

Applying for Asylum as an Afghan National in the United States



In compliance with the law, USCIS is expediting asylum applications for Afghan nationals paroled into the United States under Operation Allies Welcome (OAW), while maintaining the integrity of the program and continuing to safeguard national security.

You may apply for asylum if you are currently in the United States and have been persecuted or fear that you will be persecuted in Afghanistan on account of your nationality, race, religion, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. If you want to apply for asylum, you must apply within one year of your last arrival to the United States, unless you can show changed circumstances that materially affect your eligibility for asylum or extraordinary circumstances directly related to the delay in filing your asylum application, and that you filed the application within a reasonable period of time given those circumstances.

An exceptional circumstance would include, but is not limited to, maintaining parole or legal status in the United States during that first year. For example, as an OAW parolee, you may be eligible for the “extraordinary circumstances” exception to the one-year filing deadline if you file for asylum while your parole is still valid. If you file for asylum after your parole expires, you may still qualify for an exception to the one-year filing deadline if you filed for asylum within a reasonable period of time after expiration of your parole. Regardless of when it is filed, USCIS will accept your application, and if you have not filed within a year of your last arrival in the United States, the asylum officer who interviews you will determine whether you filed within a reasonable period of time considering your circumstances. For that reason, it is most advantageous to you to file before your parole expires.



For example, if you arrived in the United States on Jan. 31, 2022, you must apply for asylum on or before Jan. 31, 2023, unless you can show that you qualify for an exception to the one-year filing deadline.



You may be eligible for the “extraordinary circumstances” exception to the one-year filing deadline if you file for asylum while your parole is still valid. If you file for asylum after your parole expires, you may still qualify for an exception to the one-year filing deadline if you filed for asylum within a reasonable period of time after expiration of your parole.



If you file after the one-year deadline, we will still accept your application and determine whether you are eligible for the extraordinary circumstances exception.

Benefits of asylum

- If you are granted asylum, you may apply for lawful permanent resident status (a Green Card) one year later, if you have maintained residence the entire time.
- After five years as a lawful permanent resident, you may apply for naturalization to become a U.S. citizen.
- If you are granted asylum status as a principal asylee, you may be eligible to file a Form I-730, Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition (uscis.gov/i-730), to request follow-to-join benefits for your spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age.

How do I apply for asylum?

File Form I-589, Application for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal (uscis.gov/i-589), with USCIS.



Expedited Processing for Asylum Applications

If you file Form I-589, and you are in one of the categories below, USCIS will expedite processing of your form under Section 2502(c) of the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act.

Category 1

- You are a citizen or national of Afghanistan, or you have no nationality and last habitually resided in Afghanistan;
- You were paroled into the United States between July 30, 2021, and Sept. 30, 2022; and
- Your parole has not been terminated.

Category 2

- You are a citizen or national of Afghanistan, or you have no nationality and last habitually resided in Afghanistan;
- You were paroled into the United States after Sept. 30, 2022;
- Your parole has not been terminated; and
- You are the spouse or child of an individual who meets category 1 above, or you are the parent or legal guardian of an individual who meets category 1 above, and who is determined to be an unaccompanied child as defined under 6 U.S.C. 279(g)(2).

Instructions for Filing Form I-589 for Expedited Processing

Before filing Form I-589, complete the following four steps:

- Address the envelope according to instructions in the “**Where to File**” or “**Special Instructions**” section (whichever applies) on the Form I-589 webpage at uscis.gov/i-589;
- Mark “**Attn: OAW**” anywhere on the front of the envelope;
- On page 1 of Form I-589, Part A.I., Question 19c, **write your current status followed by “(Parole)”** in the **Status field**. For example, if you entered the United States with an “OAR” status, you would write “OAR (Parole)” in the Status field; and
- Include your most **recent date of entry** in the **Date field** on page 1 of Form I-589, Part A.I., Question 19.

If you properly complete your Form I-589 and we determine that you meet the eligibility criteria for category 1 or 2 above, we will submit your Form I-589 for expedited processing.

For noncitizens who are not covered under the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, we will prioritize affirmative asylum applications within the parameters indicated on the general Affirmative Asylum Interview Scheduling webpage at uscis.gov/asylum. Asylum office directors may consider, on a case-by-case basis, an urgent request for an asylum interview, including when you have an immediate family member in danger of harm in the country of claimed persecution. Please submit any urgent interview scheduling requests in writing to the asylum office with jurisdiction over your case. Go to the USCIS Service and Office Locator page (egov.uscis.gov/office-locator) for contact information.

Important Reminder

To ensure you receive important notices and documents from USCIS about pending petitions or applications, you **must** report your change of address with USCIS within 10 days of moving each time you move, even if you are moving to a temporary location. Visit uscis.gov/ar-11 to learn how to submit a change of address request online. If you have questions about an address change request related to OAW, please email USCIS at nbcafhancoa@uscis.dhs.gov.

USCIS Resources

- Information for Afghans - uscis.gov/allieswelcome
- Information on Asylum - uscis.gov/asylum
- *USCIS Welcomes Refugees and Asylees* brochure - uscis.gov/tools/settling-us

