

# AFGHANISTAN: ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

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## WHY THIS TOOLKIT

This collection of resources is intended to equip you with information, ideas, and materials to speak up for justice, step up to welcome our new Afghan neighbors and support them in finding their new home in the United States.

Your voice has the power to convince your local leaders to make this a reality! Members of Congress are influenced by YOU, their constituent. If they know refugee and immigration issues matter to you, if you show them your willingness to welcome people seeking safety and your determination to protect their rights, they're more likely to enact policies that will allow Afghans fleeing violence to become lawful permanent residents in the United States. The alternative is a dangerous, dark, and endless road for our new neighbors. This toolkit will serve as a guide to make welcoming Afghan refugees a reality!

***Your individual voice has significant power.***

***Our collective voice can be the solution.***

***You can be the reason why our new neighbors regain a sense of home!***



## WHAT'S GOING ON?

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban armed group captured the Afghanistan capital of Kabul and overthrew the civilian government. With President Ashraf Ghani fleeing, the city once again fell under the rule of the Taliban armed group, which had been ousted just 20 years before.

While many experts predicted that the rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops would increase Taliban control, few thought it would happen so quickly. Formal evacuations by U.S. and allied forces ended on August 31, leaving tens of thousands of Afghans – including human rights defenders, activists, academics, journalists, women and girls, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTI+ people, people who worked with foreign governments, and many others – stranded and without any protection from reprisals by the Taliban.

Since August 15, the Taliban and armed groups have engaged in large-scale door-to-door searches, forcing human rights defenders, women activists, and journalists to hide and move clandestinely from one place to another. The Taliban also have continued to crack down on journalists and tortured them for reporting on protests in the country. Women who took to the streets and protested, demanding equality and freedom, were met with violent crackdowns by the armed group. Amnesty International has [documented](#) a wide range of such human rights abuses. Our investigation also revealed the [torture and brutal killings of nine ethnic Hazara men](#) – yet another horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring.

Furthermore, the U.S. government ordered its embassy in Kabul to destroy “sensitive materials” before the Taliban entered the city, which included the destruction of visa application files and passports of Afghan applicants. As a result, many Afghans who could have been granted foreign visas now cannot obtain one because the documents they would need to prove their link to foreign countries have been destroyed.

The failure of the U.S. to put in place an adequate evacuation system after the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan left many stranded and tens of thousands who were evacuated to the United States via *Operation Allies Welcome* now facing acute challenges in resettling here. Admitted via **humanitarian parole**, which typically is granted for only one to two years, they currently do not have a way to **apply for lawful permanent residence or a green card**.

After escaping a deadly situation, arriving in the U.S. on humanitarian parole, and suffering from uncertainty and an unknown fate, they will face a new set of hurdles once their parole expires and as they attempt to find alternative pathways to remain in the U.S. This can go both ways, either they will find themselves stuck in asylum processing in the U.S. for years on end, or they will be forced to go back to a dangerous situation where their lives are at grave risk.

To apply for asylum, Afghan evacuees will have to appear before an immigration judge without significant documentation of the risks and violence that they fled from – many Afghans had to destroy important documentation in fear of Taliban reprisal, as did U.S. embassy officials in Kabul to protect the identities of Afghan applicants. In addition to the destruction of critical documents, Afghan evacuees would also be placed into an asylum system backlog of over 400,000 cases and a broader immigration backlog of 1.4 million cases. And if their asylum claim is rejected, they will be forcibly sent back to a deadly situation in Afghanistan, where there is no sign of abuses by the Taliban abating.

## CALLS TO ACTION

*The United States must prioritize building an immigration system based on humanity, compassion, fairness, and respect.*



It is morally irresponsible to bring tens of thousands of at-risk Afghans to the United States and, instead of ensuring their safety and a home, to then leave them stranded to a broken U.S. immigration system. **The Afghan Adjustment Act** is way to see the Operation Allies Welcome mission through and finish the job.

**[The Afghan Adjustment Act](#)** aims to establish a roadmap for Afghans who have arrived or are arriving to the U.S. to apply for lawful permanent resident status, the same legal status they would have received had they been admitted as refugees. AIUSA believes that rather than punishing Afghan arrivals for being evacuated, Congress has an urgent obligation to ensure they have a chance to become lawful permanent residents so they can start putting down roots in their new community and regain a sense of home.

- **We need to urge members of Congress to take critical steps to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act to establish a roadmap to citizenship for Afghans seeking safety in the United States by the end of 2021.**

## HOW TO TAKE ACTION

From the sadness of this moment, there is hope: we have witnessed communities across the U.S. coming together to welcome and support Afghan newcomers, to ensure their wellbeing and security as they try to rebuild their lives here. And activists like you can join them!



## ONLINE ACTIONS

Even the smallest action can make a difference in people’s lives. Take our online actions directed at the officials who have the power to transform the lives of our new Afghan neighbors by welcoming them long-term into the United States with compassion, dignity, and respect.

- [Call](#) your member of Congress urging them to pass the **Afghan Adjustment Act**
- [Sign](#) and send a message to your member of Congress
- [Send a letter](#) to President Biden and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas
- **Mobilize people!** Your voice has the power, and this power is magnified when others join. We are asking each Amnesty member to **convince FIVE people** to take the above actions to call and email our government officials!

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Post on your social media channels personalize tweets and directly tag your Senators and House Representative, @POTUS and @SecMayorkas– with the demands messaged in our actions using the hashtag #TogetherWithAfghans and #AfghanAdjustmentAct. See our list of “Social Media Guide” in the resources below.

## SEND POSTCARDS

Mobilize your communities to send thousands of postcards and letters to your members of Congress!

Our message is simple: The U.S. government must welcome, protect, and support our new Afghan neighbors and ensure they have a roadmap to stay and develop real roots in their new communities. The way to do this, is by passing the

## Afghan Adjustment Act!

### Step-by-step guide

- 1- Buy three local postcards in town to later send to your House Representative and two Senators.
- 2- Write a personal message for each Member of Congress about why welcoming refugees is important to you, and sign with your full name, city, and state. Urge them to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act.
- 3- Ask a friend to take a photo of you taking action. Share on social media and tag your government officials using the hashtag #TogetherWithAfghans and #AfghanAdjustmentAct.
- 4- Reach out to your family, friends, and neighbors and encourage them to write postcards, too.
- 5- Gather all postcards and send them to the corresponding [mailing addresses](#) for each Member of Congress.

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

HASHTAGS	TWITTER HANDLES	YOU CAN DOWNLOAD ASSETS
#AfghanAdjustmentAct #TogetherWithAfghans #Afghanistan	@[Representative] @[YourSenators] @POTUS	<a href="#">HERE.</a>

### Tweet sheet

I am thankful for all refugees and immigrants who are part of the critical infrastructure of the United States. Let's continue to open our doors and hearts to our new Afghan neighbors. [\[@your members of Congress\]](#), as your constituent, I call on you to pass the #AfghanAdjustmentAct now! @amnestyusa

The society we want to live in is one where we welcome and take care of people who need safety. I join @amnestyusa's call for my representatives, [\[@your members of Congress\]](#), to pass the #AfghanAdjustmentAct.

Refugees leave their homes because they have no other choice. They want the same safety that any of us would want. As a constituent of [city/state], I call on [\[@your members of Congress\]](#) pass #AfghanAdjustmentAct

It is morally irresponsible to abandon tens of thousands of Afghans evacuated to the U.S. by stranding them to a broken immigration system. The #AfghanAdjustmentAct is way to see the Operation Allies Welcome mission through by finishing the job [\[@your member of Congress\]](#).

[.@POTUS](#) we need your leadership to ensure that all Afghans arriving on humanitarian parole are welcomed, protected and supported. You must work with Congress to pass the #AfghanAdjustmentAct to ensure Afghan newcomers have a roadmap to citizenship. #TogetherWithAfghans

If [@POTUS](#) is serious about his human rights claims and obligations towards Afghans, he should work with Congress to pass the #AfghanAdjustmentAct and truly welcome our new neighbors. #TogetherWithAfghans

## ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS TO THE MESSAGING ABOVE

- *Contrary to the Taliban's repeated claims that they will respect the rights of Afghans, Amnesty International documented a wide range of human rights violations carried out by the group, including targeted killings of civilians, crackdowns on protests, the media and civil society, and attacks on human rights defenders.*
- *After escaping a deadly situation, entering the U.S. on humanitarian parole, suffering from uncertainty and an unknown fate, once Afghans' parole expires, they will face a new set of hurdles as they attempt to find alternative pathways to remain legally in the U.S. This can go both ways, either they will find themselves stuck in asylum processing for years on end, or they will be forced to go back to a dangerous situation where their lives are at grave risk.*

- *Once Afghans apply for asylum, they are not guaranteed legal permanent residency. If their asylum claim is rejected, those Afghans at risk, who had fled a deadly situation will be forced back to Afghanistan, where there is no sign of abuses by the Taliban abating.*
- *The chaotic evacuation out of Afghanistan compounded by an inadequate and ill-prepared immigration system underscores the need for Congress to provide a roadmap to citizenship for all Afghans seeking safety.*
- *The U.S. government must welcome, protect, and support our new Afghan neighbors and ensure they have a roadmap to stay permanently and develop real roots in their new communities.*
- *If President Biden is serious about his human rights claims and obligations towards Afghans at-risk, he should work with Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act for Afghans seeking safety and a new home in the U.S.*
- *Rather than punishing Afghan arrivals for being evacuated, Congress has an urgent obligation to ensure they have a chance to become lawful permanent residents so they can start putting down roots in their new community and regain a sense of home.*
- *The United States must take every necessary measure to ensure their safety and welcome them as new neighbors with dignity and respect for their human rights.*
- *The Biden administration should work with Congress to pass an Afghan Adjustment Act to establish a roadmap to citizenship for Afghans seeking safety in the United States.*

## RESOURCES

**Afghan Adjustment Act Factsheet:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZpbU47bLFD-un\\_Ly7bKWrl5P8o1-Q1qOSCmsMHAgFl4/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZpbU47bLFD-un_Ly7bKWrl5P8o1-Q1qOSCmsMHAgFl4/edit)

December: Capitol Hill Newsletter [Human Rights on Capitol Hill - December 2021 Newsletter – Amnesty International USA \(amnestyusa.org\)](#)

November: Capitol Hill Newsletter [Human Rights on Capitol Hill - November 2021 Newsletter – Amnesty International USA \(amnestyusa.org\)](#)

October: Capitol Hill Newsletter [Human Rights on Capitol Hill - October 2021 Newsletter – Amnesty International USA \(amnestyusa.org\)](#)

September 20, 2021: Op-ed by Samira Hamidi: Abandoning Afghanistan Is Simply unacceptable [Abandoning Afghanistan Is Simply Unacceptable \(theglobepost.com\)](#)

September Newsletter: [Human Rights on Capitol Hill: Special Edition on the human rights crisis in Afghanistan](#)

September 9: Op-ed by Brian Castner: [What the US Owes to Afghanistan's People Will Never Expire | Time](#)

***If you have any inquiries, feedback or suggestions please contact AIUSA Senior Campaigner [tharb@aiusa.org](mailto:tharb@aiusa.org). Also, please share with us your activities!***