

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,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress