



**National Association of Judiciary Interpreters  
& Translators**

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September 11, 2008

The Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman  
The Honorable John McCain, Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
228 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Special Immigrant Visas for Afghani Interpreters and Translators

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

Our organization, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), is the largest national association of legal interpreters and translators in the United States. We write to express our strong support for Senator Benjamin Cardin's Amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill, whereby 1500 special immigrant visas per year would be allotted to Afghan nationals or citizens who have performed valuable service to the government of the United States and whose lives are now in jeopardy because of their service.

We support this measure now as we supported it in July of 2007, when we wrote to Secretaries Michael Chertoff and Condoleeza Rice urging their support in "extending, prioritizing and expediting asylum applications and special visas to Iraqi and Afghan interpreters and translators." Such expedited treatment has now been – at least on paper – granted to Iraqi interpreters and translators. We wholeheartedly endorse granting this same support to our colleagues from Afghanistan.

We quote from the pertinent sections of our 2007 letter to the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security:

In recent years we have learned with growing concern of Iraqi and Afghan interpreters who are targeted by the enemy because they are viewed as collaborators. We read reports of abductions, torture, abuse and killing of interpreters and translators and of their family members. It is heartbreaking to hear soldiers' and journalists' desperate pleas for our Government to help save the lives of interpreters they have worked with and those of immediate family members...

These expanded immigration visa programs we support are not unique in our country's history. In prior wars, the United States has always opened

its doors to those who have assisted us in defending our nation. No different response should be shown to the Afghan and Iraqi interpreters who stand with us now. These interpreters have stood shoulder to shoulder with our soldiers exposed to the same risks and suffering the same consequences. It is inconceivable that our country, which takes pride in supporting democracy and human rights throughout the world, cannot now find resources to bring Afghan and Iraqi interpreters to the United States before they and their families are tortured or killed.

We believe that their visa applications should be prioritized above those of any other asylum applicant, and that they should be provided with a safe location until their asylum and/or visas are processed.

Reports from Afghanistan now indicate that the situation is not improving. Just this week, President Bush announced that more troops would be sent to Afghanistan. Translators and interpreters working with U.S. forces in Afghanistan will continue to be, both literally and figuratively, in the line of fire.

The introduction of this amendment could not be more timely. For the sake of those thousands of Afghan translators and interpreters who put their lives on the line simply by doing their job, we urge that the amendment be incorporated into the 2009 Defense Authorization Bill.

Thank you for your attention to a matter we consider to be of the utmost importance.

Sincerely,

Isabel Framer, Chair  
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators