



## Jubilee Campaign's Work in Afghanistan: Evacuating a Family and Raising the Voice of Minorities

Jubilee Campaign wishes a very happy holiday season to you and your family, and we hope that you will find a way to celebrate safely with your loved ones.

In the week leading up to Christmas, we will be updating you on Jubilee Campaign's biggest projects of 2021 and the various successes we made in the realm of international religious freedom. For the first time in over a year, we were able to meet with our colleagues in person at the inaugural IRF Summit in Washington, D.C., where we planned future advocacy initiatives, held an event, and made new friends and partners. We are fully prepared and excited to bring our advocacy plans to fruition in 2022!

### *Assisting an Escape and Celebrating a Reunion*

Jubilee Campaign was privileged to participate in the safe evacuation of one Afghan family consisting of a mother and her four teenaged children; the woman's husband had already been in the United States for some time working three jobs as a registered nurse. Prior to his family's escape, he had not seen his wife and four children in nearly six or seven years. The swift move of all of his family members to the United States at the same time was unexpected but necessary for their safety. For days while the Taliban was solidifying its stronghold in the capital, Jubilee Campaign was in close contact with the family in Afghanistan as they waited outside of the Kabul airport in the cold water, with only the clothes on their backs, with no luggage or food, desperate to escape. Meanwhile, Jubilee Campaign, alongside our wonderful partners, filed documents, spoke with authorities, and did everything possible to evacuate the family as safely and swiftly as possible. And it was a close call; not long after the family boarded the flight out of Afghanistan, militants detonated a bomb on airport grounds. Even as the family took off and escaped what was once their home, they still had to face hours and days of flights, transfers, and uncertainty regarding their next destination.





First, they were taken to Qatar, and then to Germany. No time to shower, change clothes, or calm down from the crisis they narrowly escaped. All the while, they had to communicate with their very rudimentary English skills; fortunately, the daughter was able to communicate and relay the information to her father in the US. As he learned that his family was safely en route to a third country, he could finally rest after spending the past days in a constant state of anxiety. In the DC area, Jubilee Campaign was preparing for the family's arrival, having purchased clean clothes, toiletries, and food staples; prepared comfortable housing with assistance; and assembled documentation for humanitarian parole filings. Finally, we were reassured to learn that the family had safely landed in the United States; unfortunately, however, we were not able to welcome them, as they were transferred to a military base to undergo COVID-19 testing and quarantine. Regardless, everyone at Jubilee Campaign - and all of our partners that made the escape possible - breathed a collective sigh of relief. Despite a plethora of obstacles, we had succeeded in offering an Afghan family a new chance at security and safety. We must remember, however, that there remain hundreds of Afghan civilians who are desperate to escape due to their status as women, faith and ethnic minorities, and people who in prior years had worked closely with US officials in Afghanistan and have now had a target placed on their back - for example, language interpreters and NGO workers. As long as these people are in existential danger, Jubilee Campaign will continue to relentlessly advocate for their safe resettlement in a third country where they can live their lives according to their free will, without the fear of repression and persecution.

## Our Other Initiatives on Afghanistan



**INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
ROUNDTABLE**

August 21, 2021

The Honorable Joseph Biden  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

*Re: Emergency Protection and Evacuation of Afghan Religious Minorities/Sanctioning Taliban for Religious Freedom Abuses*

Dear President Biden:

We are an informal participant-led, multi-religious group that advocates for international religious freedom. Despite our extremely broad diversity of theological views and political positions, we are united in our horror at the unfolding events in Afghanistan following the abrupt US troop withdrawal and the swift Taliban takeover. It is clear that most Afghans do not want a Taliban dominated government and are experiencing deep fear and anxiety at what the future holds. Videos of women handing babies and small children to soldiers over barbed wire vividly illustrate the panic sweeping the nation.

We request specific steps to assist non-governmental organizations in the evacuation and safeguarding of vulnerable religious minorities: Shia Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Hindus, Bahais, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and others. Immediate action is imperative to fulfill the pledge made in your recent speeches that "human rights will be the center of our foreign policy," and the many pledges of your Administration, including Secretary of State Blinken and USAID Administrator Samantha Power at last month's 2021 IRF Summit, confirming its commitment to international religious freedom.

