

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 16, 2021

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

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas:

As the situation in Afghanistan rapidly deteriorates and the Taliban has taken control of Kabul, we appreciate the urgent measures you and the Department of Defense are taking to protect Afghan women leaders and others most at risk for retaliation by the Taliban.

We strongly urge you to create a humanitarian parole category specifically for women leaders, activists, human rights defenders, judges, parliamentarians, journalists, and members of the Female Tactical Platoon of the Afghan Special Security Forces and to streamline the paperwork process to facilitate referrals to allow for fast, humane, and efficient relocation to the United States. We also urge you to increase processing capacity within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and to immediately appoint an interagency refugee coordinator. We support your efforts to evacuate those who are applying for humanitarian parole and those applying for Priority 1 or 2 pathways, including by allocating seats for them on SIV evacuation flights. Finally, the United States should do everything possible to enable charter flights to safely land at and depart the airport even after U.S. Embassy personnel have been evacuated, and that clear instructions for safely accessing their aircraft are provided to those who are trying to depart and to organizations that have referred people and their dependents.

We are gravely concerned about the safety of women leaders, activists, judges, parliamentarians, and human rights defenders. The shocking violence and alleged atrocities occurring have caused mass displacement which, during a global pandemic and severe drought, has created a major humanitarian crisis. In areas captured by the Taliban, there are reports of war crimes including summary executions, public beatings and flogging of women, sexual violence and forced marriage, as well as clampdowns on media and other forms of communication.

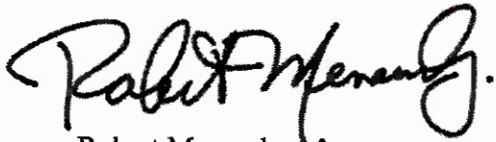
We and our staff are receiving regular reports regarding the targeting, threatening, kidnapping, torturing, and assassinations of women for their work defending and promoting democracy, equality, higher education, and human rights. While we welcomed the expansion of the eligibility requirements for Special Immigrant Visas and the creation of the Priority 2 category in

the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, we must also protect those women who might fall through the cracks of the U.S. Government's response.

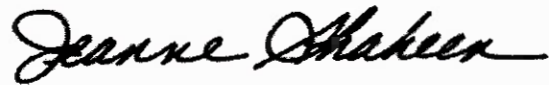
Particularly for women who are currently targets—even hunted by Taliban fighters who are going house-to-house with their names—the path to protection and safety under the Priority 2 designation is not accessible. While we understand there is little processing capacity at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, for these women to access a third country for processing is almost or completely impossible with all borders crossings now closed or controlled by the Taliban.

We greatly appreciate your efforts to help save the lives of Afghans who have advanced U.S. and Afghan joint interests over the last generation, standing for peace, democracy, and equality. We are all in agreement that we owe them our unqualified support.

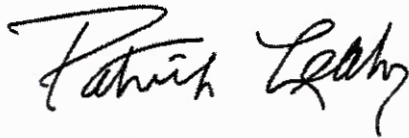
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



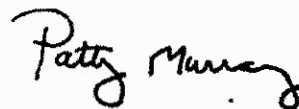
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



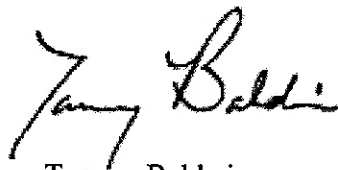
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/S/ Thomas R. Carper

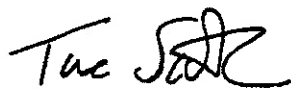
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



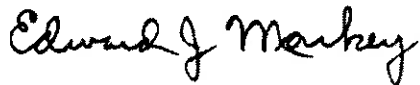
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



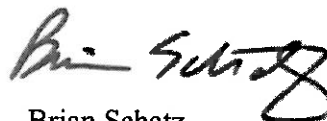
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



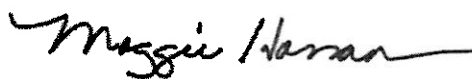
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



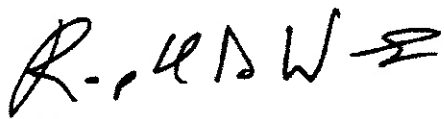
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



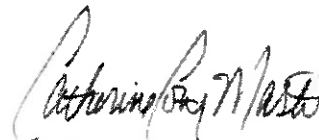
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



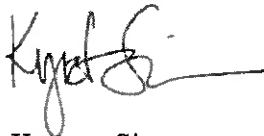
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



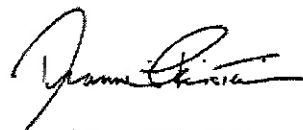
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennett
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



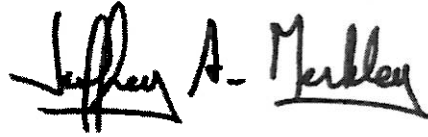
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



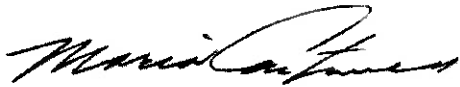
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



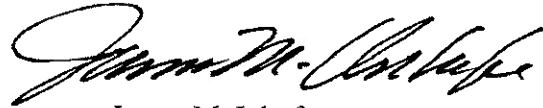
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator