

## ADVOCACY

July 16, 2007

Secretary Michael Chertoff  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20580

Secretary Condoleezza Rice  
2201 C Street NW  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

RE: Letter of support to extend, prioritize and expedite asylum applications and special visas to Iraqi and Afghan Interpreters and Translators

Dear Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Rice:

On behalf of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), I write to urge you to take immediate steps to expand and expedite your programs for granting immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan Interpreters and Translators who have provided substantial and direct assistance in support of our military activities in those countries. In particular, we recommend that you prioritize your activities to promptly address the petitions of these individuals.

NAJIT is the largest judiciary interpreting and translation association in the world. Our association was founded in 1979 and currently has over 1,100 members who work daily to bridge the language gap in state and federal courthouses and in a variety of legal and quasi-legal settings across the country. Because of our profession and our national involvement, our members are in a unique position to hear of issues regarding interpreters and translators not only throughout the country but around the world.

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.

We have also noticed that these reports have increased throughout the past two years and have become more frequent in the past few months. Please see attached partial list of news articles regarding the subject, evidence of the importance that these individuals play in advancing our country's interests.

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.

NAJIT would also like to commend and support Senators Kennedy, Smith, Biden, Hagel, Leahy, Levin and Lieberman in their call for immediate action to expand our government's ability to process refugee applications and special immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan interpreters and translators.

Please support this call for immediate action.

With respect and consideration,

Sincerely,

Isabel Frammer  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators

cc: Senators Kennedy, Smith, Biden, Hagel, Leahy, Levin and Lieberman.

### SELECT ARTICLE REFERENCES

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U.S. Failing to Help Iraqi Translator and Family Targeted for Execution  
By Maura Stephens, *AlterNet*. Posted July 10, 2007

<http://www.ktiv.com/News/index.php?ID=14253>  
KTIV News Channel 4 June 20, 2007  
Yankton, SD Soldier Rallies Support For Iraqi Interpreter

[http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/jakob\\_illeborg/2007/06/a\\_friend\\_in\\_need.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/jakob_illeborg/2007/06/a_friend_in_need.html)  
A friend in need Jakob Illeborg June 21, 2007 8:00 PM

<http://www.worldpress.org/link.cfm?http://www.cphpost.dk/get/102236.html>  
Iraqi interpreter killed

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*This American Life* Mar. 2/episode 327) By Proxy "Kill the Messenger"

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Lost After Translation

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/business/20061122-9999-1b22titan.html>  
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[http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060712/afghanistan\\_translators\\_0600812?s\\_name=&no\\_ads=](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060712/afghanistan_translators_0600812?s_name=&no_ads=)  
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Civilian Translators Thrust Into Combat Roles

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The unsung hero in this war is the Iraqi interpreter.

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Always in hiding, an Iraqi interpreter's anguished life

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0417/p01s01-woiq.html>  
Iraq's 'terps' face suspicion from both sides

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2005-05-21-translator-deaths\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2005-05-21-translator-deaths_x.htm)  
Translators dying by the dozens in Iraq

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/iraq/story/17103.html>  
Iraqi interpreters seek refuge in U.S.

[http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle\\_east/article2455047.ece](http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article2455047.ece)  
Iraqi interpreters make plea for asylum to Blair

<http://www.iti.org.uk/pages/news/viewNews.asp?article=95>  
Iraqi Interpreters hunted and killed

<http://www.brightcove.com/title.jsp?title=770018210&channel=527535507>  
Iraqi Interpreters Risk Lives for Mission

[http://www.interaction.org/media/iraq\\_facts.html](http://www.interaction.org/media/iraq_facts.html)  
5000 Iraqis have served as interpreters for the U.S., and 250 Iraqi interpreters have been killed.