



March 25, 2022

Ur Mendoza Jaddou, Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
5900 Capital Gateway Drive
Camp Springs, MD 20588

Re: Request for Creation of the Afghan Parole Program, a Designated Parole Program for At-Risk Afghans

Dear Director Jaddou:

I am a member of the Saranac Lake Rotary Foundation's Afghan Family Fund Committee (AFFC). Our committee formed earlier this year to support an Afghan friend's efforts to bring his daughter, her husband, and two young children from Afghanistan to the United States. Our friend was employed as a peacemaking and conflict resolution specialist in Afghanistan by [REDACTED]. In 2019, our friend and his two dependent children arrived in the U.S. on a Special Immigration Visa. He possesses a green card. However, his older daughter and her family continue to live in Kabul, in grave danger from the Taliban. In fact, the Taliban have been to their home in search of him.

Friendships such as ours bring the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan front and center in our consciousness. We have enormous empathy for our friend and his daily struggles with the guilt and knowledge that his peacebuilding work has jeopardized the safety of his daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren. We feel helpless and turn to you, in solidarity with other voices, to advocate on behalf of the thousands of people with ties to the U.S. who remain in Afghanistan, living in fear of Taliban reprisal. As the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine unfolds and the world's attention shifts, we worry that our Afghan allies will be forgotten.

I write to respectfully request the creation of a designated parole program for at-risk Afghans, who urgently require protection and seek reunification with family. We call on you, in your capacity as Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, to use your authority to establish the Afghan Parole Program to protect vulnerable Afghans. As Secretary of Homeland Security Mayorkas stated in September 2021, "We have a moral imperative to protect [vulnerable Afghans], to support those who have supported this nation."¹ An Afghan Parole Program would be a significant step in acknowledging the urgency of this moment and helping to fulfill that moral imperative.

Humanitarian parole authority has been utilized by both Democratic and Republican administrations since the end of World War II to protect wartime evacuees fleeing violence and persecution. In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered Operation Safe Haven, a 90-day refugee resettlement operation

¹ DHS, Secretary Mayorkas Delivers Remarks on Operation Allies Welcome, Sept. 3, 2021, available at <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2021/09/03/secretary-mayorkas-delivers-remarks-operation-allies-welcome>.

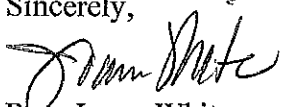
following the Hungarian Revolution, which resulted in the evacuation of over 27,000 Hungarian refugees and the resettlement of 11,000 Hungarian refugees in the United States a year later.² In 2007, the Department of Defense used Significant Public Benefit Parole to quickly evacuate Iraqi translators who had worked with U.S. troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom.³ As evidenced by these historic events, conditions during and immediately after wartime often present urgent humanitarian reasons for utilizing the tool of parole to meet immediate protection needs that refugee processing cannot.

The Biden administration, recognizing the urgency of the moment, acted within the bounds of its enumerated legal authorities in prioritizing the lives and safety of U.S.-affiliated and at-risk Afghans by conducting the non-combatant extraction operation, Operation Allies Refuge. While the military evacuation efforts ended with the withdrawal of U.S. troops in August 2021, at-risk Afghans' immediate need for protection continues. The Afghan Parole Program is urgently needed to address the dire circumstances that at-risk Afghans face from the Taliban after the chaotic withdrawal of the U.S. military following its presence in Afghanistan for two decades. In keeping with its promises, the administration must act with urgency to utilize all tools at its disposal, including parole, to provide protection from persecution and violence in Afghanistan, due to the accelerating human rights and humanitarian crisis.⁴ Threats of violence are particularly acute for Afghans, like the family for whom we advocate, who have partnered with the U.S. These vulnerable Afghans further face humanitarian and economic crises, exacerbated by the Taliban's ascent to power and the collapse of the economy.

The purpose of the Afghan Parole Program would be to acknowledge and address the urgent and exigent needs for protection for certain Afghans who would have otherwise been evacuated if the U.S. military had remained in Afghanistan. I urge you to immediately establish the Afghan Parole Program for at-risk Afghans in urgent need of protection. Given the chaos of the evacuation and the volatility of current conditions in-country, the Afghan Parole Program is warranted and will complement refugee resettlement in the long run.

