

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 7, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas,

We commend the American servicemembers and diplomats who worked tirelessly to evacuate U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents (LPR), and vulnerable people out of Afghanistan over the past several weeks. However, hundreds of at-risk individuals remain in the country and we are deeply concerned for their safety. Our staff have been working around the clock responding to urgent pleas from constituents whose families and colleagues are seeking to flee Afghanistan, and they urgently require timely, post-withdrawal guidance to best assist those in need. While we appreciate the information that we have received thus far from the Department of State (State), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Defense, we require timely and regular updates on the Administration's plans for continuing to assist these individuals through evacuation assistance, repatriation flights, and other means of relocating to safe countries, including the United States.

As President Biden noted on August 31, "for those remaining Americans, there is no deadline. We remain committed to get them out if they want to come out." Our efforts to protect Americans and our partners must continue. Given the urgent need to provide up-to-date information to our constituents, we request a timely response to the following questions:

Guidance for those Seeking to Leave Afghanistan

1. Please provide a breakdown of the number of U.S. citizens, LPRs, special immigrant visa (SIV) and immigrant visa (IV) applicants, and individuals who have received a Priority 1 or Priority 2 (P1/P2) referral to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program who are currently in Afghanistan and seeking repatriation or evacuation.

2. How should our offices advise constituents who need information to assist these individuals in leaving Afghanistan?
3. What is the Administration's plan to repatriate the U.S. citizens and LPRs that remain in Afghanistan and wish to return to the United States?
4. How does State plan to contact such individuals to communicate next steps for assistance?
5. How is State tracking information collected from those seeking evacuation or repatriation?
6. We note that some modifications to the repatriation form have been made over the past couple of weeks. Is State consolidating or cross-referencing lists of individuals as changes to the form are made or is it necessary for individuals who completed prior versions of the form to resubmit their information?
7. Some individuals were issued "airport visas" but were unable to leave before August 31. Will State contact these individuals and provide them with another opportunity to leave?
8. What guidance can our offices provide to family members who seek to sponsor individuals for immediate relocation to the United States through humanitarian parole?
 - a. Which component within DHS will handle humanitarian parole requests for individuals who remain in Afghanistan?
 - b. Will such individuals be required to leave Afghanistan to complete processing of their humanitarian parole requests?
 - c. Is DHS considering other steps to expedite the humanitarian parole process and waive fees for Afghans at risk?

Third Country Processing

9. How is State handling the processing of visa and other applications that were previously under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul? Where will such cases be transferred? How will such cases be handled for individuals who cannot leave Afghanistan?
 - a. Is State considering increasing immigrant visa processing and biometrics collection capacity at embassies in the region surrounding Afghanistan?
 - b. Is State considering expediting interviews and biometrics collection for those who fled Afghanistan but cannot remain in a third country for an extended period?
10. Where should our offices send casework inquiries for U.S. citizens, LPRs, and Afghans who have been evacuated to a third country?
11. What instructions can we provide to individuals who evacuated to a third country through a private charter flight, and need to undergo processing to come to the United States?

U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)

12. We understand that State cannot refer most Afghans at risk to the USRAP or process them for refugee status within Afghanistan. Where can individuals in Afghanistan seeking access to the USRAP get a referral?
13. Is the Administration considering implementing a process for in-country referrals?

14. What steps has State taken to build refugee processing capacity in the region for those who cannot be immediately paroled into the United States? Which countries in the region have agreed to allow Afghan refugees to be processed within their borders?
15. Does DHS plan to increase refugee circuit rides to the region or otherwise increase capacity to interview this population?

We will continue to assist your efforts to support Americans and our Afghan allies abroad and urge your agencies to closely coordinate with our offices so that we can communicate timely and accurate information to our constituents. In addition, we urge you to inform us of any additional resources or legislative action necessary to evacuate U.S. citizens, Afghan allies, and other vulnerable individuals who wish to leave Afghanistan quickly and safely. We look forward to your response and continuing to partner with you on this critical mission.

Sincerely,



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Kathy Manning
Member of Congress



Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Dean Phillips
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress