

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2021

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Thank you for recently testifying to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. To follow up, we are writing to highlight our concern for at-risk Afghans who were evacuated through private charters but remain in limbo in third countries.

The administration has consistently included Afghans evacuated through these private efforts in its official account of the success of Operations Allies Refuge, but now, many of them are not getting the opportunity to proceed. Whether an individual was evacuated by a U.S. government plane or a private charter plane should not serve as a factor in their visa's processing time. In order to ensure individuals have the chance to undergo processing and be considered for onward movement expeditiously, we request that the State Department carry out a robust response to ensure that these people are not left behind.

We have been heartened to hear your repeated commitments to continue processing at-risk Afghans who were evacuated through private charters. You reaffirmed this commitment during last week's hearing in front of the House Foreign Affairs Committee:

Malinowski: (...) I know you've surged all kinds of personnel to Germany and to other places where people we evacuated on our planes. Are you willing to do the same for Afghans who were brought by private groups to countries like Albania?

Blinken: We want to make sure that we have in place wherever necessary the personnel required to help process people and to make sure that we can do what checks are necessary and then also to support their efforts to move from their initial landing place to an ultimate destination.

We recognize how hard the Department has worked during Operation Allies Refuge, and that the Department has surged hundreds of State Department personnel to different parts of the world to assist the mission. But it's unclear to us if the surge in personnel has also been directed toward processing Afghans evacuated on private planes who may be eligible for SIV, P1, or P2 status. Processing time, or the attention our government gives them, should not depend on what kind of plane individuals got out on, be it a private charter or a C-17. Without the efforts of those operating private planes, hundreds of journalists, academics, activists, political and government officials, and other at-risk Afghans would have been left to the mercy of the Taliban.

Unfortunately, from the accounts we have heard, it appears that individuals who were transported to third countries on private planes are not being processed. We are aware of thousands of Afghans in Albania and the UAE in this situation. They were evacuated via private charters and remain in limbo, unable to access U.S. officials to make their case or proceed with processing. We ask that the Department of State surge the necessary capacity to these countries for processing to ensure that the U.S. government does not discriminate against those who escaped the Taliban through other means.

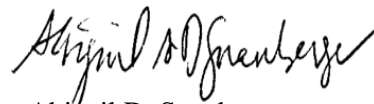
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The individuals on these private planes includes those the U.S. government promised to help, but would have most likely been missed in the official, time-bound evacuation. Even though the military withdrawal is complete, our mission to protect and process these vulnerable Afghans continues. We look forward to working with your Department and are ready to assist and support the Department in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Tom Malinowski
Member of Congress



Abigail D. Spanberger
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Peter Meijer
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress