Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to ask you to act to protect Afghan women and girls. I am a member of Soroptimist International, a global women’s organisation active in 3000 communities in 122 countries. Across the world, Soroptimists are united in working for gender equality, human rights, and peace. United in this pursuit, it is impossible for us to watch what is happening in Afghanistan, and especially to Afghan women and girls, and not call for action.

As you know, over recent decades significant progress has been made supporting the realisation of women’s and girls’ rights in Afghanistan to the benefit of individuals, families, communities, and the country. Many young women and girls have never lived under oppressive rule – they have been free to pursue their education, careers, and ambitions. These hard-won freedoms cannot be lost and belong to all women and girls everywhere. Now, Afghan women and girls are forced to flee, face oppression and persecution, experience gender-based violence, and are living through an acute humanitarian crisis during a global pandemic.

In your role, we ask you to take action to help women and girls facing unimaginable challenges. As you are my representative, I request that you:

* Ensure girls, women, and their families are able to find safety and live free from persecution. This will mean securing safe and legal migration routes and accepting Afghan refugees as quickly as possible.
* Call for programmes which support women and girls arriving to this country to access education and to re-enter their chosen careers. This will require fully funding programmes and supporting organisations, including civil society organisations, that work with refugees and migrants.
* Ask this government to contribute to the global humanitarian effort that seeks to support those remaining in Afghanistan. Over 18 million Afghans need humanitarian assistance, with women and girls being disproportionately affected by disaster. Programmes to support women and girls need specific funding and this government should work to immediately mobilise aid.
* Work to hold the Taliban accountable for their actions. They have already claimed women and girls in Afghanistan will continue to access education and pursue their careers. All governments have a role in ensuring this is the case.

There is a global responsibility to help refugees and to respond to humanitarian crises. As a representative of my community I hope that you do all you can to stand in solidarity with Afghan women and girls, support Afghans living through humanitarian crisis, and welcome Afghan refugees.

Yours sincerely,

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