We also believe that current Taliban actions warrant repositioning of US assets and freezing of funds and future assistance to a Taliban run Afghan government until they cease violating the rights of religious minorities. We collectively have assembled numerous reports of horrific mistreatment of religious minorities by Taliban militants now roaming freely throughout

1. August 16, 2021: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/2021/08/16/washington-post-biden-silence-afghanistan-speech-biden/>  
August 31, 2021: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/31/us/politics/biden-silence-afghanistan.html>

26 August 2021

**REFUGEE COUNCIL USA**

July 8, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am writing on behalf of RCUSA, a coalition of organizations serving and advocating for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, to ask that you, above and beyond the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, urgently welcome Afghan fleeing violence and persecution to the United States through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), expedite family reunification petitions, and grant humanitarian parole applications.

The withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan leaves many Afghan civilians at risk of targeted attacks from the Taliban and will likely force thousands to flee from their homes and join the millions of Afghan refugees abroad seeking safety. Many of these Afghans have family members in the United States or are being targeted because of their ties to the United States. Unfortunately, the state quo - limited refugee processing and error-laden and backlogged immigration processes - is insufficient to protect these Afghans. It is imperative that the administration take decisive action to bring these Afghans to safety.

RCUSA is encouraged that the administration is considering an evacuation to protect certain Afghans who served alongside U.S. forces. However, we are concerned that no formal plan has been articulated since the first report over three weeks ago. We are also alarmed that reports suggest the administration plans to evacuate 8,000 SIV applicants, far short of the 18,000 applicants currently awaiting processing and the estimated 85,000 family members in need of protection, and that the evacuation might be to the Middle East or Central Asia, rather than to U.S. soil. American veterans, 20 community-based and human rights organizations, and nearly 200 faith leaders and faith groups across traditions have called on your office to immediately evacuate all U.S.-affiliated Afghans to U.S. soil and to work with Congress to authorize as many SIVs as are necessary to meet the need. There is currently a deficit of at least 2,000 SIVs, but it may be closer to 20,000. Given that the Afghan SIV program was created to provide a pathway to protection for those who face danger because of their service to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, it is our moral imperative to keep our promise to those we pledged to protect.

However, even if the administration plans and executes an evacuation of Afghan allies waiting for SIVs, the lives of countless U.S.-affiliated Afghans who do not qualify for SIVs, other Afghan refugees, and family members of Afghans in the United States will be in grave danger following the U.S. withdrawal. We are

- Amnesty International
- Bethany Christian Services
- Boat People SOS
- Center for Migration Studies
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Church World Service
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- HIAS
- Human Rights First
- International Catholic Migration Commission
- International Refugee Assistance Project
- International Rescue Committee
- Islamic Relief USA
- Jewish Refugee Service USA
- Jubilee Campaign
- Katharine Immigration and Refugee Service
- Outreach America
- Refuge Point
- Refugees Congress
- Refugees International
- SEARAC
- USAHelo
- United Statesles
- US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- World Relief

8 July 2021

Jubilee Campaign signed a joint letter addressing numerous concerns about the situation of minorities in Afghanistan, including Shia Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Hindus, Bahai's, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and others. Despite that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has urged the Taliban to adhere to "tolerant Islamic principles" and human rights; however, signatories expressed that "we realistically expect a swift reversion to Taliban policies of the 1990's when religious minorities and dissenters were jailed, forced to convert, publicly whipped or executed, forced to pay tribute and use distinctive colors on their clothes and homes.

**\*\*\*Click on the above graphic to view in a separate browser\*\*\***

Prior to the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, Jubilee Campaign joined a letter spearheaded by Refugee Council USA, in which we highlight that "withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan leaves many Afghan civilians at risk of targeted attacks from the Taliban and will likely force thousands to flee from their homes and join the millions of Afghan refugees abroad seeking safety. We also offer numerous recommendations to complement the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program in order to ensure that as many vulnerable Afghan civilians are safely evacuated. These recommendations include US Refugee Admissions Program, ensuring a Family Reunification process, and Humanitarian Parole.

**\*\*\*Click on the above graphic to view in a separate browser\*\*\***

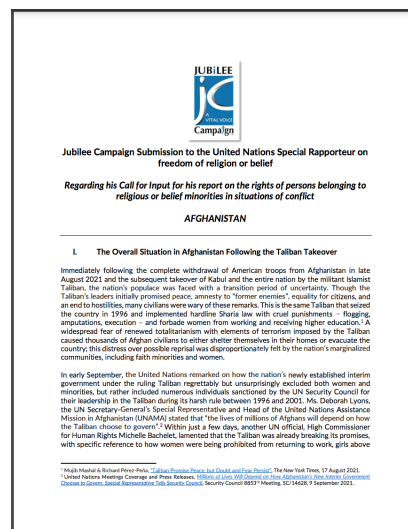
## 26 August 2021

Jubilee Campaign submitted a statement to the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief in which we explained in length our concerns with regards to specific faith communities left in Afghanistan. With regards to Christians, Some began receiving anonymous menacing phone calls in which they were warned “we are coming for you” and letters in their doorways threatening interrogation and prosecution if they did not turn themselves in. Should the Taliban reimpose Shariah law, we could see inhumane punishment for apostasy (conversion to Christianity) waged against Christian converts.

Hazaras, one of Afghanistan’s largest ethnic groups, predominantly identify as Shi’a Muslims and have a bloody history of being ruthlessly targeted for attacks by the Taliban and Islamic State. In July and August, while the Taliban was securing control over Ghazni 12 and Daykundi13 provinces, they had killed and tortured at least 20 Hazaras – including one teenage girl shot to death – and mass evicted thousands of others from their homes. Taliban troops broke individuals’ limbs one by one, strangled them with scarves, bound their arms and legs, and pulled their hair out, all before shooting them dead.

Shi’a Muslims not from the Hazara ethnic group have similarly been targeted for their faith since the Taliban takeover. On 8 October, the Islamic State launched a suicide bomb in a Shiite mosque in Kunduz province which killed at least 72 worshippers and injured 140 during prayer. Only a week following this attack, another suicide bombing at the Fatimiya Shiite mosque in Kandahar had killed at least 63 and wounded dozens more; the attack took place during prayers which drew some 500 worshippers.

**\*\*\*Click on the above graphic to view in a separate browser\*\*\***



## Afghanistan: One Family's Escape

Jubilee Campaign was privileged to participate in the safe evacuation of one Afghan family consisting of a mother and her four teenaged children; the woman's husband had already been in the United States for some time working three jobs as a registered nurse. Prior to his family's escape, he had not seen his wife and four children in nearly six or seven years. The swift move of all of his family members to the United States at the same time was unexpected but necessary for their safety. For days while the Taliban was solidifying its stronghold in the capital, Jubilee Campaign was in close contact with the family in Afghanistan as they waited outside of the Kabul airport in the cold water, with only the clothes on their backs, with no luggage or food, desperate to escape. Meanwhile, Jubilee Campaign alongside our wonderful partners, filed documents, spoke with authorities, and did everything possible to evacuate the family as safely and swiftly as possible. And it was a close call: not long after the family boarded the flight out of Afghanistan, militants detonated a bomb on airport grounds. Even as the family took off and escaped what was once their home, they still had to face hours and days of flights, transfers, and uncertainty regarding their next destination.



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jubileecampaign.org A VITAL VOICE FOR THOSE SUFFERING IN SILENCE 11

\*\*\*Click on the above graphic to view in a separate browser\*\*\*

**Please consider making a Christmas or year-end financial donation to Jubilee Campaign so that we can continue our crucial religious freedom and human rights advocacy in 2022!**

Donate

**For more information on Jubilee Campaign's projects, advocacy, and initiatives, please visit our website by clicking the button below:**

jubileecampaign.org

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