Please contact me with any questions or to arrange a time for engagement. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rev. Joann White

whitejoann@hotmail.com

² Markowitz, "Humanitarianism versus Restrictionism: The United States and the Hungarian Refugees," *The Intl Migration Rev.* (Spring 1973) 7:1: 46-59 (48, 49, 58).

³ "Programs and Procedures for DOD-sponsored Parole of Foreign Nationals," AILA, available at <https://www.aila.org/File/Related/DOD%20Parole%20Program.pdf>.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *World Report: Afghanistan (2022)*, available at <https://www.hrw.org/worldreport/2022/country-chapters/afghanistan>.



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

April 25, 2022

Reverend Joann White
The First Presbyterian Church
Saranac Lake Rotary Foundation's Afghan Family Fund Committee
57 Church Street
Saranac Lake, NY 12983

Dear Rev. White:

Thank you for your March 25, 2022 letter requesting the creation of a parole program for at-risk Afghan nationals.

On August 29, 2021, President Biden directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to lead implementation of ongoing efforts across the federal government to support vulnerable Afghan nationals, including those who worked alongside us in Afghanistan during the past two decades, to safely resettle in the United States. These coordinated efforts are known as Operation Allies Welcome.¹ As of April 15, 2022, the U.S. government has welcomed approximately 86,000 Afghan nationals, U.S. citizens, and lawful permanent residents through OAW, providing them with support and assistance as they begin their new lives. To date, more than 73,000 Afghan nationals have joined their new communities across the United States. Many of these individuals worked directly with the United States on its mission in Afghanistan, such as journalists, human rights activists, humanitarian workers, and other Afghan nationals at risk. These Afghan nationals have been paroled into the United States on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons and significant public benefit for a period of two years after undergoing screening and vetting overseas. Congress appropriated funds that enable the United States to provide resettlement assistance, such as cash assistance, medical assistance, employment preparation, job placement, and English language instruction, for up to 95,000 OAW parolees through the end of Fiscal Year 2022.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is continuously exploring ways to improve the parole process, and our webpage provides guidance created specifically for Afghan nationals requesting parole.² The webpage includes information on eligibility, filing instructions, and links to guidance on providing evidence for certain types of parole requests. We also

¹ See *Fact Sheet for Operation Allies Welcome* available online at <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/fact-sheet-operation-allies-welcome>

² See *Information for Afghan Nationals on Requests to USCIS for Humanitarian Parole* available online at <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian-parole/information-for-afghan-nationals-on-requests-to-uscis-for-humanitarian-parole>

provide information on the processing of parole requests for Afghan nationals in Afghanistan. Because the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan has suspended all operations, including consular services, the U.S. government is unable to finalize parole processing for beneficiaries who remain in Afghanistan. If USCIS determines that a beneficiary in Afghanistan may be eligible for parole, we issue a notice to the petitioner stating that the beneficiaries of the petition must arrange their own travel to a U.S. embassy or consulate to complete processing of their parole request. USCIS will continue to update the webpage as needed to provide guidance on requests for parole for Afghan nationals.

The U.S. government also continues to explore options to best serve at-risk Afghan nationals through other mechanisms, including increasing refugee processing efficiency, quickly processing applications for Afghan nationals who may be eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), and expediting processing of family-based petitions and immigrant visa petitions filed on behalf of Afghan nationals.

USCIS is working closely with the Department of State (DOS) to identify ways to more expeditiously process cases accepted to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and has deployed refugee officers to interview refugee applicants and adjudicate their cases; we will continue to interview refugee applications referred by DOS for processing. Persons who believe they are in need of protection due to persecution or fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion are encouraged to contact local protection organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for immediate protection support, where available, and for a safety assessment to determine whether resettlement is the best solution for them. We are in the process of rebuilding the refugee resettlement infrastructure to fulfill President Biden's commitment to ensuring the United States resumes our role as a global leader in refugee resettlement and responds to refugee crises in Afghanistan and elsewhere. To that end, USCIS continues to hire additional refugee officers and is implementing solutions such as videoconferencing technology to enhance our capacity to interview refugee applicants when our ability to physically travel to circuit ride locations is limited.

We have seen an outpouring of support for our Afghan allies from the American public as well as from the USCIS workforce. DHS will continue to lead on this effort, and USCIS will continue to use all available resources to support this whole-of-government and whole-of-society mission. I am confident that, with all of us working together, we will be able to meet the goal of successfully welcoming and integrating our Afghan allies into communities across the nation.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director