

January 12, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20520

The Honorable Linda Thomas-Green
Ambassador
United States Mission to the United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Secretary Blinken and Ambassador Thomas-Green:

As the United States coordinates with the United Nations to provide aid and services for Afghanistan, I urge you to include provisions for the evacuation of at-risk Afghan allies to the United States. Continued safe passage for military translators, civil servants, humanitarian workers, and others who supported the US mission in Afghanistan should be included in any agreement between the United Nations and the Taliban.

While supporting humanitarian assistance, we should insist that negotiations between the United Nations and the Taliban for governmental assistance provide for evacuation of at-risk Afghan allies. Humanitarian aid is desperately needed in Afghanistan as the people of that war torn nation face famine, failing health care, unheated homes, or no homes at all. Since the Taliban's seizure of control on August 15, 2021, the humanitarian crisis has continued to burgeon. According to the United Nations' World Food Program, ninety-five percent of Afghans lack sufficient food, and "people are being pushed to the brink of survival." Almost the entire population is close to falling into poverty.

I strongly supported the Department of the Treasury's issuance of two general licenses on September 24, 2021 to allow for the continued support to the Afghan population by qualified non-governmental organizations. Our nation should support the United Nations \$4.4 billion fundraising drive to cover food, shelter, and other basic humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan in 2022, and its collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross. This amount would equal the level of economic aid Afghanistan received in 2020. After twenty years of work to support broader rights and progress for the Afghan people, we cannot abandon them to freeze and starve. However, we cannot allow the Taliban to hold them hostage or siphon away funds to corruption or arms.

The United Nations is reportedly planning an \$8 billion program of aid and services that would take on many government functions from the Taliban. While I agree that civil servants

need to be paid their salaries and the financial system's stability is a prerequisite for reviving economic activity in Afghanistan, aid that provides government functions must clearly and verifiably benefit the Afghan people.

Among the mandatory government services must be, at a minimum, provisions for the evacuation of at-risk United States Afghan allies.

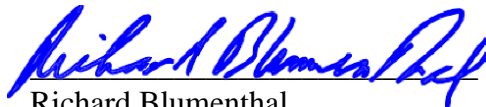
Numerous Afghans protected American troops, diplomats, or the U.S. mission in Afghanistan remain with targets on their backs. Their family homes are commonly visited by the Taliban and their names are on "kill lists." We have a moral obligation to these men and women. Any aid or assistance to Afghanistan that includes government services must include a clear, consistent, and compassionate strategy for their escape.

This strategy should include threshold security vetting in Afghanistan conducted by trusted partners on the ground, or remotely, if necessary. After arrival at a third country base, or "lily pad", more thorough vetting and processing can be undertaken. An effective strategy may also require investing more resources, waiving fees, providing funds to qualified non-governmental organizations, or other measures.

As the Taliban hunts down at-risk Afghan allies, we have only a short window to help save them. More than 130 Taliban individuals and entities remain under United Nations terrorism sanctions and the Haqqani network remains a designated terrorist organization by the United States. If the United Nations plans to provide government functions in Afghanistan, we must demand as part of any negotiations with the Taliban that we are allowed to execute this strategy and honor our sacred obligations. To do any less would lead to further tragedy in Afghanistan.

Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate