

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2021

The Hon. Antony Blinken
Secretary
Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

The Hon. Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas,

Thank you for your service to our country as we navigate the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan. As you implement efforts to provide for the safety of Afghans who supported U.S. forces, we urge you to consider protection for Afghans who worked with U.S. media to keep the American people informed.

Afghan journalists and support staff face a perilous future following the United States' military exit from Afghanistan. Throughout our nation's presence in the region, these individuals have risked their safety and livelihoods to support American media outlets in the endeavor to provide accurate and timely reporting of coalition actions. As a result of their work, however, Afghan reporters, journalists, and their families continue to be targeted, attacked, and killed by the Taliban and other insurgent forces.¹ Worse still, such forces have disproportionately sought out and killed women media workers in order to send a message that such women should not be fighting for progress and human rights.²

The withdrawal of the United States from the region only increases the risk to these Afghans as they now face retribution and reprisal for assisting U.S. media. Constituents and media organizations alike have expressed their tremendous concern for Afghan colleagues who worked shoulder-to-shoulder with them in the midst of deadly conflict. Afghan journalists and support staff continue to fear for their lives and the safety of their families.

Accordingly, we urge you to explore all available authorities at your disposal, including prioritizing Afghan journalists and support staff who worked with U.S. media as a population of special humanitarian concern for purposes of the U.S. Refugee Admissions program, and take steps necessary to ensure their safety in the face of increasing threats.

¹ *Journalist Dies in Afghanistan as Targeted Killings Continue*, THE GUARDIAN (Jan 1, 2021), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/01/journalist-dies-in-afghanistan-as-targeted-killings-continue>; Jason Motlagh, *At A Pivotal Moment in Afghanistan, Journalists are Being Killed in Record Numbers*, ROLLING STONE (Mar. 26, 2021), <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/afghanistan-journalists-killed-in-record-numbers-taliban-1146998/>; Zabihullah Ghazi and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, *Afghan Journalist Is Killed in Latest Attack on Media Figures*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 10, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/10/world/asia/afghanistan-journalist-malalai-maiwand.html>.

² Amanda Taub, *They Were Journalists, and Women, and Targeted for Both*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 5, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/world/asia/afghanistan-women-journalists.html>.

As beneficiaries of the critical work performed by Afghan journalists and support staff, we have a moral obligation to provide for their safety and security. We look forward to your prompt action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ted W. Lieu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Speier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

November 8, 2021

The Honorable Ted Lieu
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lieu:

Thank you for your July 29, 2021 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Secretary Mayorkas asked that I respond on his behalf and I apologize for the delay in responding.

I appreciate the concerns you expressed for the safety of Afghan reporters, journalists, journalists, and their families who may be at risk due to their support of U.S. media.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is managed by the Department of State (DOS) in cooperation with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and the Department of Health and Human Services. As you may be aware, there are currently three categories of individuals who may access the USRAP, known as “priorities.”¹ Once cases receive access to the USRAP, they undergo the same processing steps, including extensive security vetting. The priority categories include:

- Priority 1 (P-1): Individual cases referred by designated entities (a U.S. Embassy, designated nongovernmental organization or the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees) to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.
- Priority 2 (P-2): Groups of special concern designated by DOS as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.
- Priority 3 (P-3): Individual cases granted access for purposes of reunification with family members already in the United States.

On August 2, 2021, DOS announced a new P-2 designation granting USRAP access for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members.² This priority group includes Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or nongovernmental organization (NGO). It expands the opportunity for many Afghans and their family members, to be considered for permanent resettlement in the U.S. who would not otherwise qualify for a Special Immigrant Visa.

¹ For further information, please visit www.wrapsnet.org

² See <https://www.state.gov/u-s-refugee-admissions-program-priority-2-designation-for-afghan-nationals/>.

In addition to the new P-2 designation noted above, certain Afghans may also gain access to the USRAP through Priority 1 or Priority 3, depending on their individual circumstances.

In your letter, you mentioned that constituents and media organizations have expressed concern to you for the safety of their Afghan colleagues. The DOS has issued instructions regarding how U.S.-based media and NGOs can submit referrals for P-2 designation for Afghan nationals.³ Organizations can use these instructions to refer to the USRAP any Afghan national staff (plus their spouse and children) who might be in danger now or in the foreseeable future.

We recognize the vital role this new designation and the program in general will play in the lives of those that risked their safety to assist the United States. DHS continues to work with DOS and other USRAP partners to efficiently process this new caseload.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Representative Speier will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director

³ See <https://www.wrapsnet.org/siv-iraqi-syrian-afghan-p2/>.