

The Left Behind Afghans

The Association of Wartime Allies (AWA) has been the preeminent advocate for Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) eligible individuals since 2019. AWA currently offers interactive, real-time support and education to upwards of 17,000 SIV principal applicants in an effort to enable them to navigate the complexities of the Special Immigrant Visa process with as few delays (or denials) of their applications as possible. AWA also works directly with the US Department of State, Consular services, National Visa Center and numerous US based legal and resettlement organizations to offer a robust network of support to SIV applicants and recipients.

In April 2021, AWA members Kim Staffieri and Matt Zeller authored a [white paper](#) in partnership with the Truman Project, Human Rights First, Veterans For American Ideals, and the International Refugee Assistance Project that outlined the urgent need to begin early, coordinated and safe evacuation efforts of the 81,000 SIV applicants and qualified family members that were in the system prior to August 2021. From the efforts to promote this paper and its recommendations came the coalition of organizations that would birth the Evacuate Our Allies (EOA) coalition in May 2021.

AWA watched with looming dread the growing humanitarian crisis over the Summer of 2021 as the Taliban swiftly regained Afghan province by Afghan province in the vacuum left by the withdrawal of US Forces coupled with the delay of any coordinated US government led evacuation effort. During this crisis, utilizing communication on Facebook Groups, AWA tracked over 11,000 principal applicants and their family members, a total population of 76,000 people (an estimated 94% of all applicants prior to August 2021). Since the US withdrawal from Afghanistan on August 31, 2021, the situation of those we assist in Afghanistan has become increasingly and perilously desperate. We have continued to collect demographic data on individuals and their locations in Afghanistan waiting for their visa or extraction. AWA holds the most comprehensive data set on those SIV Eligible individuals left behind in Afghanistan.

While we commend the United States for evacuating some 82,000 Afghan Allies that otherwise may not have made their way to safe haven in the United States, we must never lose focus on those left behind. The following is AWA's status update of the SIV applicants who currently remain in Afghanistan - six months and counting after the end of the official US evacuation. Of the thousands surveyed, they convey a universal desperation - they are dismayed and exasperated that the United States failed to evacuate the vast majority of our SIV eligible allies. **The results of our survey show that of the estimated 81,000 SIV applicants in Afghanistan with visa applications pending as of August 15, 2021 (the day Kabul fell), 78,000 remain left behind.**

Population Statistics

In our most recent survey, we gathered results from 3,988 applicants in the AWA network and asked questions about geography, demographics, and their overall disposition between 14FEB2022 and 19FEB2022. We gathered a total of 10,803 dependents' information tied to the primary applicant. The typical applicant is on average a 34-year-old male, with a 23-year-old wife, and between one and two children. The typical age of the applicants' children is eight. 25.6% reported having no dependents.

We collected data on both applicants who are still in Afghanistan and those who made it out. 90.5% are located within Afghanistan, mostly in Kabul (73.3% of the 90.5% (2644)). In prior surveys, Afghans who remained in

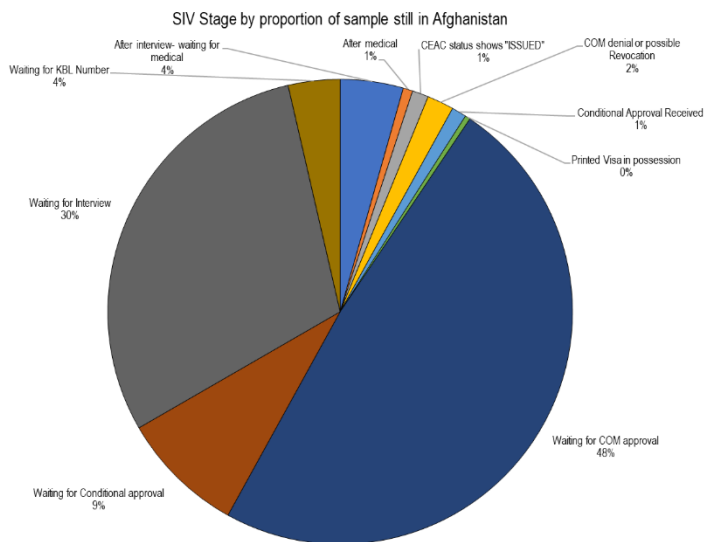
Afghanistan found about 50% currently in Kabul and 50% in the provinces outside of Kabul. The increase in the numbers of SIV applicants in Kabul are likely due to the following two reasons:

