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State Dept. to Coordinate with Veterans, Frontline Civilians to Help Afghans as Congress Eyes Resettlement Bill

Secretary of State Antony Blinken's Team Applauds Ongoing Efforts by #AfghanEvac to Resettle Afghan Allies in U.S.

Washington, D.C. – As bipartisan congressional support grows for a bill to help Afghans resettling in the U.S., key aides under Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged to assist veterans and volunteers who are working to help Afghans relocate to America.

In a meeting held in the Department of State's D.C. headquarters on Monday, State Department officials and international nonprofit #AfghanEvac discussed roadblocks that must be cleared to help Afghans come to the U.S. and successfully make a new life here.

“Secretary Blinken sincerely appreciates what you all do, and believes you are a testament to perseverance and creativity. You didn’t wait for someone else to organize, you just got busy and got to work,” said Undersecretary of State John Bass to the #AfghanEvac coalition. **“The Department of State and all of our embassies and consulates around the world remain committed to this effort.”**

“We’re extremely grateful to you all for your partnership and collaboration in supporting our Afghan allies,” said Ambassador Elizabeth Jones, who serves as the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts, to the group.

Thousands of Afghans are dispersed across the world, including Special Immigrant Visa applicants who are pending processing of their visa cases in order to enter the U.S. Members of #AfghanEvac shared stories of anguish, frustration, and humanity with State Department officials.

“Families of heroes who served alongside our troops were torn apart during the tumultuous withdrawal from Afghanistan,” said Shawn VanDiver, a Navy veteran and president and founder of #AfghanEvac. **“But there can still be a happy ending in many cases with the help of the state department, which under Secretary Blinken is committed to supporting the efforts of our hundreds of volunteers.”**

The meeting comes as Congress is considering adding language into the Ukraine Supplemental Act that will provide a path for Afghan arrivals to apply for lawful permanent resident status. The “Afghan Adjustment Act” would apply to Afghans who arrived here as a result of the military evacuation last August.

This bill will enable newly arrived Afghans to go through the immigration process, undergo all necessary security reviews, and have a path forward to lawful permanent residency here in the United States. Those who apply under this bill would undergo a robust vetting process.

The law would mirror efforts made by the U.S. government for Vietnamese and South Asian refugees following the fall of Saigon.

#AfghanEvac is also encouraging Congress to look at ways to improve and expand the Special Immigrant Visa program, and make more efficient and effective processing for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (e.g. Priority 1 and Priority 2 referrals).

The more than 180 organizations that make up the #AfghanEvac coalition have long been advocating for this legislative fix which will provide new Afghan community members with the stability they need to resettle and thrive in their new lives here. The coalition’s members and organizations, including hundreds of veterans and frontline civilians, will continue to work in the coming days and weeks to propel this effort forward.

For twenty years, Afghan allies worked and fought side-by-side with U.S. and allied forces through the longest war in American history. The #AfghanEvac coalition is committed to ensuring that their service, partnership, and commitment to American ideals is rewarded.

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