

October 28, 2021

Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor
White House National Security Council
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

We, the undersigned leaders of 103 non-governmental organizations in the international development, humanitarian, peacebuilding, refugee, immigration and resettlement, and veterans affairs sectors, write to express our alarm at the estimated tens of thousands of at-risk Afghans who were left behind after the August 31 U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan. These individuals played key roles in efforts to strengthen Afghanistan's government, judiciary, civil society, and media and to protect human rights. For their work, many now face the threat of violent retaliation at the hands of de-facto authorities. Given the urgency of this matter, **our community respectfully requests a CEO or Executive-level meeting with you to voice our concerns and hear the Administration's plans to evacuate and resettle at-risk Afghans** who remain in Afghanistan.

We call on the Biden Administration to prioritize their safe evacuation before it is too late. Some of these individuals assisted U.S. and allied armed forces. Others worked for or alongside U.S.-based and funded organizations to secure women's rights, establish a free press, or provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance to their countrymen and women. All are now bound by their shared fear for their safety. If the White House does not move to evacuate them with haste, it will leave an indelible stain on this Administration's stated commitment to a foreign policy centered on human rights and its repeated commitments to support at-risk Afghans.

We are disappointed by the Biden Administration's overly narrow list of priority stakeholders for evacuation, which currently includes only: American citizens, legal permanent residents (LPRs), immediate family members of American citizens and LPRs, U.S. Embassy staff, and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants with Chief-of-Mission approval. While these individuals are undoubtedly deserving of U.S. evacuation support, thousands of other Afghans face an immediate need for protection due to their affiliation with the U.S. Government. **The failure to prioritize them as well imperils their lives.**

We are particularly keen to hear the Administration's plan to systematically process at-risk Afghans that fall outside of the scope of the SIV program, who have been consistently under-addressed over the past several months. We are especially concerned for those Afghans referred by employers to the P-2 designation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The evacuation of these individuals should be seen as no less significant than any other priority evacuees given their work advancing democracy, human rights, and human dignity, and level of risk.

The FY 2022 Continuing Resolution requires the Biden Administration to create a strategy and status on Afghan evacuee resettlement, as well as the Afghan Priority-2 (P-2) program, and to create a plan for augmenting personnel needed for refugee processing or humanitarian parole. Below please find critical recommendations to expedite the evacuation and processing of at-risk Afghans for your consideration. These measures, if promptly taken, would make important strides towards restoring viable pathways to safety for at-risk Afghans and their families. We urge the Biden Administration to:

- 1. Establish a unified U.S. Government coordinating group for overseas operations** to facilitate greater inter-agency coordination and more expeditiously communicate updates to our

community. This group should include, at a minimum, the U.S. Departments of State, Homeland Security, Defense, Treasury, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

2. **Create a humanitarian parole program** for Afghan nationals, at minimum for Afghans with U.S. ties or loved ones already in the United States. The U.S. should provide and process filed applications for humanitarian parole and documentation allowing these individuals to travel to the U.S. Waive any fees associated with requesting and applying for humanitarian parole for Afghan nationals.
3. **Provide travel documents, diplomatic notes, letters of support, or other relevant materials to allow at-risk Afghans to exit Afghanistan and enter “lilypad” countries for processing, and create a mechanism for Afghans in other host countries to enter “lilypads” for processing to the U.S.** Many at-risk Afghans do not have valid passports or visas, and the Taliban recently stated they would not allow Afghans to cross the border into third-countries without documentation. As the U.S. government does not currently maintain a diplomatic presence inside Afghanistan, these at-risk Afghans are unable to secure the required documentation. The U.S. must use diplomacy to negotiate safe passage into “lilypad” countries and then onward to U.S. military bases for processing.
4. **Surge resources and personnel to “lilypad” countries**, particularly those with U.S. military installations, to scale up and expediently process applications. The U.S. Government must press neighboring countries to open their borders to fleeing Afghan refugees. The U.S. Government must incentivize third countries to provide space, housing, and aid for meeting fleeing Afghans’ basic needs during the requisite processing period.
5. **Provide virtual and expedited screening and processing** for all at-risk Afghans, including those who have applied for the SIV, humanitarian parole, and family reunification (such as follow-to-join/I-730) programs, as well as those who are referred to USRAP, including P-1, P-2, and P-3 referrals while in Afghanistan or host countries.
6. **Identify additional pathways to safety for at-risk Afghans who do not qualify for the SIV or the USRAP P-2 program.** This includes, but is not limited to, individuals who do not have a verifiable U.S. affiliation and are not known to the U.S. Embassy but who were engaged in activities that make them targets of Taliban reprisals. Such individuals include civil servants, women’s rights advocates, election workers, human rights lawyers, academics, and journalists. We strongly recommend including individuals who worked on U.S.-funded sub-contracts or sub-grants as well.

