



August 20, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC
20500

Dear President Biden:

We the undersigned represent a diverse collection of organizations and individuals deeply committed to the rights, safety, and well-being of vulnerable people across Afghanistan. Though our expertise and our approaches vary, we stand unified in the belief that your administration must urgently do more to evacuate Afghanistan's most vulnerable people from harm's way.

We understand that evacuations remain difficult given the volatile conditions on the ground and know many in your administration are working around the clock to secure the safe departure of those seeking to flee Afghanistan. But we are deeply troubled that the ongoing approach risks jeopardizing the lives of thousands of Afghans.

Some of these individuals have previously worked with U.S., ISAF, and NATO military forces. Others are civil society workers, journalists, academics, women's rights and other activists, former exchange students, and others who were employed by U.S. media or nongovernmental organizations. Others still have no ties to the United States beyond their willingness to have risked their own lives for democracy, human rights, human dignity, and other values for which the U.S. government has long expressed support. Some will simply be targeted because they belong to a particular religious or ethnic group or because of their sexual orientation or gender

identity. All face the credible threat of retaliation from the Taliban for their beliefs, their associations, or simply for being who they are.

We firmly believe the United States has a responsibility to safely evacuate these individuals. Yet, under current conditions, the United States is not on track to evacuate many of these individuals it is capable of bringing out of the country. The security environment surrounding Hamid Karzai International Airport remains unstable, preventing many Afghan and international civilians from safely arriving for their evacuation flights. There are credible reports of Afghans being beaten by Taliban fighters as they seek to flee the city. Even if the evacuation operation were to reach the administration's stated target of airlifting between 5,000 and 9,000 people per day, many people whose lives are at risk would still be unlikely to be able to leave.

Given these conditions, we call on you to:

- Plan for US forces to remain on the ground until the most-vulnerable Afghans are safely out of the country, including past August 31;
- Work with partners and allies to assist in the safe passage to the airport for those seeking to depart;
- Work with partners and allies so that the airport itself remains safe, operational, and supplied with infrastructure necessary to support departing Afghan and foreign nationals;
- Work with civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to ramp-up capacity and coordination of evacuation efforts beyond the originally stated goal of 5,000 – 9,000 people per day; and
- Take all feasible measures to ensure that all flights leaving Afghanistan are full.

Failure to take the actions outlined above will heighten the risk to the lives of thousands who face an already dire human rights and humanitarian catastrophe. It is imperative that the United States develop a more effective evacuation operation and continue it as long as necessary to bring about the safe departure of all those in Afghanistan most at risk. We stand ready to work with you to make this a reality.

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