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Joint statement: UK Higher Education Access for Students from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, and Cameroon.

18 March 2026

This statement by the undersigned civil society organisations responds to the UK Government's decision to impose a study visa brake on nationals of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, and Cameroon. As well as expressing our concern about this decision, we want to set out how the Government could develop a more structured response by working alongside civil society and the UK higher education sector.

Who this affects

For students from Afghanistan, Sudan, Myanmar and Cameroon, access to higher education is severely constrained by conflict, displacement, and systematic exclusion. A place at a UK university is one of the few viable options to continue their education. For some it is also an essential pathway to safety. These are not people abusing the system. They are people for whom the system has no adequate provision.

A more structured approach

The rise in asylum claims through student visa routes reflects two structural gaps. First, the absence of a lawful, well-designed pathway for students in crisis-affected contexts who need both education and protection. Second, the significant gap in higher education provision in-country: when there is no credible option nearby, travel to the UK becomes one of the few options. The answer to both problems is better provision.

The UK higher education sector has a deep commitment to sanctuary and humanitarian support. By working with our organisations and the 137 higher education institutions in our collective networks, the Government can help deliver that provision. We therefore call on the Government to:

- **Expedite the launch of a sustainable humanitarian student pathway** that provides a dedicated, well-designed route for displaced students to take up places at universities in the UK — including nationalities affected by this visa change. This will reduce pressure on the standard student visa system, give universities a clear framework for admissions, and provide the Government with greater reassurance than the current approach allows.

- **Invest in education access for students who cannot come to the UK.** 645,000 students are enrolled on UK degree programmes delivered overseas through branch campuses and online programmes. Investing in scholarship schemes through UK transnational education will create alternative options for crisis-affected students,, contribute to stability and development, and build long-term relationships in regions important to UK foreign policy.
- **Protect currently enrolled students.** Students from these four countries already studying at UK universities on valid visas must be given clear assurance that their studies will not be disrupted.

Signed

Mosaik Education

Refugee Education UK

Universities of Sanctuary (City of Sanctuary UK)

Student Action for Refugees

Cara (the Council for At-Risk Academics)

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