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## **IRAP CALLS ON CONGRESS TO NOT FORGET AFGHAN ALLIES IN SPENDING BILL**

**NEW YORK, NY** – As Congress faces a looming deadline of April 28 before a government shutdown, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) at the Urban Justice Center calls on congressional leaders to ensure that additional visas for Afghan allies are a part of any spending package. The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program allows individuals who worked for the U.S. Government and face threats as a result of their service to apply for safe passage to the United States.

Congress failed to authorize sufficient visas for the program in 2017, leaving thousands of applicants in indefinite limbo and at serious risk until more visas can be allocated. On March 6, IRAP learned that all SIV interviews had been suspended because the Department of State was running out of visas.

**Betsy Fisher, Policy Director of IRAP, said:** "Our Afghan allies protect our soldiers, diplomats, and government employees, but now they find themselves in serious danger because Congress was extremely short-sighted last year. As a matter of national security, Speaker Ryan and Majority Leader McConnell need to make sure that Afghans have access to safety."

A bicameral, bipartisan effort to authorize more visas is already underway; Rep. Kinzinger (R-IL) and Sen. Shaheen (D-NH) introduced the Keeping Our Promise to Our Afghan Allies Act in March, which would authorize 2,500 additional visas for the Afghan SIV program on an emergency basis.

International Refugee Assistance Project at the Urban Justice Center

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