for 20,000 Afghans to be taken in as an additional intake. Australia's humanitarian cap was cut by 5,000 in 2020 to 13,750 - so we've been progressively shrinking our intake as it is."

Regarding resettling UN High Commissioner for Refugees referred refugees for resettlement in 2020 to 2021, the Australian Government rated towards the more generous end, but a long way behind countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland and Canada (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. UN High Commissioner for Refugees referred refugees for resettlement based on resettlement country between 2020 and 2021, expressed as refugees resettled per million population.



"This is not the kind-hearted, welcoming nation we want to be."

"The Uniting Church has long called for and continues to call for an end to the cruel and harmful policy of indefinite, mandatory detention for people who come to Australia seeking refuge and safety."

Rev. Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia

The announcement comes amid renewed spotlight on the way Australia treats refugees after tennis star Novak Djokovic was detained in the same hotel in Melbourne being used by the Government for the detention of the 34 refugees who had arrived in Australia by boat and have been detained for nine years. In addition to the Park hotel in Melbourne, there are about 24 – 28 refugees in various detention centres in Australia.



Adnan Choopani was only 15 years old when he fled Iran in fear of his life. He boarded an overcrowded boat bound for Australia, hoping to find safety and freedom. Adnan's boat was intercepted by the Australian navy, he was given an ID – ANA023 - and for the last eight years, he's been held in a series of onshore and off-shore detention centres. Today, he stays indefinitely detained in a room in the Park Hotel in Melbourne.

Photo: https://twitter.com/SetThemFree_AU

What You Can Do

Watch and share **#SetThemFree**, a short film produced by acclaimed director Richard Keddie and narrated by Rev Tim Costello <https://fb.watch/aOTVEJEusd/>

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon Alex Hawke

Minister for Immigration, Citizenship,
Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Senator, the Hon Kristina Keneally

Shadow Minister for Immigration and
Citizenship
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

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Write polite and respectful letters to your local Member of Parliament or Senator and ask them to [www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members/Guidelines for Contacting Senators and Members](http://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members)

Points to make in your letters:

- As a wealthy country, Australia should be willing to play a leading role in providing protection to refugees who have been forced to flee their homes.
- Ask that they commit to supporting an increase in the number of humanitarian places Australia offers to 20,000 by the 2022-2023 financial year and 25,000 by the 2023-2024 financial year.
- Ask that they commit to help release the 60 refugees still held in indefinite detention, who were medically transferred from PNG and Nauru – most who have refugee status.

For further information, visit <https://sa.uca.org.au/justice-advocacy/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>
Synod Refugee Advocacy Group-produced video: <https://vimeo.com/605416093>
Contact Paul Goh, Synod Justice Officer pgoh@sa.uca.org.au 08 826 4244