



City of Portland, Oregon



Multnomah County, Oregon

Dear President Biden, Secretary Mayorkas, and Secretary Blinken,

As we watch democracy collapse in Afghanistan, we urge you to take bold, decisive actions in support of the Afghan people.

First, you must prioritize the most vulnerable Afghans seeking visas, or refugee or asylum status. This includes, but is not limited to, minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ people, non-Muslim believers, those involved in the previous government, believers of other branches of Islam, and those who previously opposed the Taliban. The Taliban's archaic, abhorrent, life-threatening treatment of women is also well-documented, and its ascendancy will likely destroy twenty years of expanding women's rights in Afghanistan.

Second, you must also prioritize Afghans (and their families) who collaborated with U.S. personnel and therefore qualify for Special Immigrant Visas. Regardless of how anyone feels about the war, the United States' reasons for going into Afghanistan, or our lengthy presence, these people assumed great risk to help our soldiers. That risk is now at their doors, threatening them and those they love, and betraying their service will reverberate well into the future. We must protect them by helping them leave Afghanistan and rebuild their lives in the United States.

We ask you to designate Temporary Protected Status for all fleeing Afghans, lift the caps on refugee resettlement, and process applications on U.S. soil rather than stranding applicants in third-party countries. By doing so, you can reduce complications and save more lives more quickly.

These decisions belong to you as leaders of the federal government, but we recognize that you cannot admit more Afghans without American communities willing to resettle them. Our community is willing. Immigrants and refugees have made our region and our state better and it would be our honor to welcome Afghans who are no longer safe in their home country. Please know that you can count on us to provide welcoming new communities to as many Afghans as we can.

We make this offer buoyed by [our governor](#) and [a bipartisan, geographically-diverse group of state legislators](#). Together, we affirm that Afghan refugees are welcome in Oregon. We thank Sen. Kayse Jama and Rep. Khanh Pham – a former refugee and the child of refugees, respectively – for leading the way, and for creating the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. This crucial infrastructure will provide long-term support services to immigrant and refugee Oregonians, help them reestablish their lives in communities across our state.



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We are a great country, and a safer country, when we lead with integrity and love. Such leadership demands that we ensure the safety of (at least) those who ensured the safety of our citizens, and of those who will be persecuted because of who they are. We hope you open the door to Afghan refugees and visa or asylum seekers – and if you do, we promise to do our part locally to welcome them into our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Portland City Council

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