

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Mullin:

We write to thank you for a decision that brought two Afghans safely to the United States on September 22, 2026, through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program under an exception to current policy. With refugee admissions largely suspended and Proclamation 10998 barring entry to nearly all Afghan nationals, this arrival was only possible because leaders at the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security determined that this family deserved an exception. That was the right decision, and we are grateful for it.

This decision shows that the process to exempt certain migrants from both entry restrictions on foreign nationals as well as refugee resettlement works when leaders choose to use it. We write to ask that you use it again, deliberately and at scale, for two groups whose claim on American responsibility is especially clear: the families of U.S. service members, and Afghans seeking to reunite with immediate family members already lawfully in the United States.

Nearly 3,000 immediate family members of U.S. service members and veterans remain stranded overseas. These are the spouses, children, and parents of Americans who have worn our country's uniform. Roughly 150 of them are at Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar, alongside more than 1,000 Afghan allies and family members who were vetted by the U.S. government and flown there on U.S. government aircraft. No service member should have to choose between serving this country and being reunited with their family. Tens of thousands more Afghan mission partners have already been referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and are waiting in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and countries around the world, many of them separated from spouses, parents, and children who are already here.

To help us understand how this week's decision came about and how it can be repeated, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. What process and legal authority were used to approve this admission, including any joint determination under Executive Order 14163 and any exemption from Proclamation 10998?
2. How many exemptions have been granted to Afghan nationals since January 20, 2025, and how many requests are currently pending?
3. What criteria do the Departments apply when considering these requests, and how long does a decision typically take?
4. Will the Departments consider a class-based exemption for immediate family members of U.S. service members and veterans, and for Afghans with immediate family lawfully present in the United States, rather than deciding each case individually?

5. What is the Departments' plan for the residents of Camp As Sayliyah before its scheduled closure on September 30, 2026, and will those with U.S. military family ties or immediate family in the United States be prioritized for processing?
6. What resources, authorities, or support from Congress would allow the Departments to exempt more Afghans from the entry restrictions on foreign nationals more quickly?

We also urge you to take the following steps:

- A. **Prioritize the immediate family members of U.S. service members and veterans** for exemption determinations and refugee processing, beginning with those at Camp As Sayliyah.
- B. **Prioritize family reunification cases**, including follow-to-join beneficiaries and Afghans whose spouses, parents, or children are lawfully in the United States.
- C. **Name Afghan allies in the FY2027 Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions**, with a dedicated allocation and a national-interest finding covering it, so these families do not depend on one-off exceptions.

This week, your Departments showed what is possible. The families of the men and women who serve this nation, and the Afghans who stood beside them, deserve the same decision. We ask that you provide written responses to these questions within 30 days, and we would welcome a briefing for our offices at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your leadership and your attention to this request. We look forward to working with you to make sure America keeps its word to those who stood with us.

cc: The Honorable Andrew Veprek, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration

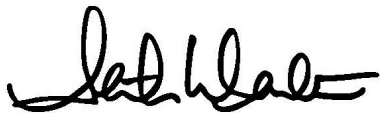
Sincerely,



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



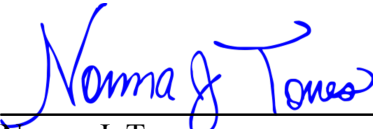
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



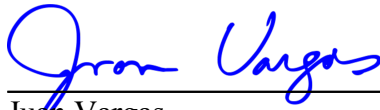
Andy Kim
United States Senator



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



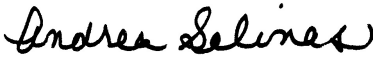
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Mike Levin
Member of Congress



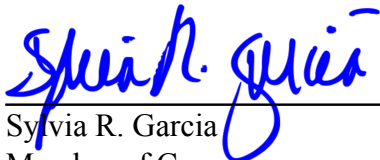
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress