



September 13, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

[InterAction](#) and the [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#), the two largest networks of international development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding organizations with more than 300 member organizations, write to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts to support at-risk Afghans in light of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. Despite the considerable effort that went into evacuating at-risk Afghans prior to August 31, tens of thousands of Afghans—many of whom constitute the NGO community’s current or former staff—were left behind. These individuals worked on U.S. taxpayer-funded projects from the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other federal agencies, on grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts—and that is why they are particularly at-risk. Tens of thousands have been referred by their current or former employers to U.S. government agencies for priority resettlement under the Priority-2 category of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), but have not been able to leave Afghanistan. We need equitable solutions for these Afghans to whom the United States has [committed](#) to provide a pathway to safety. The Administration’s recent list of anomalies submitted by the Office of Management and Budget for the short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) is a good first step, but more is needed.

We therefore urge Congress to take the following steps to support ongoing evacuation and resettlement efforts for our Afghan colleagues and partners in advancing U.S. interests in Afghanistan over the last 20 years. Specifically, we request that Congress:

1. **Explicitly note that, at a minimum, Priority-2-referred (P-2) Afghans still in Afghanistan or third countries remain a U.S. Government priority.**

We welcome the Administration’s requested funding, including the \$2.2 billion in State and USAID accounts, to support ongoing evacuations, provide critical resettlement resources to recent and future arrivals, and respond to growing humanitarian needs. We urge you to include these anomalies in the bill. However, please clarify with specific language in the short-term CR that any further evacuation and resettlement efforts must also explicitly include those vulnerable Afghans referred to the P-2 category of USRAP. P-2 referred Afghans represent some of the most at-risk Afghans, including democracy workers, journalists,



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human rights defenders, women’s rights advocates, judges, civilian police, peacebuilders, and humanitarian workers who supported U.S.-funded activities. All funding in the CR for visa processing and resettlement *must* include these brave men and women on whom the U.S. depended for two decades.

At present, the language from the Biden Administration for the short-term CR only directly mentions Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants (i.e., page 32). They should be included, but Congress must add language to clarify that *all categories* of vulnerable Afghans—and P-2 referrals, specifically—are to be included in [Operation Allies Welcome](#). There can be no confusion about the priority that Congress places on processing visas for these individuals as quickly as possible.

2. Direct the Biden Administration to issue travel documentation, diplomatic notes, and letters of support to facilitate evacuation of at-risk Afghans into third countries

Thousands of vulnerable P-2 referred Afghans remain trapped behind Taliban lines. Without [valid passports](#), the Taliban recently stated they will not allow these Afghans to cross the border into third countries. Many of our staff and partners do not have passports or travel documents—particularly children. Given this new restriction imposed by the Taliban, many of our most at-risk staff and partners will never be able to leave to seek safety. By current definition, fleeing the country is required to begin P-2 processing, but the lack of documentation means those who are at-risk cannot evacuate, which has led to a “Catch-22” situation.

To remedy this, we ask Congress include language in the next available legislative vehicle to require the Administration to provide travel documents, diplomatic notes, letters of support, and other relevant materials that will allow at-risk Afghans (including those who are SIV applicants and those referred or eligible for the P-1, P-2, and P-3 USRAP categories or humanitarian parole) to evacuate. Please direct the Biden Administration to forcefully use diplomacy to facilitate evacuation and resettlement of at-risk Afghans into third countries and the U.S. even if they do not have valid passports and visas.

3. Surge support to the Biden Administration to expedite P-2 refugee processing in third countries and provide basic services to Afghans awaiting visa approval

To add further complexity, third countries that have agreed to provide a temporary haven for evacuees will quickly lose patience if it appears that refugees will become permanent. Staff and resources from the Departments of State and Homeland Security need to be deployed to the countries that have welcomed our Afghan partners so that processing of visas and refugee applications can be done expeditiously. Funding must also be provided for temporary housing, healthcare, education, and other necessities for Afghans in third countries awaiting P-2 refugee processing.

Should P-2 refugee processing take more than six months, applicants should be automatically paroled into the U.S. Those that lack passports or visas should be issued the requisite travel documentation by the State Department to allow entry into the U.S.

4. Include a legislative solution for Afghans arriving on humanitarian parole to apply for Legal Permanent Residence



At-risk Afghans, including P-2 referrals, deserve an opportunity to apply for an adjustment of status to become legal permanent residents rather than languish for years in a complex and backlogged immigration system. We support the Administration's request for this adjustment of status, as well as authorization and supplemental funding for Afghans arriving with humanitarian parole to receive resettlement benefits.

Although the U.S. has now withdrawn from Afghanistan, the fight is not over to bring our NGO colleagues and their families to safety. We cannot do this without the support of Congress, and we appreciate your continued attention to these urgent matters during these difficult times.

Respectfully yours,

Sam Worthington
Chief Executive Officer
InterAction

Elizabeth Hume
President & Chief Executive Officer
Alliance for Peacebuilding

CC:

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jerry Nadler
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Madeleine Dean
Vice Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
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The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
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The Honorable Richard Durbin
Chair
Committee on the Judiciary
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The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member
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The Honorable Gregory Meeks
Chairman
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The Honorable Michael McCaul
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The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
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The Honorable Mike Rogers
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The Honorable Robert Menendez
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