

July 20, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader of the U.S. House of
Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We are a coalition of U.S. news organizations that have provided the American people and the world with coverage of Afghanistan for the past two decades. We write today to seek the U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance for those Afghans who have worked with the U.S. media as journalists, interpreters, and support staff and now fear retaliation from the Taliban for having courageously associated themselves with the American press. For those who fear reprisals, there is a critical need for a special visa program to allow them and their families to find safety in the United States.

Much attention has been given in recent weeks to the plight of Afghans who worked for the U.S. Government and the expansion of the Special Immigration Visa program to assist them in seeking relocation and safety in the United States. The SIV program properly recognizes both their service and this country's commitment to provide safe harbor to people who advanced America's interest in Afghanistan. The SIV program does not reach those Afghans who have served U.S. news organizations. Yet they and their families face the same threat of retaliation from the Taliban, which views the American press as a legitimate target. The Taliban has long conducted a campaign of threatening and killing journalists.

We urge Congress to support the creation of a visa program for Afghans who worked with the U.S. press and now seek safety in the United States. There is precedent for such an initiative. In 2008, Congress passed, and President Bush signed, legislation extending special immigration consideration to Iraqis who had worked with the U.S. news media. That program reached both journalists and support staff and extended to their immediate family members. The same sort of program is needed now for Afghanistan.

We do not have a reliable count at this time of the number of our Afghan colleagues who are in danger. But the number is undoubtedly modest – we estimate fewer than 1,000 people – because of the small number of news organizations that have operated in Afghanistan and the relatively small size of our operations.

The need for action is urgent. Designing and implementing a program and then processing applications will inevitably take time. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of U.S. forces is moving forward rapidly. We are doing what we can as private organizations to assist our former and current Afghan colleagues but our capacity to provide relief is limited. Without the assistance of the U.S. Government, many of these

Afghans face grievous harm and death for having done nothing more than lent their labor and skills to making certain the world knew what was going on in their country while U.S. troops were there for the past twenty years.

We thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

ABC News
The Atlantic Monthly Group LLC
The Boston Globe
Buzzfeed, Inc.
CBS News
Center for Investigative Reporting, Inc. (d/b/a "Reveal")
CNN
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.
First Look Institute, Inc. ("The Intercept")
FOX News Media
Hearst Corporation
Los Angeles Times Communications LLC
The McClatchy Company, LLC
National Public Radio, Inc.
NBCUniversal News Group
The New York Times Company
The New Yorker
Politico LLC
Sinclair Broadcast Group, Inc.
VICE Media Group
The Washington Post

Committee to Protect Journalists
News Media Alliance
Radio Televisión Digital News Association
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press