



Respond Crisis Translation

State of Affairs in Afghanistan/Action Plan Memorandum

Date of Issue: August 17, 2021

Please note: as the situation in Afghanistan is subject to change, please check this memo periodically for updates.

Supporting our Afghan translators

At this time, a few members of our translator community based in Afghanistan have informed Respond's leadership and Iranian languages team that the situation on the ground around the country is very serious. We have heard heart-wrenching personal stories, including news that families are being separated, women are being sent home, and that there is complete uncertainty, fear for the future, and hopelessness.

"I can't sleep well. We are running out of money and might be cashless and without food for days. I have a family of 15 members. We immediately need money to go through this hardship. I am still available for any translation projects as I have to feed my family."

"Everyone is crying, everyone is hopeless. We have lost Afghanistan and have to restart from nothing."

"My female relative is a medical doctor. The Taliban has announced that women shouldn't work. She is scared for her future."

Among many of the concerns right now is the dire need for access to cash in order to have a semblance of stability in these uncertain times. Currently, all banking channels are closed in Afghanistan due to security concern, but they have announced that they will resume operation from Wednesday. In order to navigate the next steps of their lives, our Dari and Pashto-speaking translators and families based in Afghanistan need financial assistance.

Respond Crisis Translation is asking our friends, families and network at large to donate whatever they can to help provide financial assistance to our Afghani translators at this time. If you are interested in supporting, please feel free to make a donation with note **"Supporting translators in Afghanistan"** at any of the following links:

Respond donate page: <https://respondcrisistranslation.org/en/donate>



Venmo: @respondcrisis

Cashapp: \$respondcrisis

We also ask that you support Afghan translators and refugees around the world and donate in kind with your time for our upcoming phone and email banking initiative, intended to put pressure on governments to expedite visas and guarantee safe entry and integration into new homes. Please fill out the form [here](#) to express interest in this initiative.

What's happening in Afghanistan right now?

After 20 years of involvement, the US and NATO have withdrawn from Afghanistan. Since their departure, the Taliban has reconquered a big part of Afghanistan. Over the past few weeks, it has taken strategic border crossings near Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. Yesterday, the Taliban took Kabul and the Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, has fled the country. Under Taliban rule in Afghanistan not too long ago, women could not leave home without male supervision, could not go to school past the age of 8 or work, minorities were targeted, and offenders of these policies were met with extreme punishment. History is now repeating itself. Minority indigenous communities, such as Hazara, who have been historically marginalized and killed, face continued threat of genocide. Women are losing hard-fought positions in society and government, freedoms, and rights to education and work. By taking back control, the Taliban is undoing the last twenty years of progress.

Afghans are afraid for their lives and the security of their families, and many have flooded Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul to leave the country without a visa or passport. A few have even lost their lives as they desperately cling to the undercarriages of planes while attempting to escape. Nearly four million Afghans are now internally displaced. Over a thousand civilians have been killed in the past month. Schools are closed, banks are closed, and many people need medical assistance as waves of COVID continue to assault the population. The government cannot provide basic services. Compounding this nightmare are the unfortunate circumstances surrounding Afghan translators and NGO workers, who have served tirelessly and faced continuous threat of violence and death, especially in recent years. As we compose this memo, the Taliban is allegedly going door-to-door looking for Afghan or foreign government representatives, female judges, former police, and representatives of NGOs -- populations that will most certainly include fellow translators.

While the world watches, Afghans trying to leave the country over the past days, weeks and months have been estranged, waiting for visas when their government collapsed - meaning that people under threat cannot leave if they do not have passports from existing governments. The Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) P2 system is also difficult to navigate, as stringent



requirements such as needing to go to a third country before coming to the United States create insurmountable barriers to leaving Afghanistan, leaving thousands at risk.

How can RESPOND and its network of volunteers help?

Respond is calling upon its international community of translators to pressure the American government, the international community, and the press to take actions to protect Afghani asylum seekers, especially women, children, translators and NGO workers. We will specifically demand that they expedite the issuance of visas to any asylum-seeking populations and take actions against the Taliban for crimes against humanity.