1. applicants have been fleeing the countryside to Kabul, and/or,
2. we have lost communication with applicants outside the major population centers.

We will seek to determine the specificity of the increase in future surveys. Of those applicants who are out of Afghanistan, the majority are in Pakistan (45%).

The visa application status breaks down as follows:

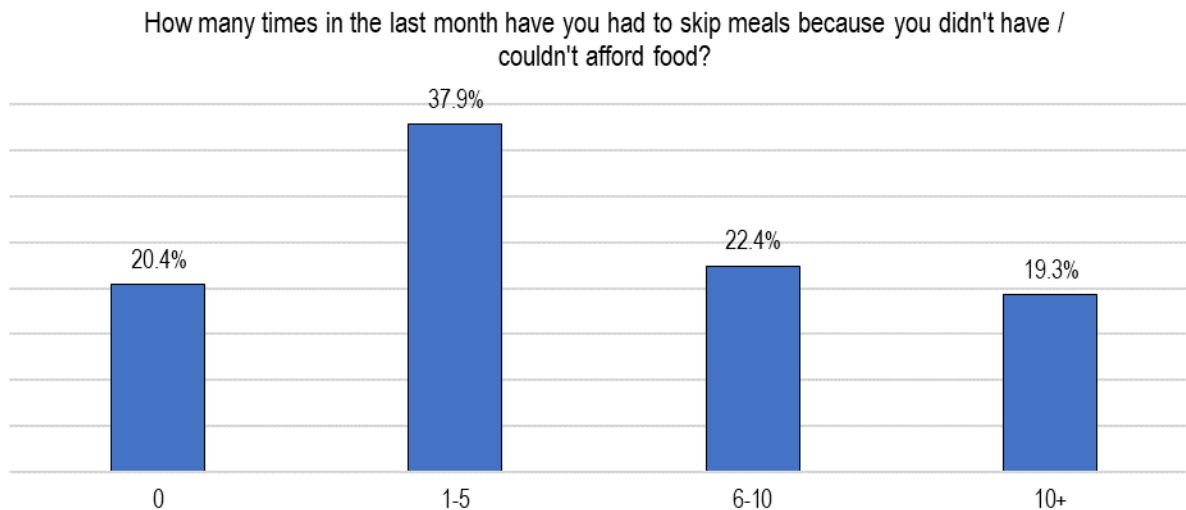
- 48% are still waiting for Chief of Mission Approval
- 30% are waiting for an interview
- 9% are waiting for other administrative hurdles
- Only 13 have a printed visa in hand



All SIVs that hold printed visas or “Issued” status face a time hurdle that results in their visas expiring and returning to a status of “REFUSED.” As of the date of this report, it has been over six months since these applicants were left behind. A current medical exam is a requirement of a US visa, these exams have a six month term of validity. In the time that passed since the United States abandoned them, their medical exams have expired. The medical exam expiration is but one example of the numerous bureaucratic challenges faced by SIV applicants. These challenges remain the greatest obstacle to exfiltration that the United States can currently influence - i.e. the Taliban clearly control who can and cannot get on a plane in the country, but the United States controls how arduous the paperwork/task one needs to complete in order to qualify for a life saving visa.

