

Canada promises refuge for 20,000 Afghans as nations scramble to evacuate.



By Elian Peltier

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Canada has promised to resettle more than 20,000 Afghan citizens from groups it considers likely targets of the Taliban, including leading women, rights workers and L.G.B.T.Q. people, as many nations scramble to evacuate their nationals and help Afghans flee.

Canada's immigration minister, Marco Mendicino, announced the resettlement process at a news conference on Friday, adding that Canada could "not stand idly by" as the Taliban seized control of cities and provinces. The rapid advance has prompted a surge in refugees and stirred fear among those who have worked with Western governments or organizations, or with the current authorities.

About 250,000 Afghans have been forced to flee their homes since late May, most of them women and children, according to the United Nations' refugee agency.

Several European countries announced on Friday that they were withdrawing embassy workers and evacuating Afghan nationals who had worked for them. Most of them reiterated calls for their nationals to leave the country urgently.

Norway and Denmark announced that they were temporarily closing their embassies, and Spain said it would repatriate its diplomatic staff and evacuate Afghan translators "as soon as possible."

Britain has said it will send 600 troops to help evacuate its citizens, and Denmark is also offering evacuation to all Afghans who worked for its embassy or armed forces in the past two years.

Canada did not provide a timeline for its resettlement program. On Friday, it was continuing to repatriate those who had worked with its diplomats and armed forces in Afghanistan, according to government officials.

"We owe them a debt of gratitude, and we will continue our efforts to bring them to safety," the country's foreign minister, Marc Garneau, said.