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,

Maya Hess, President, Red T  
Uroš Peterec, President, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)

Cont’d
OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE

Linda Fitchett, Chair, Conflict Zone Group, AIIC
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)
Christopher Stone, President, World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)
Maurizio Viezzi, President, Conférence Internationale Permanente d’Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI)
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)
Romana Cacchioli, Executive Director, PEN International
Urtzi Urrutikoetxea, Chair, Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, PEN International
Bill Rivers, Chair, FIT-North America
Donald Barabé, President, Ordre des traducteurs, terminologies et interprêtres agréés du Québec (OTTIAQ)
Ted Wozniak, President, American Translators Association (ATA)
Ellen Elias-Bursac, President, American Literary Translators Association (ALTA)
Aimee Benavides, Chair, National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators (NAJIT)
Erika Gonzalez, President, Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Inc. (AUSIT)
Jason Scanes, CEO, Forsaken Fighters Australia Inc.
Annette Schiller, Chair, FIT Europe
Stéphan Barrère, President, European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI)
Daniela Perillo, President, European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA)
Lieven Buysse, President, European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT)
Bruno Chanteau, President, Société française des traducteurs (SFT)
Abdul Raziq Adeel, President, Association des interprètes et auxiliaires afghans de l’Armée Française
Norma Kessler, President, Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ)
Marcus Grotian, Chair, Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskräfte e.V.
Paul Appleyard, Chair, Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI)
Sara de Jong, Co-founder, The Sulha Alliance