While Afghanistan sinks into a grave humanitarian crisis, credible reports from [international human rights monitors](#), [media organizations](#), and [multilateral bodies](#) indicate that the Taliban is targeting Afghans, including those who have worked with U.S. and allied armed forces and women’s rights activists, with retaliatory killings and violence. If the U.S. does not bring these vulnerable Afghans to safety, it will have failed to uphold its commitment to human rights and turned its back on the very causes of human dignity and freedom it claims to uphold.

The Administration must act now. We look forward to discussing these recommendations with you in the proposed CEO- or Executive-level meeting.

Signed,



Metra Azar-Salem, Executive Director of Afghan Refugee Relief



Brandon Powell, President of American Veterans Committee



Mariam Atash, President and Co-Founder of Afghan Women Leading the Way



Paul O'Brien, Executive Director Amnesty International USA



Haroon Azar, Board Member of Afghan-American Foundation



Robert Kely, CEO of Amref Health Africa in the USA

Mariam Atash, Founder of Afghanistan Advocacy Group



Kim Staffieri, Executive Director / Co-Founder of Association of Wartime Allies



Arash Azizzada Co-Founder/CEO Afghans For a Better Tomorrow



Gulalai Ismail, Chairperson of Aware Girls



Nana Ahmed, Founder/ CEO of Agents of Hope Training & Information Center



Chris Palusky, President & CEO of Bethany Christian Services



Lisa Herb, President & Executive Director of Alliance for International Women's Rights (AIWR)



Richard Brookshire, Board Chair of Black Veterans Project



Liz Hume, Acting CEO & President of Alliance for Peacebuilding



Nguyen Dinh Thang, PhD CEO & President Boat People SOS (BPSOS)



Mike Jason, Executive Director of Allied Airlift 21



Debra Boudreaux, Executive Director of Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation



Ardian Shajkovci, Director of American Counterterrorism Targeting and Resilience Institute (ACTRI)



Karen Musalo, Director of Center for Gender & Refugee Studies



Allan Rosenbaum, President of American Society for Public Administration



Alisa M. Roadcup, Executive Director of Chicago Refugee Coalition



Anne Lynam Goddard,
President and CEO of
ChildFund International



Cheryl Thomas, Executive
Director of Global Rights
for Women



Richard Santos, President &
CEO of Church World Service



Dr. Rebecca Thomley, Chief
Executive Officer of Headwaters
Relief Organization



Rev. Dr. Sharon G Stanley-Rea,
Director of Disciples Refugee &
Immigration Ministries



Surita Sandosham, Executive
Director of Heartland Alliance
International



Kate Weckesserenglish,
Executive Director of The
Educators' Institute for Human
Rights (EIHR)

Dina Francesca Haynes, Professor of Law and
Director of Human Rights and Immigration Law Project



Dr. Tsehaye Teferra, President and
CEO of The Ethiopian Community
Development Council, Inc.(ECDC)



Mike Breen, President and CEO of
Human Rights First



Tessie San Martin, CEO of FHI 360



Srik Gopal, Managing Partner of
Humanity United



Michael J. Abramowitz, President
of Freedom House



Fred Tsao, Senior Policy Counsel of
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and
Refugee
Rights



Maran Turner, Executive Director of
Freedom Now



Camille J. Mackler, Executive Director of
Immigrant ARC



Diane Randall, General Secretary of
Friends Committee on National
Legislation



Sam Worthington, CEO of
InterAction



Casey Littlejohn, CEO of
G.H.O.S.T (NPS-International)



