



OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE

May 2021



His Excellency Jens Stoltenberg
Secretary General
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Boulevard Léopold III
B-1110 Brussels
Belgium



Re: Resolute Action

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

The undersigned representatives of the world language community, together with their humanitarian partners, are profoundly concerned about the safety of our colleagues in Afghanistan. Engaged locally to provide a vital service as civilian interpreters for NATO-led forces, they became the "face of the coalition," working at great personal risk to themselves and their families. Now, with the withdrawal of troops from the Resolute Support Mission, this risk has risen exponentially.



At the April 14 joint press conference, you stated that there will be "an orderly, coordinated and deliberate drawdown of troops." We believe the same structured approach must be taken in resettling interpreters. While some of these linguists have found refuge via national programs, countless others have been waiting years in vain for a protective visa. Considered traitors and fearing retaliation for their collaboration, they have either gone into hiding at home or fled abroad. There is now little time left to save them.



We therefore ask that you urgently encourage NATO allies to implement actionable plans for relocating their past and present linguists prior to full withdrawal. In situ offices, if sufficiently staffed, could process visas with all due speed or, where backlogs exist, interpreters could be extracted to locations outside Afghanistan and their applications processed from there.



We echo your gratitude to all those who sacrificed so much to ensure member states are safe from terror attacks orchestrated from Afghanistan. But we must remember that this shared security is due, in no small measure, to the work of local interpreters. Resolute action is now needed to keep them safe in return.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Uroš Peterc, President, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)

Cont'd



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Kevin Quirk, President, International Federation of Translators (FIT)
Aurora Humarán, President, International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI)



Angela Sasso, President, Critical Link International (CLI)
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Loredana Polezzi, President, and Sue-Ann Harding, Chair of the Executive Council, International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)
Lucio Bagnulo, Head of Translation, Language Resource Centre, International Secretariat, Amnesty International
Betsy Fisher, Director of Strategy, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
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Bill Rivers, Chair, FIT-North America
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