As individuals and as a community of concerned citizens and translators, we can take tangible steps to address the unfolding situation in Afghanistan by:

1. **Raising Awareness:** Talk to your peers and share credible information on social media. We will be sharing information on Respond's social media. Please follow and circulate our information on the following pages below. As you raise awareness, please remember to not contribute to misinformation (don't paint this as a dispute between tribes), acknowledge historical context, and share information from credible sources). Please fill out the form [here](#) to express interest in this initiative.
2. **Amplifying Afghan Voices:** Follow and amplify/circulate the voices, work, and initiatives of Afghan activists, leaders, journalists, artists and researchers and take direction from leaders in those communities about what type of content to disseminate.
3. **Join Respond Crisis Translation's phone banking efforts and letter writing campaign:** We will be collectively reaching out to our representatives in government to articulate our concerns about Afghanistan and to demand protection, support, and expedited visas for Afghan asylum seekers, women, girls, and translators. We have included a draft text below that you can use to contact your representatives.
4. **Find out if your government is deporting Afghans back to Afghanistan:** Many governments around the world were deporting Afghan asylum seekers and only recently have stopped deportations. Demand for the end of deportation. If you're based in the UK, write to your MP to block the government from deporting Afghan asylum seekers.
5. **Organize/Join a Protest in your City:** On August 21, 2021, protests will be taking place in Stuttgart and London. Several international protests are being planned to take



place on August 28, 2021 including Albany, Atlanta, Amsterdam, Athens, Basel, Beirut, Berlin, Calgary, Chicago, Denver, Edmonton, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, Montreal, London, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Oslo, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Vienna, Washington DC, San Diego, and San Francisco. Social media is a great source for information about these protests planned throughout the next few weeks. Follow #stopkillingafghans for more information.

6. **Provide financial support if possible:** Help our translators in Afghanistan. If you donate to any organizations, prioritize smaller, Afghan-based organizations and anyone doing work on the ground in Afghanistan, as most NGOs cannot do work there and have left the country. You can also send money directly to Respond and we will be sure to get it directly to our translators in Kabul.
7. **Reach out to journalist unions and women's rights groups:** Ask them what they're doing to support asylum seekers from Afghanistan and to defend the rights of women. We know that journalism can make or break a political moment.

How can I educate myself?

[NYT live update](#)

[UN Website](#)

[Associated Press](#)

[The Guardian](#)

[PBS](#)

[Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)

Some news, NGO and journalist instagram accounts to follow: @girlupafghanistan; @theafghan; @afghansempowered; @anisashaheed; @tolonewsofficial; @omar.haidari; @womenforafghanwomen; @mothersofafghanistan; @yekihastim.ngo; @enabledchildren; @charmaghz; @srowzarchildren; @arianathejournalist.



Respond Crisis Translation
Phone Banking and Letter Writing Campaign
Advocating for Afghani Translators and Asylum Seekers

We must keep our elected officials accountable by making our voices heard. We must insist that our elected officials consistently prioritize and promote policies that support Afghan asylum seekers. We need to let them know that any policies that are detrimental to these populations are, without equivocation, intolerable. They need to know that we are watching.

To that end, Respond Crisis Translation is asking our supporters and volunteers to undergo a phone and/or letter-writing campaign. These are simple grassroots tools by which we can advocate on this important issue. Our Senators and Representatives depend on our votes and they pay attention to the mail and calls they receive.

How to Contact American Elected Officials:

You can locate the information for your elected officials via [the USA.gov website](https://www.usa.gov), where you can search for your local, state, and federal representatives.

Federal Elected Officials

- Contact President Joe Biden online OR call the White House switchboard at 202-456-1414 or the comments line at 202-456-1111 during business hours.

Contacting Your Senators:

- To contact your Senator by phone, call the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and provide your zip code to be connected directly with the Senate office you request.
- To contact your Senator by mail, address as follows:
 - The Honorable (Full Name)
[Room #] [Building Name] Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Contacting Your Representatives:

- To contact your Representatives by phone, call the United States Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and provide your zip code. A switchboard operator will connect you directly with the House office you request.
- To contact your Representative by mail, address as follows:
 - The Honorable (Full Name)
 - [Room #] [Building Name] House Office Building



- United States House of Representatives
- Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone Talking Points:

The following are suggested talking points to send clear, powerful and consistent messaging:

