Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 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 are writing about the alarming reports that over 150 Afghans could be deported to Afghanistan in the coming days. This flight has now been reported in multiple court filings and media outlets,[1] and as the New York Times notes, it would constitute "one of the largest single expulsions of Afghans" ever.[2] We understand that relatives of Afghans who helped our troops could be on this flight.[3] We have also received credible reports that this flight will be followed by the first mass deportation of Iranians since the United States launched its military conflict against Iran. We are extremely concerned that sending vulnerable people who sought safety in the United States to Afghanistan or Iran will result in their persecution, torture, or even death. We urge you to cancel any deportation flights of Afghans and Iranians, either directly or through any other country. Our nation made a promise to stand by Afghans who risked their lives and their families' safety to stand by U.S. service members. This mass deportation – potentially to their deaths – is a violation of that promise and our moral obligations to the Afghan community who stood alongside our troops.

As you know, Afghanistan remains an extremely dangerous country, and particularly deadly for the people who supported the U.S. government and troops. The U.S. State Department lists Afghanistan as a Level 4 "Do Not Travel" list and where many of those on the flight are likely to be persecuted, tortured, or even killed.[4] Afghans who helped U.S. forces and who were left during the speedy evacuation have gone into hiding, been targeted for persecution and in some cases killed.[5] Their assistance to U.S. troops puts a target on these individuals and their families to this day.

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[1] The Independent, "Trump plans to deport dozens of Afghans back to the Taliban in first large-scale removal flight," https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-afghanistan-taliban-deportations-b3076616.html; NBC News, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-administration-set-deport-afghan-refugees-pakistan-rcna606059; Bloomberg Law, "US Makes Plans to Deport Afghans, Families of Allies to Pakistan," Oct. 26, 2026, https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/us-makes-plans-to-deport-afghans-families-of-allies-to-pakistan.

[2] Pranav Baskar, Hamed Aleaziz, and Elian Peltier, "U.S. to Send Dozens Back to Afghanistan, Despite Risk of Persecution," The New York Times, Oct. 30, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/30/world/asia/afghan-refugees-deported-flight-pakistan.html.

[3] ABC News, https://abcnews.com/US/afghans-scheduled-deportation-include-relatives-worked-alongside-us/story?id=137722696.

[4] U.S. Department of State, Afghanistan Travel Advisory, https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/afghanistan.html.

[5] See, e.g., https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/22/over-200-former-afghan-troops-officials-killed-since-taliban-takeover-un; https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/afghans-who-helped-americans-fear-taliban-retribution-after-u-s-suspends-refugee-program; https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/fear-hiding-frustration-afghans-left-one-year-us-evacuation-rcna41406; https://www.foxnews.com/world/what-happened-afghan-civilians-who-helped-us-but-had-stay-behind; https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-army-torture-killings-human-rights/33077053.html.

Dissidents, LGBTQ persons, and many others who do not "conform" to the Taliban's extremely restrictive rules have been subject to torture, detention, and extrajudicial killings.[6] For women, Afghanistan is the most repressive country in the world; not only are girls and women excluded from education and public life, but many have been detained and beaten by authorities for "morality crimes." Women have been subjected to rape and other sexual violence by the Taliban and other authorities, including as punishment for exercising their rights to press speech or as "discipline" by a husband.[7] LGBTQ people in Afghanistan, where their status is largely criminalized, are routinely targeted for abuse and sexual violence, and their families are also targeted and persecuted by the Taliban.[8] We have heard that there could be women and LGBTQ persons on this flight; if they are deported to Afghanistan, they will face extreme danger.

We are similarly shocked to receive reports that this administration may also deport several Iranians – including women, Christian converts, and pro-democracy activists – to Iran, where they face imprisonment, torture, and in some cases, a possible death sentence. The United States has not ceased its military operations against Iran, and sending people who sought protection from the Islamic Republic of Iran back to a war zone and a repressive regime is unconscionable.

In the U.S. State Department's last human rights report on Iran, in 2024, it recorded: "The government executed hundreds of prisoners, including many who confessed under torture and faced unfair trials. There were new cases of violent enforcement of women's dress code restrictions. While some political prisoners, including persons detained in connection with protests related to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, were released from prison, other participants in the protests were arrested, sentenced to prison and death, subjected to torture, or executed during the year. Restrictions on religious freedom were severe during the year. "[9] President Trump has himself warned about the dangers faced by pro-democracy and anti-government protestors, including women, in Iran, and sending these individuals to Iran would expose them to significant harm.[10]

Sending dozens of people back to one of the most dangerous countries on earth, and where they are likely to be targeted for their or their family's suspected support of the U.S. government or criticism of the Taliban, is a death sentence. Our country made a promise never to abandon the Afghans who sacrificed their own and their family's safety to stand with American service members.

