

June 9, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Hon. Antony J. Blinken
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Hon. Alejandro Mayorkas
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

RECEIVED
By ESEC at 5:13 pm, Jun 16, 2022

Dear President Biden, Secretary Blinken, and Secretary Mayorkas:

Immediately prior to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, in August 2021, this Administration took the important step of creating a Priority-2 (P-2) designation specifically for Afghans who worked for American news organizations. The Administration was rightly applauded for that decision, which created an opportunity for our Afghan colleagues and their immediate families to evacuate and resettle in the U.S., potentially saving their lives. We remain grateful for the assistance and support provided by the U.S. government in evacuating our Afghan colleagues and their families to physical safety.

However, subsequent events have undermined the P-2 program and rendered it ineffective or inapplicable for many of the very people it was designed to help. On September 20, 2021 we and 18 other American news organizations and associations wrote to the Administration to highlight these issues. Secretary Blinken responded to that letter on October 29, asserting that the Administration was working to resolve these issues. Members of the Administration also met with us and similarly represented that the Administration was working to address the issues we had raised and would soon respond with greater clarity. More than seven months later, however, we are still awaiting a substantive response.

We write again to renew the concerns raised in our previous letter with regard to the P-2 program and to ask the Administration to take concrete steps to ensure this program actually fulfills its purpose. Specifically, we reiterate our September requests that the Administration (i) continue P-2 processing for eligible Afghans paroled into the United States and (ii) expedite P-2 processing for those taking refuge in third countries.

(i) P-2 Eligible Afghans Paroled Into the United States

As the Administration is well-aware, thousands of Afghans were evacuated from Afghanistan and brought to the United States on parole, many of them as part of the government's mass evacuation airlift. Among them were P-2 eligible current and former workers of U.S. media companies such as ours. While parole provided immediate physical safety—for which they, and we, remain grateful—it did not and does not provide permanent legal status.

Secretary Blinken wrote seven months ago that “all options” were under evaluation and the “Administration is committed to finding a way to grant legal status for Afghans relocated to the United States.” However, the Administration appears reluctant to use the P-2 program to do that. The Administration instead seems intent on meeting this extraordinary moment by reverting to the already overburdened asylum system.

This presents multiple problems, including that the eligibility standards for asylum are different than those for P-2. This presents the very real risk that P-2 eligible Afghans or their family members who are forced into the asylum system will ultimately be denied the U.S. resettlement that the Administration recognized they deserve.

The Administration's reluctance to process parolees' P-2 applications is particularly baffling because it is unnecessary. As explained in a 1980 opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, there is no legal reason why P-2 applications cannot be processed after an applicant enters the U.S.

We urge the Administration to reconsider its approach, which is placing an unnecessary and crippling burden on the asylum system and doing a disservice to the very vulnerable individuals for whom the P-2 program was created.

(ii) P-2 Eligible Afghans Outside the United States

Many P-2 eligible Afghans were not able to be paroled into the United States and instead found temporary safety in third countries. We remain grateful to those third countries that opened the door and provided temporary refuge in their hour of greatest need. However, due to their temporary status, P-2 eligible Afghans in third countries frequently lack access to schooling, appropriate medical care, or the means to support themselves. Some are in legal or physical jeopardy. The insecurity and uncertainty our colleagues are enduring is having a significant negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing. We hold particular concern for the children in these families and their need for permanent resettlement. For non-profit media, the cost of supporting families in third countries is especially challenging.

In October, Secretary Blinken conveyed that he shared our “sense of urgency” for the prompt processing of P-2 applications for those outside the U.S. The Secretary assured us “that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program continues to operate around the world and that we are looking at every available option to assist our Afghan allies and those Afghan nationals who have fled the Taliban to seek refuge.”

We recognize that P-2 case processing can be “lengthy.” Secretary Blinken also committed that while the State Department processed P-2 referrals, it is “determined to offer, as expeditiously as possible, a chance for a new start in the United States for everyone who qualifies.” Nevertheless, to our knowledge, no P-2 application by an Afghan worker for a U.S. media company has yet been approved and little progress appears to have been made on even initial processing.

We all share an interest in expediting processing so that eligible Afghan evacuees may continue their careers and restart their lives in the U.S. We implore you to accelerate P-2 processing for those outside the U.S. and, at a minimum, provide greater clarity about the procedure and timeline for doing so.

We look forward to your prompt response and remain eager to discuss these critical issues with you as we continue our cooperative efforts to ensure the successful resettlement of our Afghan colleagues.

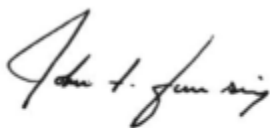
Respectfully,



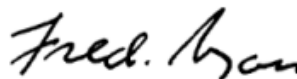
Almar Latour
Chief Executive Officer, Dow Jones & Co.
Publisher, The Wall Street Journal



A.G. Sulzberger
Chairman and Publisher, The New York Times



John F. Lansing
President & CEO, NPR



Frederick J. Ryan, Jr.
Publisher and Chief Executive Officer, The Washington Post



July 25, 2022

Almar Latour
Chief Executive Officer
Dow Jones & Co.
1211 6th Avenue
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Latour:

Thank you for your June 9, 2022 letter regarding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Priority-2 (P-2) processing of Afghan nationals. Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf.

As of July 19, 2022, the U.S. government has welcomed nearly 90,000 Afghan nationals, U.S. citizens, and lawful permanent residents through Operation Allies Welcome (OAW). More than 83,000 Afghan nationals have joined their new communities across the United States. Congress has 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 95,000 parolees in OAW through the end of Fiscal Year 2022. Afghan nationals continue to be considered for humanitarian parole into the United States on a case-by-case basis.

Afghan evacuees complete a rigorous and multi-layered screening and vetting process that includes national security and criminal records checks before they can enter the United States. This process includes intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals from the Departments of Defense, State (DOS), and Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Counterterrorism Center, and other Intelligence Community partners that review fingerprints, photos, and other biometric and biographic data for every Afghan evacuee. Further, Afghan evacuees are subject to recurrent vetting, as are other foreign nationals visiting the United States, to further enable the federal government to identify and appropriately act upon any potential information of concern.

Once paroled by DHS, Afghan nationals may be eligible to apply for employment authorization and immigration benefits through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS is working hard to respond to the needs of Afghan evacuees. USCIS personnel are adjudicating applications for employment authorization, conducting other immigration processing, including the provision of "special immigrant" status to those who qualify, and providing administrative support to expedite the processing of applications for immigrant status and work authorization. Further, USCIS has announced that it will exempt filing fees and streamline application processing for Afghan nationals who were paroled into the United States

for humanitarian reasons on or after July 30, 2021. DOS and the Department of Health and Human Services are working to provide initial relocation support to Afghans granted parole, including short-term emergency health insurance.

USCIS is working closely with DOS to identify ways to improve processing times for Afghan nationals accepted to the USRAP. In March 2022, USCIS, in collaboration with other agencies, including DOS and the International Organization for Migration, began conducting refugee processing for Afghan nationals at Camp As Sayliyah (CAS) in Doha, Qatar, where partners are co-located in order to complete all necessary processing steps in parallel – rather than sequentially – within 30 days. As of July 12, 2022, nearly 600 Afghan refugees processed at CAS had arrived in the United States. Our commitment to safely resettling Afghan nationals remains steadfast.

My colleagues in the USCIS International and Refugee Affairs Division welcome the opportunity to discuss your collective questions and concerns alongside our partners at DOS's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. We are prepared to share information on the P-2 refugee process and other pathways available to Afghan nationals seeking protection in the United States, and will reach out directly to your office to schedule a meeting.

We look forward to discussing these critical issues with you. Thank you again for your letter. The cosigners of your letter will receive a separate, identical response. 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", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director