

WIN WITHOUT WAR



U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Messaging Guidance

Toplines:

- Saving as many Afghan lives as possible must be the U.S. government's top priority as the government of Afghanistan rapidly collapses and the humanitarian crisis grows.
- The current situation in Afghanistan makes all too clear that twenty years of war and military occupation was a mistake, and utterly failed to prioritize the needs of everyday Afghans.
- President Biden's decision to recognize the will of the U.S. public and bring U.S. troops home was and remains the right one.
- Withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan is not the end of the harm the U.S. war in Afghanistan created. It is essential that the United States prioritize accountability — for itself and all parties in Afghanistan's four decades-long conflict — and justice moving forward.

Saving as many Afghan lives as possible must be the U.S. government's top priority as the government of Afghanistan rapidly collapses and the humanitarian crisis grows.

- Given the U.S. role in the war in Afghanistan, the United States has a moral responsibility to accept any Afghan seeking refuge that it can.
- The U.S. government should facilitate evacuation flights for all vulnerable groups in Afghanistan who seek asylum and safe haven in the United States or beyond.
- President Biden should dramatically increase the refugee quota for Afghanistan, and direct the U.S. government to expedite processing of the Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) and Priority 2 Refugee Designation (P2) applications.
- The U.S. government should also expand eligibility and assistance under the P2 program to include women, the LGBTQI+ community, and ethnic and religious minorities, regardless of a previous affiliation with the U.S. government. It could also consider a new category of humanitarian parole to increase the number of people eligible for life-saving immigrations protections in the U.S.
- All applicants for these visas should be evacuated immediately and not forced to wait in harm's way while the application process proceeds.
- It should also provide increased funding assistance to nongovernmental organizations making referrals for the P2 program to enhance their ability to provide interim protection and capacity to help those seeking refuge.
- The United States must use any money that was previously going to be spent supporting Afghan security forces to help save Afghan lives.

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- Nearly two decades of U.S. military occupation evidently could not build a sustainable peace, or a government capable of meeting the needs of its people. What we see today is evidence of the failure of endless war.
- After twenty years without success, it is absurd to suggest, as some in the war lobby have, that a few more years of occupation, a few more bombs dropped, would have made the difference.
- The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan was a tragic mistake. The current violence, the Taliban's reconquest, and all that will follow, are the costs of that decision.

President Biden's decision to recognize the will of the U.S. public and bring U.S. troops home was and remains the right one.

- The majority of the U.S. public, both Democrat and Republican, and particularly veterans and military families, supported Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan.
- Only one third of the people of Afghanistan wanted U.S. and NATO forces to continue to occupy their country. An overwhelming majority said there is no U.S. military solution to the conflict.
- Indefinite occupation would never have yielded peace. Abandoning Trump's withdrawal agreement would likely have meant a surge of thousands of more U.S. troops and a renewed fight against the Taliban – a policy with little public support and even less prospect of success.

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- The United States is partly responsible for the tragedy unfolding in Afghanistan today. From the arming and training of the mujahideen decades ago to the decision to prioritize “counterterrorism” over the needs of Afghans the last twenty years to the failure to better plan for post-occupation, the United States' duty to Afghanistan does not end with the occupation.
- The United States can best help mitigate violence not with bombs, but with diplomacy, empowering civil society, and by listening to the people of Afghanistan and its diaspora.
- That means offering refuge to all of those fleeing the violence, expanding the amount of U.S. humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and any country taking in refugees, prioritizing justice and accountability for war crimes, and working multilaterally and in support of the UN to push for humanitarian aid and peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

Additional Resources:

- [“Statement: The War Was a Failure. Now, We Must Open Our Doors to Its Refugees.”](#) (8/16/2021)
- [“Statement: Escalating Violence in Afghanistan is Tragic Proof That War Cannot Build Peace.”](#) (8/13/2021)
- [“Don't Listen to the Pundits: Withdrawing from Afghanistan Is Incredibly Popular,”](#) *Newsweek* (6/16/2021)
- [“Afghan security forces' wholesale collapse was years in the making,”](#) *Washington Post*, (8/15/2021)
- [“What's happening in Afghanistan currently is a humanitarian crisis...”](#) Rep. Barbara Lee (8/16/2021)