



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Houses of Commons  
London  
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The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
King Charles Street  
London  
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27 March 2020

Dear Secretary of State

**Re: Constituents stranded overseas**

Following the government's announcement that all British nationals should return to the UK, I have received a high volume of cases of constituents stranded overseas. Included in the paragraphs that follow are indicative examples based on a number of cases that I have received in recent days.

Constituents in Pakistan are unable to return home as all passenger flights have been cancelled and several airports are closed. Some affected constituents have serious health conditions and, whereas their health needs may be met during a planned holiday, they are now at risk of being without essential medication.

On 24<sup>th</sup> March, India introduced a lock-down for twenty-one days and airlines are cancelling return passenger flights. One constituent has been advised by the British High Commission that, as there will not be any repatriation flights, they should purchase commercial flights. However, this is not possible due to the high demand for these tickets from British citizens wanting to return home. News outlets in India are reporting that the virus is being spread by people arriving from Europe and some of my constituents are concerned that they may be forcibly detained by the police as there are reports of the police filming themselves administering public beatings. As a result, my constituents fear seeking medical attention and medication that they are short of as a result of their enforced extended visit to India. A constituent stranded in Goa as a result of a cancelled flight has reported that he and his family are not permitted to leave premises to purchase necessities.

I have constituents who are medical students working as volunteers in Peru who wish to offer their services to the NHS but are unable to return as they are in places, such as Iquitos, where

internal flights have been grounded and they do not have the means to travel to Lima to board a repatriation flight. I have also been contacted by a family reporting that, due to ineffective assistance from the British Embassy, they have experienced an excessive delay during which time a case of Covid-19 has been confirmed at their hostel.

A constituent in Panama was due to return to the UK in May but government advice is to return to the UK as soon as possible, yet flights are being cancelled and it is not possible to make either telephone or e-mail contact with the airline.

Numerous medical professionals stranded in Australia are desperate to return to the UK to offer their skills to the NHS, but their flights have been cancelled and the airline will only refund people who booked before a specific date. Other constituents stranded in Australia have contacted the British Embassy in both Sydney and Melbourne and not received a response. There are reports of travel agents and airlines cancelling flights and then not responding to e-mails.

Constituents in New Zealand report being unable to contact consular services. The same is happening to constituents in the Philippines who report that they are not receiving assistance from the British Embassy as they are in rural areas rather than tourist destinations. They are also unable to access international flights.

Clearly these issues are chronic, serious, and widespread. In light of this, I urge you to:

1. Ensure that consular services are available to all British nationals overseas, ensuring that effective support is established to safeguard their health and safety during this crisis.
2. Negotiate the quick and safe return home for my constituents and all British nationals, for example by providing urgent repatriation flights.
3. Ensure that airlines refund all cancelled flights, regardless of the time of booking, and that airlines do not make excessive charges in these circumstances.
4. Ensure British nationals are able to access medical attention swiftly upon return.

I would be grateful if you would outline what action your department has taken and will continue to take on each of the above points. As this is a matter of the utmost urgency, I look forward to your prompt reply.

Yours sincerely,



**Nadia Whittome**  
Member of Parliament for Nottingham East