

July 19, 2023

Dear Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned, are writing to you today as Afghan-Americans and Afghan-led community organizations, advocacy groups, and others with strong roots within the Afghan-American community. The passage of the bicameral, bipartisan Afghan Adjustment Act (S.2327/H.R.4627) is of utmost urgency. This crucial legislation holds tremendous importance as it aims to fulfill the promises our country made to tens of thousands of Afghans who supported the U.S mission in Afghanistan.

Afghan American Community's Investment

During the 20-years of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Afghans worked alongside Americans towards shared goals of building a peaceful, democratic, and stable Afghanistan. Together, they combated terrorism, constructed schools and clinics, established democratic institutions, fostered a free and independent press, and nurtured a new generation of civil society activists, human rights advocates, and public servants. Afghans in the diaspora, who had been forced to flee the country in previous decades, were finally able to return and assist in these efforts. We witnessed the U.S. government promise persistently to Afghans who supported the mission during those twenty years: *if you stand by us, we will stand with you.*

In August 2021, Afghan-Americans were devastated to witness Afghans subject to yet another Taliban takeover. Tens of thousands of Afghans, desperate to escape the looming and repressive Taliban regime, were evacuated by U.S. forces as the military withdrew, and we saw that solemn, 20-year promise reiterated—Afghans evacuated to the U.S. would receive long term safety and security. Since then, these evacuated Afghans have made remarkable strides in resettling and integrating into our American family, but have yet to see this promise fulfilled.

Need for Adjustment of Status

Today, over 95,000 evacuated Afghans are now our friends, community members, neighbors, and co-workers across the U.S. It has taken a whole-of-society effort to welcome Afghans to the U.S. and that work is not over. Afghan-American community organizations, businesses, refugee resettlement organizations, veterans groups, faith-based groups, and other Americans have all heeded the call to welcome newly arrived Afghans. Afghan-Americans have carried the impact of this work deeply and uniquely, given the personal, multi-generational weight it has had on our community. We have been responsible for supporting our community through an incredibly burdensome, backlogged, and unnecessarily re-traumatizing legal system. While we have been able to work together to step up and assist our new community members across the country, it falls on Congress to address their need for permanent protections in the U.S. We urge members of Congress to uphold America's word to our Afghan allies, and follow historical precedent¹ in

¹ [Explainer: What We Can Learn from Prior Adjustment Acts and What They Mean for Afghan Resettlement - National Immigration Forum](#)

passing an Adjustment Act. Time after time, America has done the right thing and provided a pathway to permanent legal status to those who were brought to the United States as part of wartime evacuations. Congress must do that again—this time for Afghans.

Parole Powers

As Afghan Americans, we were not just witnesses to an evacuation which brought at-risk Afghans to safety, as they desperately attempted to flee a brutal rule by the Taliban. Rather, we were on the frontlines of a war-time evacuation. We wholeheartedly supported an evacuation that allowed for the executive branch to exercise its powers in order to organize a large-scale airlift, allowing for many at-risk Afghans to find refuge in the United States and elsewhere. This is also why we firmly oppose Senator Cotton's poison-pill alternate bill, which would strip this and future administrations from the ability to do what is necessary to save human lives. We consider the bill unnecessarily cruel and a removal of such parole powers worries us greatly. Senator Cotton's proposal conflates irrelevant issues with Afghans' eligibility to adjust legal status. His measure would only serve to further harm our communities.

Conclusion

If Congress fails to pass a large-scale adjustment for newly arrived Afghans, it will be left to the Afghan American community to pick up the pieces. Thousands of Afghans will live in continued legal limbo, unable to fully restart their lives here in the United States. We will note that newly arrived Afghans already have been deeply affected and traumatized by their sudden displacement. Forcing Afghans to undergo years of anxiety in a deeply backlogged immigration system will serve to inflict additional harm on them, something the United States should prevent from happening again. The Afghan Adjustment Act will keep the United States accountable to its commitments to allies who supported the American mission and were left behind.

Therefore, we urge you and your colleagues to swiftly and without delay, pass the Afghan Adjustment Act in this Congress as an amendment to the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act to ensure America keeps its promise to Afghan allies.

Respectfully,

Afghan-American Foundation

Afghan American Artists and Writers Association (AAAWA)

Afghan American Community Organization

Afghan Cultural Society

Afghans Empowered

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow

American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)

ArtLords

Elena's Light INC

Emergency Relief and Development

Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)

Project ANAR
The 5ive Pillars Org
Women for Afghan Women