March 8, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary  Secretary
Department of State  Department of Homeland Security
2201 C Street NW  Washington, D.C. 20528
Washington, D.C. 20520

Patrick M. Shanahan  The Honorable Christopher Wray
Acting Secretary  Director
Department of Defense  Federal Bureau of Investigation
1400 Defense Pentagon  935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20301  Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Nielsen, Acting Secretary Shanahan, and Director Wray:

We are writing to express our concern and need for further information about the slow processing of visas for our Iraqi and Afghan wartime partners. As you know, Congress established four programs to provide a safe and legal pathway for Iraqi and Afghan citizens who face danger as a result of their employment helping American overseas personnel. Congress has acted regularly to ensure that vetted partners continue to be able to access protection in the United States—most recently in the Fiscal Year 2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act, signed by the President on February 15, 2019.

We are disturbed by reports of slow processing in the two primary programs that remain available to our Iraqi and Afghan partners. The Iraqi program has a backlog of more than 100,000 people due to slowdowns in the Direct Access Program, where only 48 individuals were admitted in a 10-month period in Fiscal Year 2018. The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program has seen a significant decrease in arrivals although Congress approved visas to allow processing to continue. State Department data show that 1,649 visas were issued in Fiscal Year 2018, a 60% decrease from the 4,120 visas issued in Fiscal Year 2017.

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In light of these disturbing figures, we request that your agencies respond to the following questions, and provide responses in writing by May 31, 2019.

**Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)**

1. What efforts have your agencies made to comply with the nine-month processing timeline mandated by Congress?
2. What efforts are being made to ensure efficiency within your agencies and in cooperation with other agencies?
3. What are the reasons for the significant decline in Afghan SIV processing between fiscal years 2017 and 2018?
4. For each fiscal year from 2014 to the present:
   a. How many personnel from the Department of State are assigned to issue decisions on applications for Chief of Mission (COM) approval?
   b. How many personnel from the Department of State are assigned to issue decisions on appeals for applications for COM approval?
   c. How many personnel from the FBI are assigned to security vetting of SIV applications?
   d. What are the average processing times for COM applications, COM appeals, I-360 petitions, embassy interviews, and administrative processing?

**Direct Access Program (DAP) for U.S.-Affiliated Iraqis**

1. What are the number of Iraqis in Iraq:
   a. Who have submitted applications but are pending access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program?
   b. Who are pending USCIS interviews?
   c. Who are waiting for security clearances?
2. What are the number of Iraqis outside of Iraq:
   a. Who have submitted applications but are pending access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program?
   b. Who are pending USCIS interviews?
   c. Who are waiting for security clearances?
3. For each fiscal year from 2014 to the present, what are average processing times:
   a. From the time of initial application to access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program?
   b. From the time of access to USCIS interviews?
   c. From the time of USCIS interview to completion of security checks?
4. Are your agencies taking steps to increase admissions and improve efficiency of processing for Direct Access Program applicants? If so, what are your agency’s plans?
Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

Ron Wright  
Member of Congress

Guy Reschenthaler  
Member of Congress

Jason Crow  
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger  
Member of Congress

John Lewis  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Don Bacon  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress
Elhan Omar
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress
Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress

Brad Wenstrup  
Member of Congress

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress