



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

October 1, 2021

The Honorable
James Comer
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Comer:

Thank you for your August 19 letter underscoring the importance of protection U.S. citizens and at risk Afghans. The Department of State shares Congress' interest in ensuring the safety of Americans and individuals at risk in Afghanistan. As of the conclusion of our noncombatant evacuation operations, the United States facilitated the evacuation or relocation of over 124,000 individuals, including nearly 6,000 U.S. citizens, through the Kabul International Airport (KIA).

While U.S. government evacuation flights out of Afghanistan have ended, our commitment to U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs), and at-risk Afghans in Afghanistan remains steadfast. We have no deadline for supporting U.S. citizens, LPRs, and those who worked alongside the United States during our 20-year mission in Afghanistan. The Department continues to explore options for those who wish to depart, and we continue to advocate for the full resumption of commercial flights out of KIA.

The Department continues to encourage U.S. citizens in Afghanistan to notify us if they want to depart Afghanistan. The recent charter flights and overland transfers have enabled dozens of U.S. citizens and LPRs to leave the country. We will continue to facilitate departure operations for U.S. citizens and LPRs as they come forward.

The Taliban have publicly and privately assured U.S. representatives that all foreign nationals and any Afghan citizen with valid travel documents will be allowed to proceed in a safe and orderly manner to points of departure and travel outside of the country. We intend to hold them to these commitments. We reiterated this expectation in the broadly supported UN Security Council Resolution 2593 on August 30.

The Department continues to encourage countries surrounding Afghanistan to allow entry for Afghans. We particularly urge states to uphold their respective obligations to not return Afghan refugees or asylum seekers to persecution or torture, as applicable, and to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

We also remain committed to helping Afghans who remain in Afghanistan. On September 13, the Department and USAID announced \$64 million in new humanitarian assistance for Afghans inside Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region. This assistance will provide critical life-saving support to Afghans facing the compounding effects of insecurity, conflict, natural disasters, and COVID. The United States remains the single largest humanitarian donor in Afghanistan, providing nearly \$330 million this year alone. We will continue to help alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people and call on other donors to step up their contributions to help deliver critical assistance directly to Afghans in need.

The Department also continues to receive eligible referrals directly from U.S. government agencies and U.S.-based NGO and media organizations for individuals eligible for the United States Refugee Admissions Program and continues to prioritize the processing of Special Immigrant Visas. It is important that applicants carefully follow the guidance found at: Afghanistan Inquiries - United States Department of State: www.state.gov/Afghanistan-inquiries. If your office has questions about specific cases, we invite you to follow up through our dedicated email address for inquiries from Members of Congress and their staff at ConsularontheHill@state.gov or by reaching out to the Legislative Affairs Bureau directly.

We again express our gratitude for the dedication shown by Members of Congress, such as yourself, who share our interest in the protection of U.S. citizens and at-risk Afghans. We look forward to continuing our communication on this or any other questions that you might have for the Department.

Sincerely,



Naz Durakoglu
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs