

Statement Urging the Swift Assurance of Protection to Asylum Seekers, Including those from Afghanistan

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Door to Asylum Nagoya
RAFIQ JAPAN
Japan Association for Refugees

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the U.S. government launched an attack on Afghanistan and continued to station U.S. troops in the country. When the U.S. troops began to withdraw from the country on May 1 this year, the Taliban¹, an anti-government armed force, succeeded in expanding its influence in various areas. On August 16, the Taliban reportedly seized control of the presidential palace in the capital, Kabul, and declared that they had taken control of the government².

Due to the current situation, those of us who support refugees in Japan have been receiving increased contact from Afghans in Japan and abroad. Those who are in the process of applying for refugee status in Japan have expressed concern about the future. Students are worried that they will not be able to return to their home country even after graduating from university. There are Afghans living in Japan who are looking for ways to save their families in Afghanistan. There are even people in Afghanistan who want us to help them somehow, and if possible help them get out of Afghanistan and get to other countries, including Japan.

While some Afghan refugees who have sought asylum in Japan have obtained residence status through refugee recognition and humanitarian considerations, we can also confirm that there are people without residence status who are waiting for the result of their refugee application.

In response to the situation in Afghanistan, more than 70 countries, including Japan, issued a joint statement on August 15, saying, "The Afghan people deserve to live in safety, security and dignity. We in the international community stand ready to assist them"³. In addition, on the 13th, the Canadian government announced that it would accept 20,000 Afghans as refugees⁴.

In the past, brutal human rights violations such as public executions and mutilations have been carried out against those who are considered to be hostile to the Taliban. In particular, there have been reports of women being stoned to death by the Taliban, such as a teenager who was trying to escape a forced

¹ Since the 1990s, the Taliban has been fighting for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, the overthrow of the Afghan government, to be followed by the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the establishment of a Sharia-based system of governance.

² Reuters, "Afghan president flees as the Taliban declares victory; American and European troops accelerate withdrawal" (August 16, 2021)

<https://jp.reuters.com/article/afghanistan-conflict-idJPKBN2FH0AT> (JP)

³ U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement on Afghanistan" (August 15, 2021)

<https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-afghanistan/>

Reuters, "More than 60 countries say Afghans, others must be allowed to leave Afghanistan" (August 16, 2021)

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/more-than-60-countries-say-afghans-others-must-be-allowed-leave-afghanistan-2021-08-16/>

⁴ Particularly vulnerable groups such as women leaders, human rights activists, journalists, persecuted religious minorities, and sexual minorities are expected to be targeted. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada,

"Canada expands resettlement program to bring more Afghans to safety" (August 13, 2021)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2021/08/canada-expands-resettlement-program-to-bring-more-afghans-to-safety.html>

The Asahi Shimbun, "Canada to Accept 20,000 Afghans, Including Female Leaders" (August 14, 2021)

<https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASP8G5H80P8GUHBI007.html> (JP)

marriage⁵. In light of the risk of serious human rights violations by the Taliban and the current situation in Afghanistan, we strongly urge the Japanese government to adhere to the following:

1. To swiftly grant asylum (as much as possible in the form of refugee status), to refugee applicants from Afghanistan, and grant them residence status.
2. To swiftly and extensively grant stable residency status to Afghan nationals who have indicated that they cannot return home, whether or not they are in the process of applying for refugee status.
3. Including the prompt and flexible issuance of travel documents and visas, to provide effective support for the evacuation of persons from Afghanistan or neighboring countries who wish to leave the country or seek asylum in Japan (including family members of refugees and refugee applicants residing in Japan, etc.).
4. After the terrorist attacks in the U.S. 20 years ago, Afghans who had applied for refugee status in Japan were detained en masse⁶. Such a situation must not be repeated.

Currently, serious human rights violations are occurring not only in Afghanistan, Myanmar, where a military coup took place in February this year, and Syria, where a civil war began in 2011, but there are also people from other countries and regions who have fled to Japan as refugees. We strongly urge that the same protection be granted to all these people; not only to those from Afghanistan, but also to those from other countries and regions, in a prompt and extensive manner.

Contact Information

Door to Asylum Nagoya (DAN)

〒460-0002 Marunouchi Office Forum #601, 2-1-30 Marunouchi, Naka-ku, Nagoya

Tel: 070-5444-1725

Fax: 052-308-5073

Email: info@door-to-asylum.jp

<https://www.door-to-asylum.jp>

RAFIQ JAPAN

〒532-0002 OSAKA NanminHouse, 4-9-13 Higashimikuni, Yodogawa-ku, Osaka

Tel/Fax: 06-6335-4440

Email: rafiqtomodati@yahoo.co.jp

<http://rafiq.jp/english/>

Japan Association for Refugees

〒101-0065 TAS Building 4F 2-5-2 Nishikanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

Tel: 03-5379-6001 Fax: 03-5215-6007

Email: info@refugee.or.jp

<https://www.refugee.or.jp/en/>

⁵ Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO / Masato Toriya, "Rapid Deterioration of Security Due to the Expansion of the Taliban and IS Offensive: Afghanistan in 2015," Annual Report on Asian Trends 2016 (JP)

⁶ JAR "'Refugee claimants were suddenly detained after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Has refugee detention changed since then?' <https://www.refugee.or.jp/20th/1-detention.shtml> (JP)