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ADAM B. SCHIFF
MEMBER OF CONGRESS · 28TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

2309 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

245 EAST OLIVE AVENUE, SUITE 200
BURBANK, CA 91502

@RepAdamSchiff · schiff.house.gov

August 18, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We believe it is critically important that the United States make all effort to protect and evacuate Americans and our Afghan partners who have served alongside Americans for the past two decades. Our country owes a significant debt to these individuals who aided the U.S. military and diplomatic efforts as translators, drivers, and partners in the region. We must ensure their evacuation to safe harbor.

We are writing to urge the same assistance be extended to journalists and their partners in Afghanistan. These individuals have spent twenty years reporting stories that needed to be told, and in doing so, in many cases they have exposed themselves and their families to significant risk.

This week, the publishers of The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal called on your administration to safeguard their Afghan colleagues — individuals who were critical to the mission of reporting the truth out of Afghanistan over the past twenty years. We have heard from and have been assisting other media organizations attempting to evacuate their personnel, as well.

We join that call to protect journalists looking to evacuate. Journalists and media support staff who assisted media organizations are in imminent danger as Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. These courageous individuals should receive safe passage to Hamid Karzai International Airport, and be transported to safety outside of the country if they request it, and be considered as priority applicants for P-2 designation.

This safe passage should be offered to all individuals employed by media organizations, as well as Afghan journalists and support staff who have put themselves in grave danger for reporting on the Taliban and the ongoing conflict in the country. No matter where they are located, journalists must be free to fulfill the critical mission of providing timely, accurate information to the public without the fear of repression, imprisonment, or death. With the Taliban in control, journalists, especially female reporters who demonstrated immeasurable courage by merely showing up to work, may be in peril.

One Afghan reporter told The Guardian that since the Taliban assumed control of the country, "our lives have changed and we have been confined to our homes, and death threatens us at every moment." We have also heard similar warnings from others.

Our country is among the fiercest proponents of a free and fair press — believing that a robust media is necessary for sustaining strong democracies around the world. We cannot resign those individuals who acted to fulfill these beliefs to violence and death. We must see them to safe harbor.

We look forward to hearing further from your administration its plans to assist journalists and others who, as a result of their work working for media organizations, are at extreme risk because of their reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam B. Schiff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Adam" and last name "Schiff" clearly legible.

Adam Schiff

Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Chabot". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Chabot" clearly legible.

Steve Chabot

Member of Congress