August 26, 2021

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

Dear President Biden;

As the people of Afghanistan face an unfolding tragedy, the United States must open its doors to refugees fleeing the devastating consequences of a 20-year U.S. military intervention and 40 years of U.S. involvement in the war. To ensure their safety, we urge you to increase the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program cap to no less than 200,000 when you issue your Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 before October 1st. We also urge you to expand humanitarian parole to provide refuge to vulnerable Afghans who are in grave danger following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

After decades of disastrous U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, one thing is clear: we have a moral responsibility to provide safe harbor and refuge for the Afghan people. The U.S. war in Afghanistan has caused irreparable harm to Afghans as well as to the Americans who served there. Now, the growing humanitarian crisis is further exposing the horrific costs of our endless wars. The United States must do everything in its power to protect those who have borne the brunt of this decades-long conflict, especially Afghans who are at increased risk of persecution or death by the Taliban.

Increasing the U.S. Refugee Admissions Programs cap above 200,000 will mean that hundreds of thousands more people can escape danger to find greater security and hope in the United States. Beyond Afghanistan, refugee crises are also ongoing in other parts of the world — especially as political violence erupts in Ethiopia, Lebanon faces economic collapse, and Haiti grapples with yet another devastating earthquake following the assassination of its president. And as climate change accelerates, destroying homes and ruining crops, displacement is only on the rise. In the face of these overlapping crises, increased refugee protections are vital to ensuring that people can reach safety and rebuild their lives.

In the weeks before your FY22 Presidential Determination for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, there is an immediate need to provide refuge for Afghans. We appreciate your dedicated effort to expedite Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Afghans who have assisted the United States but it is imperative to focus on evacuation of all SIV applicants and the thousands of other vulnerable Afghans who now fear for their lives. We request that you provide humanitarian parole to the families of U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents, SIV applicants and their families, as well as those who would have qualified for the Priority 2 program. Humanitarian parole must also be extended to other vulnerable groups in Afghanistan, including women’s rights activists, human rights defenders, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and journalists.
The urgent need to double down on our efforts to welcome and protect refugees is evidenced by the racist, virulent anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment that exploded over the last decade — often as a result of U.S.-fueled wars — and was further heightened under the last administration and now with the evacuations occurring in Afghanistan. To those questioning if it is really our responsibility to provide refuge for those fleeing conflict, persecution, or dire living conditions — yes, it is. In fact, it is not only our responsibility, but it is our greatest strength.

Mr. President, the time to act to save lives is now. We are ready to work with you to appropriate the necessary funds to be used for humanitarian needs and, specifically, as is necessary to ramp up the evacuation and processing of Afghans and others seeking refuge around the world.

Sincerely,

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

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