Doug Rutzen, President and CEO of
International Center for Not-for-Profit
Law



Farhad Ghafoor, President of
Ghafoor Foundation



Sanam Naraghi Anderlini MBE,
Founder and CEO of International
Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)



David A. Weiss, CEO of Global
Communities



Giselle Carino, CEO of International
Planned Parenthood Federation Western
Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR)



Becca Heller, Executive Director of International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)



Zack Baddorf, Executive Director of Military Veterans in Journalism



Jeanne Bourgault, President and CEO of Internews



Tanya Henderson, Founder and Executive Director of Mina's List



Jeremy Butler, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)



Lindsay Church, Executive Director of Minority Veterans of America



Kristin Lord, President and CEO of IREX



Jennifer Dane, CEO of Modern Military Association



Joan Rosenhauer, Executive Director of Jesuit Refugee Service/USA



Ali Noorani, President & Chief Executive Officer of National Immigration Forum



Lisa Shuger Hublitz, Assistant Vice President of Jewish Federation of Chicago



Marielena Hincapie, Executive Director of National Immigration Law Center



Karen Tumlin, founder and director of Justice Action Center



Alina Atash, President of Nooristan Foundation



Polly Byers, Executive Director of Karuna Center for Peacebuilding



Bernice G. Romero, Executive Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)



John A. Bradley, Lieutenant General, U.S. Air Force (Retired), CEO of Lamia Afghan Foundation



Betsey Mercado, Executive Director of Objective Zero Foundation



Mahnaz M. Harrison, president and CEO Last Mile4D



Abby Maxman, President & CEO of Oxfam America



Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, President and CEO of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service



Michelle Milligan, Interim Executive Director of Paloonkey



Nikolaj Gilbert, President and CEO of PATH



Devin Hibbard, CEO of Street Business School



Michael B. Williams, CEO of Phase Zero Solutions, Inc.



Jared Lyon, President and CEO of Student Veterans of America



James E. Morgan, CEO of Physicians for Peace



Archi Pyati, Chief Executive Officer of Tahirih Justice Center



Douglas Jackson, PhD, JD, President/CEO of Project C.U.R.E.



Edefe Okporo, US Mobilization Director of Talent Beyond Boundaries



Gary Barker, CEO & President of Promundo-US

William Felder, Director of Tarjoman Relief



Jims Porter, Board Chair of Refugee Action Network



Lyla Kohistany, CEO of Task Force Pineapple



Nili Sarit Yossinger, Executive Director of Refugee Congress



Jenna Ben-Yehuda, President and CEO of Truman National Security Project



Jims Porter, Advocacy Director of RefugeeOne



Eskinder Nagash, President and CEO of U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants



Eric Schwartz, President of Refugees International



Suzanne Barakat, MD, Executive Director of UCSF Health and Human Rights Initiative



Robert Quinn, Executive Director of Scholars at Risk Network



Christine Schwartz, CEO of Service to School



Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director of Union for Reform Judaism



Steven M. Miska, Founder and CEO of SLC Consulting, Inc.



John P. Yori, President of United Soldiers and Sailors of America



Amy Palmer, President & CEO of Soldiers' Angels



Sarah Ivory, U.S. President of USAHello



Jayson Browder, Founder and
Chairman of Veterans in
Global Leadership



Diane Calvi, CEO of
Village Enterprise



Lynn Malooly,
Executive Director of
Water for South Sudan

Kimberly Weichel, President and
CEO of Weichel & Associates



Rye Barcott, Co-Founder and
CEO of With Honor



Laurie Adams, CEO of
Women for Women
International



Fay Weber, President of
Women Graduates USA



Sarah Costa, Executive
Director of Women's Refugee
Commission



Carol, Jenkins, President
and CEO of World
Learning



Myal Greene, President
and CEO of World Relief

CC:

Anthony Blinken

Secretary of State

U.S. Department of State

Ambassador A. Elizabeth Jones

Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts

U.S. Department of State

Uzra Zeya

Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security,

Democracy, and Human Rights

U.S. Department of State

Alejandro Mayorkas

Secretary of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Lloyd Austin

Secretary of Defense

U.S. Department of Defense

Samantha Power

Administrator

U.S. Agency for International Development