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# OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS  
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



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May 2013

The Honorable Helle Thorning-Schmidt  
Prime Minister  
Statsministeriet  
Christiansborg  
Prins Jørgens Gård 11  
1218 København K  
Denmark

## **Protective Asylum for Endangered Afghan Host Nation Linguists**

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), the International Federation of Translators (FIT), the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), and Red T, a U.S.-based non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of translators and interpreters in high-risk settings, we urge you to commit to protecting Afghan interpreters who served the Danish Armed Forces by granting them asylum in Denmark.

The undersigned, representing over 80,000 translators and interpreters worldwide, are deeply concerned about the fate of our colleagues following the upcoming withdrawal of Danish troops by the end of this summer. These individuals risked their lives to provide crucial linguistic and cultural services that enabled your military to engage with local populations. Due to this collaboration, they are viewed as traitors and subjected to Taliban death threats.

We hope your government will continue to uphold its tradition of responsibility towards affiliated linguists as demonstrated by its laudable treatment of Iraqi interpreters. Until now, the reasons offered for denying asylum were that these interpreters were not hired directly by the Danish Armed Forces but rather through the US and British military, and, according to Defense Minister Nick Hækkerup, that they are less susceptible to Taliban retaliation

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because they were not drawn from the communities where they worked (i.e., Helmand province). As has been revealed by Peter Bartam, your own Chief of Defense, and amply documented by the local and international media, the lives of Afghan interpreters are at risk irrespective of the geographic region from which they hail; moreover, the Taliban's infiltration of the Afghan National Army means that their identities may easily be compromised.

Summer is upon us and Denmark is at a pivotal moment in time. While we understand that your country will remain engaged in Afghanistan even after its withdrawal, interpreters, who practice one of the most hazardous professions in theaters of war, need to be offered a safe haven. As language professionals, we sincerely hope that you will welcome them to Denmark.

Sincerely,

Linda Fitchett  
President, AIIC

Marion Boers  
President, FIT

Aurora Humarán  
President, IAPTI

Maya Hess  
President, Red T

Cc:  
The Hon. Nick Hækkerup  
Minister of Defense