Major findings

SIV applicants left behind face tremendous risks of violence and substantial economic hardship. Their lives have been devastated by being left behind with seemingly no verifiable path to safety. In the six months since the evacuation, of those surveyed, **nearly 30% have been imprisoned by the Taliban at some point** and **52% have been stopped and questioned**. **Nearly all have faced diminished economic opportunity** because of the evacuation with **88% reporting loss of job** and **94% reporting economic hardship**. **Over 70% reported going without food at least once in the last month – nearly 20% reported going without meals 10+ times in the last month.**



77% reported going without heat in the last month. Fear has gripped the SIV population, with 84% reporting going without medical care due to angst about leaving the home and receiving reprisals from the Taliban. Fueling this fear, 77% have witnessed some form of physical violence against others for their service to the United States.

Conclusion

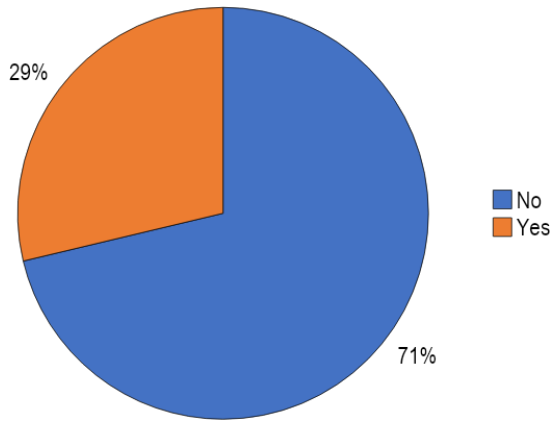
It is hard to understate the dire situation our left behind Afghan allies face in Taliban held Afghanistan – statistics and numbers only illuminate so much. The stories behind the numbers define the true sentiment of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. To quote one of the respondents:

“We are suffering the worse days of our life, I never go outside of my living area. I have [not] left my home since the Taliban took over the country... Some of my [family] has provided food and other necessities for me and my kids. I have faced economic hardship, I will not be able to [feed] my kids in near future, and I lost my job furthermore I cannot walk freely in the city/village because the Taliban will arrest me.”

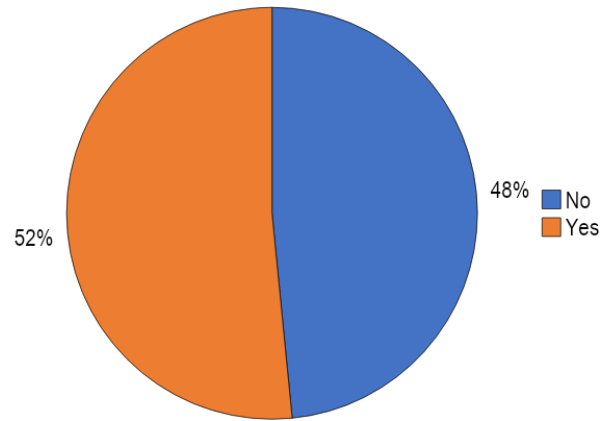
Time is running out for this population. Only swift action by the United States – expedite their visas, remove bureaucratic obstacles like costly medical exams that expire before they can be of any use, fund charter flights, send US government flights to remove SIVs from Afghanistan, etc. – will ensure that these people are safe. The Association of Wartime Allies is proud to continue to serve the SIV applicants who remain left behind. Each of our members is someone who served the United States in some capacity. To us and those who served with them, they are no different than American born veterans – one’s placement in the birth lottery is not important, what matters is what one does with their life. These people choose to serve their country and ours in partnership, knowing full well the deadly risks that service entailed. They did their part, now we must do ours. Thus far, we’ve left some 78,000+ behind. We cannot leave them behind in Taliban hell, to do so would be akin to abandoning a soldier on the battlefield. We can and must save them.