- Hello, my name is [Insert Name] I'm a constituent from [City, State]. I am also a [Insert Position, EG: translator] with Respond Crisis Translation.
- We are a group of language experts, technicians and marketers, professional interpreters who are passionate about the intersection of immigrant justice and language democracy.
- We mobilize to provide fast, accurate, compassionate translating and interpreting services of any kind for asylum seekers and other individuals who require language support amidst legal, medical, or personal crises.
- The United States is a country of immigrants. We have a moral obligation to uphold human and legal rights for those seeking safety abroad.
- Reject unreasonable eligibility requirements that render illegible victims of domestic or gang violence, family members of asylum seekers under threat, and individuals charged without due process in their home countries to seek asylum in the U.S.
- Demand that the SIV P2 requirement that US-affiliated Afghans go to a third country be waived. This requirement is a *de facto* obstacle to resettlement in the US given that getting a third country visa is incredibly difficult for Afghan nationals.
- Facilitate expedited processing of asylum claims.
- Protect asylum seekers' access to attorneys and end any deportation.
- Provide safe, open routes for Afghan refugees and welcome them.
- Secure immediate unconditional amnesty for Afghan asylum seekers.
- Provide trauma-informed and culturally relevant support for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.
- Demand accountability and sanctions against actors who finance the Taliban, train them and give them weapons.
- Pressure the international community to reinstate commercial flights to and from Afghanistan to help stranded people leave.
- Prioritize the evacuation and immediate resettlement of women leaders and rights activists.
- Reject any policy aimed at barring asylum seekers from entering the country.
- Ensure the end of deportations of Afghan asylum seekers.
- Support policies that help asylum seekers to support themselves and their families.



- Waive the SIV P2 requirement that US-affiliated Afghans go to a third country. This requirement is a *de facto* obstacle to resettlement in the US given that getting a third country visa is incredibly difficult for Afghan nationals who no longer have valid passports after the collapse of their government.

Email/Letter Template

[Date]

The Honorable _____ House (or Senate) Office Building
Washington, DC 20515 (20510)

Subject: Call to Action - Calling on Americans to Support the Afghan People and in Opposition to the Taliban; Save our Translators

Dear Congressman/Senator _____:

My name is _____ and I am a constituent of [city, state]. I am also a [Insert Position, EG: translator] with Respond Crisis Translation. We are a group of language experts, technicians and marketers, professional interpreters who are passionate about the intersection of immigrant justice and language democracy.

I am writing to ask you to advocate for urgent action to expedite visas for Afghani peoples, especially women, children, ethnic minorities such as the Hazara, translators and NGO workers, and to facilitate their relocation and readjustment to a new home. Help asylum seekers find safety, gain pathways to earning citizenship, and protect the most vulnerable members of our international community. We call upon you to condemn any policies that act to the detriment of Afghani immigrants and asylum seekers.

The United States is a country of immigrants and we have a moral obligation to uphold human and legal rights for those seeking safety abroad. It is imperative that our elected officials work to fight for Afghani asylum seekers throughout your term as [Representative/Senator/President]. U.S. and NATO allies benefitted from the support of local Afghans who are being targeted as we speak. The United States has a moral obligation to admit as many Afghan refugees as quickly and as humanely as possible.

We ask for:

- trauma-informed and culturally relevant support for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.



- accountability and sanctions against actors who finance the Taliban, train them and give them weapons.
- pressure on the international community to reinstate commercial flights to and from Afghanistan to help stranded people leave.
- the prioritization of the evacuation and immediate resettlement of women leaders and human rights activists.
- the end of sale of weapons, military equipment, surveillance technology to despots, dictators and human rights violators.
- rejection of any policy aimed at barring asylum seekers from entering the country.
- ensurance of the **end of deportations** of Afghan asylum seekers.
- support for policies that help asylum seekers to support themselves and their families.
- the SIV P2 requirement that US-affiliated Afghans go to a third country to be waived. This requirement is a *de facto* obstacle to resettlement in the US given that getting a third country visa is incredibly difficult for Afghan nationals who no longer have valid passports after the collapse of their government.

We thank you for your time and hope that you prioritize the well-being of Afghans now and going forward.

زنده باد مردم افغانستان

Zنده baad-e mardom-e Afghanistan

Long live the people of Afghanistan

Sincerely,

Your name

Your address