The United States is also bound not to return anyone to a country where they would face torture, and that obligation does not disappear because a flight makes a stop along the way. It is the policy of the United States

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[6] See, e.g., https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/08/1139962; https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/; https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/22/no-end-taliban-revenge-killings-afghanistan; https://impactpolicies.org/news/540/talibans-kill-list-exposes-brutal-repression-and-impunity-in-afghanistan.

[7] See, e.g., Congressional Research Service, https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/HTML/IF11646.html; https://www.afintl.com/en/202605296448; https://english.elpais.com/international/2026-06-02/hell-on-earth-for-afghan-women-from-the-ban-on-education-to-the-legal-rape-of-girls.html; https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/nov/29/afghanistan-taliban-women-children-arrested-begging-rape-torture-killings-jails-destitution-work-ban.

[8] See, e.g., https://www.hrw.org/report/2022/01/26/even-if-you-go-skies-well-find-you/lgbt-people-afghanistan-after-taliban-takeover; https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-58271187; https://www.euaa.europa.eu/coi-report-afghanistan-country-focus/45-lgbtiq-persons.

[9] U.S. Department of State, 2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Iran, https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/iran/.

[10] NPR, Feb. 27, 2026, https://www.npr.org/2026/02/27/nx-s1-5724974/iran-continues-crackdown-on-anti-government-protesters-despite-trumps-threat; Reuters, Apr. 22, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/trump-says-eight-iranian-women-wont-be-executed-iran-disputes-entire-account-2026-04-22/.

not to effect the involuntary return of any person to a country where there are substantial grounds for believing they would be in danger of being subjected to torture.[11]

The New York Times has reported that the plan is to fly Afghans from Louisiana to Pakistan.[12] We also urge you to make clear to the Government of Pakistan that the United States will not accept its participation in sending these individuals onward to the Taliban. Under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and Executive Order 13818, the United States may impose sanctions on foreign persons who are responsible for, complicit in, or materially assist serious human rights abuse.[13] Officials who help deliver people to torture or death should expect us to press for exactly those sanctions, and for a full accounting of their role.

We urge your agencies to cancel any plans for deportation flights to Iran or Afghanistan so that this administration is not complicit in horrendous human rights abuses. These people came to the U.S. because they believed in its promise of democracy, religious freedom, and liberty. We must uphold those values and commitments, not abandon people to autocratic regimes.

We request a response to this letter by November 2nd and expect your assurances that these flights will not proceed.

Sincerely,

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

[11] Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, Pub. L. 105-277, div. G, § 2242(a) (8 U.S.C. § 1231 note); Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, art. 3.

[12] Pranav Baskar, Hamed Aleaziz, and Elian Peltier, "U.S. to Send Dozens Back to Afghanistan, Despite Risk of Persecution," The New York Times, Oct. 30, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/30/world/asia/afghan-refugees-deported-flight-pakistan.html.

[13] Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, Pub. L. 114-328, div. A, title XII, subtitle F (22 U.S.C. § 10101 et seq.); Executive Order 13818, Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption, 82 Fed. Reg. 60839 (Dec. 26, 2017).

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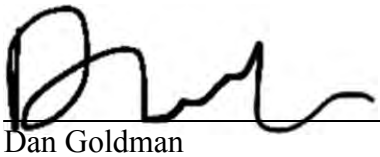
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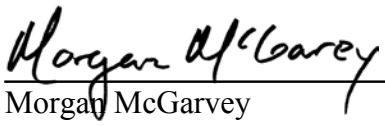
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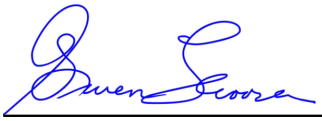
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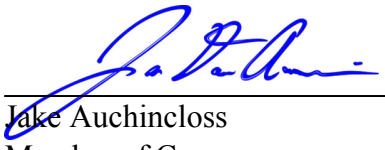
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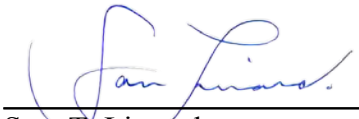
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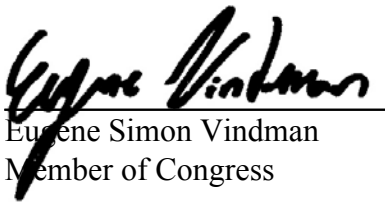
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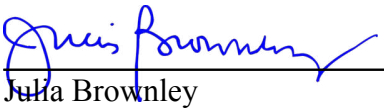
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