Appendix

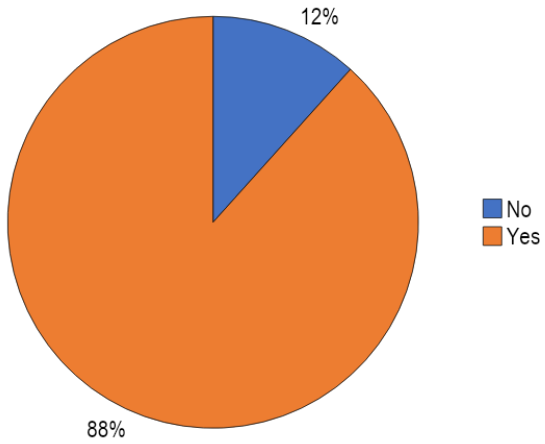
Have you been imprisoned by the Taliban for your service to the United States?



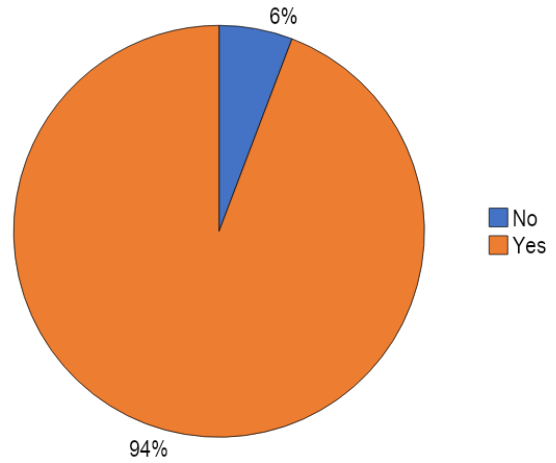
Have you been detained or questioned by the Taliban for your service to the US?



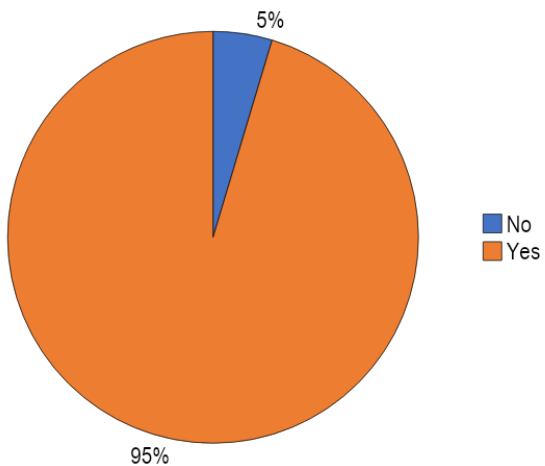
Have you lost a job or economic opportunity due to the US evacuation?



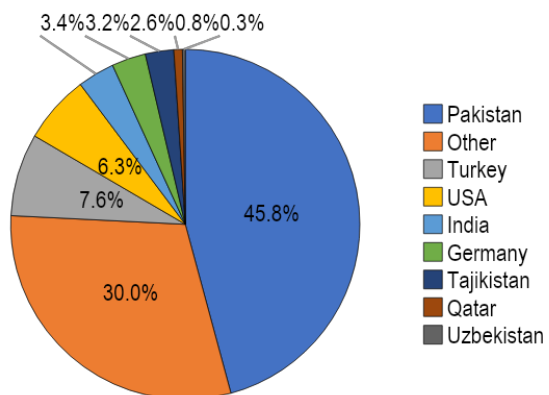
Have you faced economic hardship due to the US evacuation?



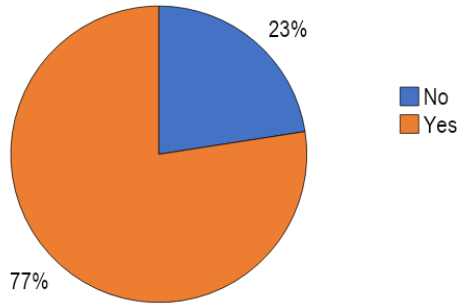
Do you fear leaving your home due to retaliation from the Taliban?



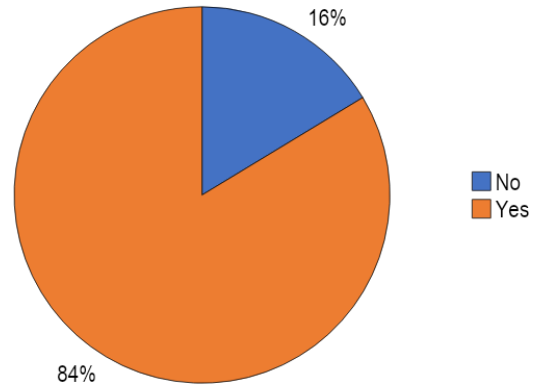
AWA Members globally outside Afghanistan



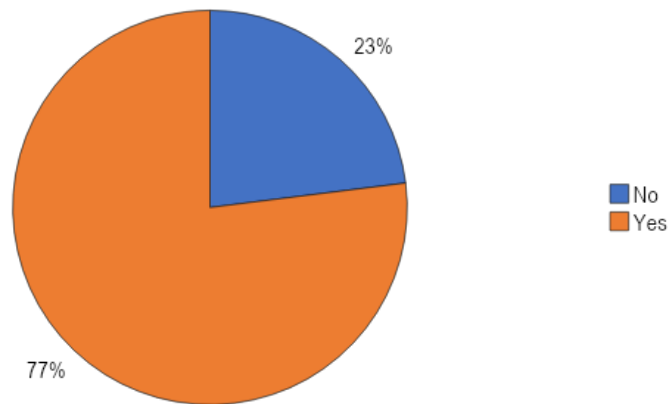
Have you lacked heating or basic necessities over the past month?



Have you had to skip necessary medical care over the past month because of a lack of money or fear of going out to visit a doctor?



Have you personally witnessed violence towards individuals who supported the United States Mission in Afghanistan?



Selected Comments: Spelling and Grammar not adjusted to preserve record

There is always fear to visit town and i can not go back to my hometown after withdrawal of international forces from afganistan

I am hidden and life of me and my family extremely in danger due to my affiliation with US government.

Tackling financial issues for the past 1 year and my bank in Afghanistan has also freezed my account and all international transactions. The bank has been refusing to transfer my funds to Turkey stating they do not have funds until the USA unfreeze the Afghan assets

We are under house arrest, Our economic problems are increasing day by day.

Please Assist me! I am passing through the bad days of my life because of my faithful service with US in Afghanistan. I applied to SiV and my case was fortunately approved by the NVC and it was scheduled for the in the interview but due to the collapse it was cancelled.

I hope one day we can walk freely without fears,I hope one day we can go to shoping with kids with out fears,I hope one day we can speak freely without fears,I hope one day we can take our kids to school,I hope one day we can go to work with out fears.Being in hidden will kill us.

Taliban are looking after me they searched my house in Herat on 18 Nov 2021 I was hidden in Kabul then in 22 and 23 of Dec 2021 they came to my previous house asked about me the house owner called me that Taliban are looking after you I told them that he was tenant here he is not living here. I am hiding me somewhere with my family to safe my life and my family.

I am not safe in Afghanistan because of my employment with U.S. army as an interpreter

Since US has lifted Afghanistan I lost my job , and I can't live here because of working with USG me and my wife life is in danger !

I and my family are stuck in Farah, Afghanistan in a very difficult situation, we need to leave here as soon as. please help and evacuate us from here.

Currently I live in a plastic tent, I left my home couple months a go due to home search by TBs, I went to Parwan but TBs ordered village elders to expulse outsiders from their village I came back to Kabul, I couldn't go back to my home and I didn't had that much budget to rent a house now I live in unbuild park inside a plastic tent, behind my friends wall.

We really need your help and support in this bed situation so please help as before to kill by Taliban

I am in hide I don't go any where all time at home scare to find by taliban

I have changed my locations many times, because our area was searched so many times where i was living, now i am some where else in Kabul.

I have been followed two three times and also been asked about my job but i did not have any evidence to find i worked for USG.

I have submitted all my documents to NVC for approval, i have worked as Interpreter for ██████████ which is belong to ██████████, I request to please consider my documents so i can get my approval since i am waiting for more than 3 years.

My last job was An Advisor in Zabul province, i have LOR and HR from my direct Supervisor and Olive group.

I am now in living in severe psychological conditions, full of stress and depression. I am also in need of severe economic aid.

I am under serious threat because Taliban have been searching for those who have worked for the US government especially linguists, Taliban targets people who had affiliations with US government in an appropriate time and find different excuses for their killings and then make it Seems as they were not involved in the killings

Poverty and lack of job oportunities for me make me in bad situation.

I passed my interview in the U.S Embassy in kabul and

I was wait for my medical. So as a result of my service and support for the USG mission in Afghanistan I have suffering and continues to suffer threat to me and my family's life by Taliban. Me and my children are really frightened for our life's and waiting in fear of our brutal killing by Taliban. I would like to humbly request you to please help us get out & save our lifes.

Dear sir, all my brothers served ISAF forces and we completely left our home in Helmand and its completely destroyed by the Taliban and just one of my brother made it to the US through siv programme .

We did what we could for you and U.S government. Now it is you, who decides on us. I wish you to make a fair decision.

I worked for Arizona Star Construction Company for two years as a cleaner. I wish that US do not forget us and do not left us behind. I served honestly for US for many years. Please don't leave us behind for God sake just save my three children.

Thank you

We are living in stress. Many time I was going to receive passport to my family. But I couldn't because the Taliban lash me.

The main point with my family is that my wife and tow sons are not having their passports..
You know in this situation it's not possible to arrange thier passports plz do something for us ...
There is no hope ...

I successfully passed my interview at the US Embassy in Kabul on 19-May-2021, and since I am waiting for a visa, When the Taliban capture Kabul
They warned me that we would kill you because you were a translator with the Americans. for this reason I leave my house and hide in the house of my relatives

When the Taliban took Control of Afghanistan, I lost my job. We were already in danger and I am under threat and I need your help to save my family.

I and my family are stuck in Farah, Afghanistan in a very difficult situation, we need to leave here as soon as. please help and evacuate us from here.

I am in bad situation right now no jobs no money even not for eat in my house. I am always worry about my life. I wish this message help me as soon as possible I wish to evacuate from here soon. Thanks a lot for your support.

I am a woman with three child and my husband died in suicide attach by Taliban. I lost everything I had and my only hope is USA. Please help me!

I am a woman it is extremely hard for me to live afterward in Afghanistan because I have worked with USG as Translator, in these days TBs are killing womens who have worked before so I am waiting from the 6 months for my COM Approval but till that time to get my COM i know i will be killed so please I am kindly requesting of you to work on mu case and please send me my COM and please help me and save my life as I have three little kids pleaease

I am in critical situation, i am changing my location every 30 days to protect ourselves from the Taliban target killing, I am three family members only, me with my wife and minor daughter, we don't have the places to protect ourselves correctly and don't have money to buy something for eat for my minor daughter or warm clothes for winter, this situation hit me pretty hard.

Target killing and Taliban retaliation against those who supported the US Mission is getting worse day by day

Due to my services for the U.S forces/Gov my Family and I are living in a terrible situation with fear and frustration. The Taliban are behind the U.S allies to find them, torture and kill them. We are going through a very difficult time. We are under Taliban direct threat and right now hiding somewhere in Kabul. Please help up, save our life and evacuate us from this terrible situtation.

As of my jobs with USG I am feeling very scared to not lose my life, My every family mamber is in a bad and scary situation either I am changing my house every month still anyone knocking our door my kids are crying and telling me that Taliban will come and kill you. Hope you understand our situation.