June 25, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2801 Nebraska Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20528

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

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken:

The U.S. has long been an open and welcoming refuge to those fleeing persecution. As you are aware, the Biden-Harris administration announced plans to fully withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan this fall. Throughout the course of the United States’ time there, we have worked alongside Afghan civilians in their efforts as interpreters, engineers, security guards, cultural advisors, and more. These Afghan civilians were critical to the United States’ mission in Afghanistan and must be included in our evacuation plan.

For this reason, we request that you immediately begin the process of reviewing the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Program to ensure that it has the necessary resources to operate effectively. We learned from SIV recipients and service providers of some unnecessary delays in processing these applications. Immediately processing all pending applications should be a top priority for the Department of Homeland Security. This would provide an evacuation plan to some 17,000 Afghan civilians and their families who worked alongside our troops.

In addition to processing, we learned from service providers that there is a need to provide financial assistance to SIV recipients, so that they can immediately purchase flights out of Afghanistan or accommodate travel. By granting SIV status, the United States acknowledges that the recipients and their families are in danger. When refugees travel to the U.S. or U.S. citizens are stranded abroad, their flights are typically purchased with loans. Therefore, we ask...
that SIV recipients be given access to financial services to promptly ensure their safe evacuation from the country. The time spent waiting to obtain funds to purchase flight tickets or other means of travel can prove deadly, and the United States should not risk the security of these civilians for financial reasons, who have been invaluable to the United States’ mission in Afghanistan.

The United States has a proud tradition of standing with our allies. Afghan nationals who worked alongside U.S. troops did so knowing that they and their families would be at risk. As the Biden-Harris administration works to withdraw our brave servicemembers from Afghanistan, we must not forget about those who stood with them in their efforts.

We are grateful for your leadership on this issue, and we welcome the opportunity to work more with you on this matter.

Sincerely,

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress

Additional Signatories:

Rep. Tom McClintock
Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
Rep. Scott Peters
Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. Thomas R. Suozzi
Rep. Joe Neguse
Rep. Dina Titus
Rep. Rick Larsen
Rep. Val Demings
Rep. Ed Case
Rep. Ro Khanna
Rep. Elaine Luria
Rep. Mondaire Jones
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Sharice L. Davids
Rep. Eleanor Homes Norton
Rep. Joaquin Castro
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, II
Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr
Rep. David N. Cicilline
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly
Rep. Brian Mast
Rep. Conor Lamb
Rep. Julia Brownley
Rep. Michael Waltz
Rep. Don Young
Rep. Colin Allred
Rep. Austin Scott
Rep. Danny K. Davis
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Rep. Jamaal Bowman
Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr
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Rep. Susan Wild
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Rep. Madeleine Dean
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Rep. Frederica S. Wilson
Rep. Jahana Hayes
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Rep. Mark Pocan
Rep. Suzan DelBene
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Rep. Greg Murphy, M.D.
Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux
Rep. Peter Welch
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Rep. Guy Reschenthaler
Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney
Rep. Al Green
Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis
Rep. Anthony Gonzalez
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Rep. Derek Kilmer
Rep. Ritchie Torres
Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. Veronica Escobar
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Rep. Chellie Pingree
Rep. Barbara Lee
Rep. Elise Stefanik