**FAQ on Afghans Seeking Refuge**

**Why do Afghans need urgent humanitarian protection?**

Since the United States’ withdrawal preparation from Afghanistan, tens of thousands of vulnerable Afghans are in imminent danger and [face retaliation and death by the Taliban](https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/08/16/world/taliban-afghanistan-news). Action must be taken now to ensure a timely, efficient, and secure [Afghan evacuation](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/13/afghanistan-risk-civilians-need-evacuation-protection) and for the United States to provide refuge for Afghan allies, their loved ones, and those fleeing violence and persecution.

**Why is it difficult to evacuate Afghans seeking refuge?**

The plan to evacuate has been in process for months, but the U.S. military was not expecting the Taliban to take over the country so quickly. The previous administration had delayed expanding and expediting evacuations of Afghans who assisted the U.S. mission, displaced Afghans, and other at-risk Afghans to safety. This delay exacerbated a chaotic evacuation process and many Afghans in danger have had difficulty making it out of the country safely. The U.S. has sent armed forces to maintain control of the airport itself, but there are very real and profound security concerns around the airport perimeter and the paths to get to the airport. There is more advocacy needed to ensure humanitarian corridors, so people can travel to the airport safely, continued evacuations to U.S. territory, and an extended deadline until all Afghans seeking protection can be evacuated and find safe refuge. See resources for advocacy, [here](https://rcusa.org/afghanistan/individual-advocacy/).

**Why are Afghans arriving at U.S. Military Bases?**

Afghans evacuated to U.S. territory are being transported to U.S. military bases to complete their processing into the United States. Our military bases are often used for emergency housing, vetting, and processing of refugees who cannot be processed abroad. This is not a form of detention, but rather a temporary space in which U.S. government officials and non-profits can assist in the case by case legal paperwork necessary to enter the country. Resettlement staff have been deployed to these military bases to help welcome and process Afghan arrivals.

**What immigration status are Afghans seeking protection given?**

Many Afghans are entering the United States with humanitarian parole, a temporary form of protection that offers employment authorization. Afghan arrivals also include individuals eligible for Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for aiding the U.S. mission (or with their SIVs in hand). Some Afghans will come under new refugee admissions categories as family members or employees of U.S. companies or non-profits. Many arrivals will need access to legal representation to assist them in pursuing a permanent pathway to citizenship in the United States.

**What are all these legal terms?**

Although it's confusing, this is a good time to learn the complicated nature of the immigration, refugee, and asylum systems and processes. See the below list of terms and definitions:

* **Special Immigrant Visa (SIV):**The SIV program is available to Afghan nationals who were employed by, or on behalf of the US government within Afghanistan. This program is intended to allow those who qualify, and their direct family members, to apply directly

to the U.S. for resettlement, as opposed to waiting for UNHCR referral. After their cases have been approved, SIVs receive resettlement services from a local resettlement office.

* **Priority 2 (P2):** A P2 designation means that this is a group of “special concern” to the US government. The new P2 designation for Afghanistan expands beyond the SIV program to include those who don’t meet the minimum time-in-service requirement for the above, and those who worked in Afghanistan for a US-based media company or a non-governmental organization. After their cases have been approved, P2s receive resettlement services from a local resettlement office.
* **Asylum:** A person can seek asylum in the United States if they meet the definition of a refugee. They can apply for asylum from within the U.S. or at a U.S. port of entry. Asylum seekers can seek work authorization while awaiting final decision on their case. Once they have been approved for asylum, they can receive services from a local resettlement office.
* **Humanitarian Parole:** For many Afghans arriving in the U.S., they will likely be initially seeking humanitarian parole, which is a temporary status allowing the parolee to stay in the United States up to 365 days while applying for a longer term solution. Under current law, parolees are only able to apply for work authorization, they can only access resettlement services or benefits once they have been granted a separate status (such as asylee, SIV, etc.).

**What Can I Do?**

People of good will want to help. There is so much you can do, including advocacy, donating, and community sponsorship.