

March 31, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Joseph Edlow
Director
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Rubio, Secretary Mullin, and Director Edlow:

The undersigned human rights, religious, refugee-serving, veteran and front-line civilian organizations write to share our collective concern regarding policies in recent months targeting Afghan nationals seeking to live legally in the United States. Now several months after the policies were announced, Afghans who entered the country through eligible pathways – including the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, the refugee resettlement program, humanitarian parole, or those who are seeking asylum – are facing increased risk of harm, detention, and loss of benefits. Despite the gravity of these actions, there has been no public guidance explaining how the policies are and will be implemented or when they will be lifted.

We urge you to meet with service providers and community leaders, address the questions set out below, and rescind policies that wrongly harm Afghan allies and destabilize U.S. communities.

I. Halt of immigration benefits

In the weeks following the tragic November 26, 2025 shooting of two National Guardsmen in Washington, D.C., the administration ordered sweeping pauses on asylum adjudications and the processing of immigration benefits for Afghan nationals and others. These actions have effectively shut down large portions of the legal immigration system for the Afghan SIVs, refugees, and asylum seekers who were already vetted, approved, and lawfully present in the United States. Many of the individuals impacted had already paid substantial fees to USCIS for facilitating the processing of now-indefinitely-halted immigration applications.

As a result, Afghan nationals who had finally found safety and stability in the United States are now once again trapped in limbo — unable to renew work authorization, unable to complete green card processing, and in some cases unable to prevent their lawful status from expiring through no fault of their own. Even Afghan nationals preparing for naturalization ceremonies after years of wading through the citizenship process and paying significant filings fees have been “plucked out of line” via the cancellations of their ceremonies. Families are losing jobs, housing, and access to benefits because the government has turned off the lawful pathways that Congress created for people to seek safety, live, and work here legally. Many of these families were brought to the United States on U.S. government planes, provided with temporary

assistance to get on their feet, and have become reliable employees and integral members of their receiving communities. Stripping them of their work permits and halting their forward path to stability is counterproductive to their successful integration in the U.S.

Specifically, we seek the following information:

- What legal authority is USCIS relying upon for the current pause in SIV adjustment of status applications, asylum, and other benefit applications?
- How many cases (including SIV adjustment of status applications, asylum, asylum-based and refugee-based adjustment of status applications, family-based sponsorship petitions, family reunification applications, and work permits) filed by or on behalf of Afghan nationals are currently paused?
- How long does the USCIS anticipate the pause will last?
- Under what conditions does the administration intend to lift the pause?
- Are there exceptions to benefits processing pauses that may be sought on a case-by-case basis? If so, what is the process for seeking such an exception?

II. Retroactive “re-review” of status and benefits

The administration has also announced plans to “re-review” immigration benefits and the lawful status granted to Afghans – including already-resettled refugees and lawful permanent residents. Without additional public guidance, it seems these reviews have already begun. As an example, in Minnesota, under Operation PARRIS, refugees were picked up and transported to detention facilities in Texas in what appeared to be a “detain first, ask questions later” approach. A court order has paused this policy.

Ensuring the integrity of immigration pathways that have welcomed Afghans and others to the U.S. is vital. However, indiscriminate re-review efforts in the absence of credible derogatory information risks diverting adjudication capacity while offering limited additional security benefits. Individuals potentially affected have already undergone multiple layers of U.S. government national security vetting prior to receiving lawful status. Additionally, many Afghan nationals potentially subject to these reviews have lived in the United States for years after completing rigorous screening and have since established families, paid taxes, and contributed to their communities.

We seek the following information:

- What statutory or regulatory authority is USCIS relying upon to reopen or re-litigate finalized grants of lawful permanent residency, refugee status, or other immigration benefits?
- What due process protections are being provided to those whose status is subject to this re-review?
- What factors are being used to determine which individuals are re-reviewed, detained, or flagged? Which directorate or personnel within USCIS are conducting the re-reviews?
- What is the expected total cost of the re-review process?

III. Shuttering of all legal pathways for Afghan allies

The ongoing refugee ban and suspension of visa processing for Afghan nationals — including SIV applicants and refugees who remain in U.S. processing outside the United States — is closing the door on one of the most important national security commitments the United States

has ever made: protecting those who risked their lives to support the U.S. government. Many Afghan allies were vetted to work alongside U.S. forces, vetted again for evacuation and entry to the United States, and vetted yet again as they pursued SIV, asylum, or refugee claims. To reject these cases is an abdication of duty and undermines our credibility and national security.

On January 9, President Trump said, “I’m all for people coming into our country. Through the border ... if they come in legally.” Yet this administration has now frozen all legal pathways for those who remain at risk because of their support for the United States.

We seek the following information:

- How many Afghan SIV and other visa cases have been frozen or issued 212(f) denials since November 28, 2025?
- What is the plan to resume lawful pathways for Afghan nationals as established by statute for those who were already approved or in the midst of processing?
- What is the plan to resume SIV and refugee family reunification of spouses and children of already-approved lawful permanent residents?

Afghan allies who stood with the United States did so at extraordinary personal risk. Closing legal pathways, reopening settled cases without evidence of wrongdoing, and leaving families in further limbo is an abdication of our values and makes our country less safe and less prosperous.

Several of the policy memos referenced above included deadlines for USCIS to develop more formal implementation guidance. As these deadlines come and go with no additional information, we call for immediate action and request you engage with service providers and community members to address policies that have put so many at risk.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE)

Afghan-American Foundation

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow

ANAR

Association of Wartime Allies (AWA)

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency

Community Supported Film

Allied Shepherd

Church World Service

Conklin Immigration Law LLC

Dorcas International Institute

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

FAMIL

Hearts & Homes for Refugees

Human Rights First

Immigrant ARC

International Institute of New England

International Refugee Assistance Project

JAMAAT - Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together

JFCS East Bay

No One Left Behind

Paloonkey

REACT DC

Refugee Council USA

World Relief

#AfghanEvac