

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Thank you for your leadership and the whole-of-government effort to evacuate American citizens, U.S. legal permanent residents, other foreign nationals, and Afghans at risk in Afghanistan.

Over the last few weeks, our offices have heard from Afghan Americans living in Washington, international non-profit organizations, former service members and other individuals residing in our state working to evacuate families, colleagues, and loved ones from Afghanistan. As the State Department leads evacuation efforts, we urge you to consider the following actions.

- Appoint a Special Envoy at the State Department to lead efforts with the international community, to coordinate with third-countries and to hold the Taliban accountable to the commitments it made on freedom of movement, humanitarian support for the Afghan people, and protecting Afghan woman and girls.
- Recommend to the Administration the establishment of an interagency task force dedicated solely to the mission of evacuating people out of Afghanistan, including Afghan nationals, that is empowered to coordinate across the interagency.
- Continue to expedite the processing of Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) as well as P-1, P-2, and P-3 referrals, including by increasing consular personnel and reducing barriers to processing and approving applications.
- Ensure that the U.S. evacuation efforts support some of the most at-risk Afghans such as leaders in women and girls' equality, journalists, promoters of human rights and democracy, and aid workers by making full use of humanitarian parole authorities.
- Provide supplemental documentation, letters of support, or other materials to address the challenge that many SIV applicants and P-1, P-2, or P-3 eligible individuals may not have valid passports to leave Afghanistan for a third-party country.
- Identify alternative, secure, options for individuals who may have destroyed or left behind passports or other documents for safety reasons or who had their passport destroyed by U.S. personnel when evacuating the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.
- Make clear that the U.S. evacuation efforts will continue for P-1, P-2, and P-3 referrals and individuals eligible for humanitarian parole.
- Work with civil society groups to consolidate and prioritize lists of Afghans at risk who remain in Afghanistan and who may be eligible for P-2 or P-1 refugee status or humanitarian parole.

- Improve lines of communication between the Department of State and applicants on the status of applications to ensure timely responses and reduce confusing or conflicting information.
- Establish relationships and partner with referral organizations, visa sponsors, or other individuals, as appropriate, to receive updates on the status of individual cases.
- Explore further coordination and improved channels of communications with nonprofit organizations that are facilitating the evacuation of Afghans at risk of reprisal by the Taliban.
- Use our leverage with the Taliban and international partners to fully reopen Hamid Karzai International Airport to commercial and other flight operations including ensuring stable and safe operations of the airport. Ensure that the Taliban allow freedom of movement for Afghans across international borders through overland routes, and to airports.
- Continue negotiations with neighboring countries to accept Afghan refugees and establish agreements with countries to house Afghans while the necessary processing is completed for them to resettle in the United States or elsewhere.

We recognize the unprecedented nature of the evacuation efforts out of Afghanistan and greatly appreciate the tireless work by State Department and other U.S. government personnel. We stand ready to support you in Congress with any additional resources or authorizations necessary.

Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



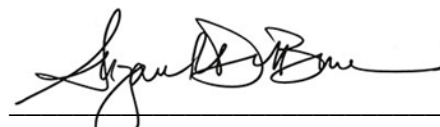
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



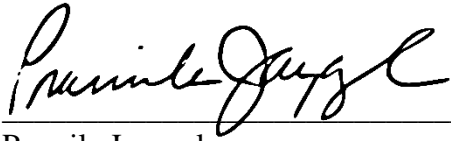
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress




Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress