

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 18, 2021

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

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Austin, and Secretary Mayorkas:

It is of utmost importance that we continue to prioritize the safety of U.S. citizens and our partners in Afghanistan. Our immediate priority must be ensuring we are doing everything possible to evacuate American citizens, U.S. Embassy personnel, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants and their families, and Afghans targeted by the Taliban.

As you work to evacuate American citizens and allies, we encourage you to honor the United States' commitment to the freedom of press and to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of journalists, supporting staff, and their families in Afghanistan.

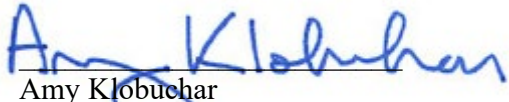
The Taliban have long targeted journalists, which continues today. Despite this risk, journalists have been on the front lines reporting on the conflict in Afghanistan for 20 years, keeping citizens informed and government leaders accountable. Those who contributed to a free and open press in Afghanistan will likely face retribution by the Taliban, and must be brought to safety. Last week, suspected Taliban members reportedly targeted members of the press, including an Afghan radio station manager in Kabul and a journalist in Helmand province, who were killed and kidnapped respectively. This is in addition to attacks on other members of the press, including the Radio Azadi journalists, who have seen four of their journalists killed since 2016. It is of concern that if we do not act now, the Taliban will continue such attacks.

There are an estimated 200-plus journalists and support staff in addition to their families in Afghanistan seeking to evacuate the country. Please ensure that as evacuation flights continue, journalists and support staff are not forgotten.

We must ensure journalists are able to do their jobs without fear of harm and provide protection when they are in danger. We appreciate your efforts to ensure the safety of U.S. and Afghan

citizens who have supported U.S. efforts over the last 20 years and we look forward to working with you to ensure the continued protection of our citizens and allies.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Mitt Romney
United States Senator