



Alliance for
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Joint InterAction and Alliance for Peacebuilding Statement: The U.S. Must Protect Afghan Partners and Civil Society

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 13, 2021

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Washington, D.C., USA. – [InterAction](#) and the [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#), the two largest networks of international development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding organizations with more than 300 member organizations, call upon the Biden Administration to provide and accelerate the availability of U.S. immigration avenues for all Afghans and their families who worked with or for the U.S. government, implemented U.S. government-funded programs, or served as staff for U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and media outlets.

The situation in Afghanistan is dire and further deteriorates each day. The Taliban now controls an estimated [two-thirds of the country](#). U.S. military assessments predict an [imminent collapse of Kabul](#) within the next 30 days.

As the U.S. prepares to end its military presence in Afghanistan, critical partners are being left behind. While the U.S. immigration system offers a narrow opportunity for qualifying individuals, an overwhelming number of Afghans remain in need of protection and support, unable to access a pathway to safety through the U.S. immigration system. The following recommendations outline key opportunities for the U.S. to support Afghans who worked on U.S.-funded development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding efforts.



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1. **IMMEDIATE EVACUATION OF QUALIFYING STAFF:** Qualifying individuals and their families who desire to flee Afghanistan must be evacuated by air immediately. The Administration must arrange multiple daily flights as soon as possible and utilize the 3,000 U.S. troops currently being deployed to Kabul to facilitate evacuation. Qualifying Afghans and their families should be provided access to an orderly and dignified air evacuation to a third-party country where they will live until their SIV, P2, or other application is fully processed. The Administration should advise all Afghans participating in the process that evacuation is not a guarantee of an eventual visa and may involve lengthy processing times.

2. **PATHWAYS FOR SAFETY:** The Biden Administration must immediately direct the Departments of State and Homeland Security to make the following adjustments to ensure that eligible Afghans have access to multiple, viable pathways for safety. They must reduce or waive administrative burdens associated with immigration applications to expedite processing for all avenues. Additional [air evacuations](#) to third-party countries must immediately be provided for Afghans eligible for SIVs, P1s, P2s, and other potential immigration options.
 - **Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program:**
 - Expand the existing interpretation of the [Afghan Allies Protection Act](#) to ensure SIV eligibility of Afghans who worked on U.S.-funded grants and cooperative agreements, in addition to U.S.-funded contracts.
 - Provide additional resources to expeditiously and urgently process SIV applications. A recent Department of Homeland Security and State Department [report](#) provided that the total U.S. government processing time for Afghan SIVs is 996 calendar days. This is unacceptable. However, Congress recently provided an [additional \\$600 million](#) expressly for refugee assistance and SIV processing. The Department of State must hire and deploy additional staff to process new visas and clear the existing backlog.
 - To the extent possible, assist eligible Afghans to travel and provide humanitarian assistance while in Kabul awaiting processing and/or evacuation.



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- **Priority 1 (P1) Designation Under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP):**
 - Urgently process Afghans eligible for [P1](#) designation within Afghanistan and through U.S. embassies in third-party countries.
 - Provide P1 referrals for Afghan women and men at risk of persecution and violence for refugee status and resettlement options in the U.S. This includes, but is not limited to, women human rights defenders and leaders with high levels of visibility, such as politicians and journalists.
 - Ensure timely support for relocation and visa processing in third-party countries as necessary.
- **Priority 2 (P2) Designation Under the USRAP:**
 - Expand [P2 eligibility](#) to include subcontractors and subgrantees of U.S.-funded contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements.
 - Accelerate refugee processing infrastructure in countries where P2 refugees travel so that refugees receive timely processing. Concurrently, scale-up emergency transit centers and protection transfer agreements (PTAs) to facilitate regional processing.
 - Allow rapid virtual and in-country processing, bolstered by personnel and resources from other U.S. embassies and any other trusted partners on the ground. Facilitate processing while applicants are in Afghanistan, given the growing percentage of territory falling to Taliban forces and the inability of these individuals to travel to other countries.
- **Establish a New Category for Humanitarian Parole for Afghans**
 - Generously provide humanitarian parole for Afghans who worked with or for the U.S. government to provide expedient processing and safety.
 - Speed and streamline existing humanitarian parole processes and increase processing capacity by surging staff levels within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- **Establish a New Emergency Visa Program for NGO Afghan Staff and Subrecipient Staff:**
 - If the foregoing pathways—SIV, P1, P2, and humanitarian parole—are insufficient, work with Congress to quickly establish an emergency temporary authority to speed evacuations and create a status that provides eligible Afghans temporary legal status in the U.S.



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3. **SCREENING FOR EVACUATION**: We urge the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other U.S. donor agencies to immediately compile a list of Afghan local staff—many of whom were previously vetted under U.S. government regulations—who worked on U.S.-supported contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, subcontracts, subawards, and subgrants in Afghanistan. This list of Afghan staff should complement, and supplement lists submitted by U.S. NGO partners as an initial effort to identify Afghans seeking evacuation. The list of vetted Afghans and proof of employment should provide immediate eligibility for evacuation and can help reduce the administrative burden of immigration processing.
4. **PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION**: We highly recommend the U.S. government regularly consult with NGOs to identify and resolve implementation challenges. We also urge the U.S. to work with bilateral, multilateral, and civil society partners on evacuation, protection, and resettlement.
5. **RESOURCING AND STAFFING**: We encourage the Biden Administration to immediately scale up the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) staff capacity for SIV, P1, P2, and other visas/status implementation questions and processing to address existing and avoid future backlogs. Additionally, we call upon the U.S. government to create an information platform for these applicants to provide up-to-date guidance and real-time answers to FAQs.

All Afghans now face imminent threats—not just those who worked on behalf of or for the U.S.

We recognize that outside of this community of Afghan NGO workers, millions of Afghans are at-risk of persecution and violence with the Taliban’s resurgence, particularly human rights defenders, women’s rights activists, and those who have worked for 20 years to strengthen democracy, equality, education, and independent media.

Significant diplomatic efforts must be invested to ensure roads leading out of the country remain open to those fleeing, that neighboring countries do not close their borders to Afghan refugees, and ultimately, to secure a diplomatic solution to the conflict.



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We strongly urge the Administration to intensify efforts to ensure that Afghans can access vital humanitarian services and that adequate international funding to scale up humanitarian response is provided.

With over 150 member organizations, AfP brings together the largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and influential humanitarian and faith-based groups to harness collective action for peace. We build coalitions in key areas of strategy and policy to elevate the entire peacebuilding field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.