



INTERNATIONAL SERVICE CENTER

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Afghan Family Reunification (AFR) Project

August 2021 has been a very intense and hectic month for the International Service Center (ISC) as the heartbreaking events in Afghanistan and consequences of the U.S. troop withdrawal have unfolded. The security risk for Afghan Allies who assisted the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and their loved ones, became a heightened priority, made even more urgent by the Taliban takeover of the country on August 15. Within two weeks, the U.S. government had managed to safely evacuate more than 120,000 U.S. Citizens and Afghan nationals out of Kabul Airport to various U.S. military bases around the world. The vast majority of the evacuees are former U.S. allies and their immediate relatives whose lives would have been in grave danger under Afghanistan's new rulers.

As of September 15, more than 23,000 Afghan refugees have arrived in the U.S. through Washington-DC and Philadelphia airports, and are being temporarily housed at eight military bases in Indiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Virginia, and Wisconsin. There, they will undergo a strenuous vetting process, prior to being connected with their U.S. relatives or resettlement agencies for placement into designated communities across America.

Hundreds of personnel from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, and Department of Defense are continuing to process and screen Afghan evacuees at U.S. military bases overseas including Bahrain, Germany, Kuwait, Italy, Qatar, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates. Their ultimate goal is to bring to the United States Afghan nationals who had worked for the U.S. during the 20-year war, as well as other vulnerable Afghans. By the end of September, the U.S. government anticipates that it will have relocated more than 65,000 Afghans to the United States, with about 30,000 more expected to arrive over the next 12 months.

Since the beginning of August, the Executive Director of the International Service Center (ISC) and a small group of volunteers have been working feverishly to try to address the needs of desperate Afghan clients rushing to the ISC for assistance. Most of the Afghan immigrants who came to the U.S. in the past few years under the Operation Allies Welcome are Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, for having worked side-by-side with the U.S. Armed Forces in Afghanistan. Their relatives left behind in Afghanistan would suffer horrible retaliation from the Taliban. Responding to the appeal for assistance from local Afghan immigrants who were extremely concerned for the safety of their relatives in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, the ISC has initiated the Afghan Family Reunification (AFR) Project on September 1, 2021. The main purpose of the AFR Project is to help at-risk people still stranded in Afghanistan reunite with their relatives in the United States, and to help ease their transition once they get here.

Considering the constantly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the imminent arrivals of Afghan refugees in our community, we are afraid that with our presently limited resources, we will not be able to achieve the goal we have established for this special Project. We began developing additional resources, while trying to recruit more partners in mission.

There are several ways you could assist us in this Afghan refugee assistance effort.

1. You could donate any of the items listed on the attached Refugee's Wish List and Preferred Foods. Donations could be delivered at our door on 21 South River Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101. This address is actually the back door of the Market Square Presbyterian Church, from where the International Service Center has been serving refugees and immigrants for the past 45 years. We would appreciate it very much if you could drop-off your donations on Fridays between 9:00am and 4:00pm. You could also email us your name, address, phone number, and the item(s) you wish to donate. Our Basic Needs Team will contact you to make arrangement for pick-up.
2. You could register to serve as a volunteer by completing the attached Volunteer Sign Up Form and return it to us at your earliest convenience.
3. You could make a financial contribution by writing a check to the International Service Center, with a note "Afghan Refugees" on it, and mail it to the address below. Every dollar you contributed will be presented to a newly-arriving Afghan refugee family as a welcoming gift from a generous resident of Central Pennsylvania.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Truong N. Phuong

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