

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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PRESS CONTACT

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FISHER: "This devastating development means that thousands of trusted allies will remain in danger, waiting for Congress to allocate visas that were clearly needed months ago."

New York, NY – Today, the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan officially stopped scheduling interviews for applicants in the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program. Due to a shortage in available visas, the process has been put on hold, leaving thousands of Afghan allies and their families in immediate danger.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (NDAA) reauthorized the program for another four years, but only allocated 1,500 additional visas. IRAP estimates that more than 10,000 applicants are still in the process of obtaining visas, but less than 1,500 visas remain. The remaining applicants will be put on hold until further visas have been authorized.

The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program represents a lifeline for thousands of Afghans who worked for the U.S. military, State Department, and other U.S. government entities, and are facing death threats due to their service. At a time when the United States is expanding troop deployment to other countries, it appears especially reckless to betray the trust of local allies, who are essential to our current and future missions in the region.

Betsy Fisher, Policy Director of the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) at the Urban Justice Center, said: "This devastating development means that thousands of trusted allies will remain in danger, waiting for Congress to allocate visas that were clearly needed months ago. IRAP and champions in Congress were clear last year that, if sufficient visas were not allocated, our allies' lives would be jeopardized. Our worst fears are proving true."

Mac McEachin, National Security Policy Associate at IRAP, added: "This news deals our ground efforts an especially harsh blow, as it comes on the heels of the announcement that troops from the 82nd Airborne will be deployed to Syria. Now that the world has seen how we turn our backs on our Afghan allies, there is almost no chance that local allies in Syria will be inclined to work with us."

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INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT

IRAP calls on Congress to pass legislation that would authorize and allocate funding for at least 2,500 more visas immediately to allow the State Department to issue visas to our wartime allies, whose lives are endangered because of their service to our country.

International Refugee Assistance Project at the Urban Justice Center

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