



Afghan Refugees and Human Trafficking

Background

Since the Taliban took power in the Afghan capital of Kabul on August 14, 2021, United States and coalition aircraft have evacuated over 123,000 civilians.¹ U.S. military evacuation flights from Kabul have carried U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants and other vulnerable Afghans.²



¹U.S. Department of Defense: [Comments from Press Secretary John Kirby](#)

² Reuters: [“Explainer: Who are the Afghan refugees coming to the U.S. and what happens when they arrive?”](#)

Many of those flown out of the country were taken to emergency processing centers set up in several countries, including Qatar, Spain, and Germany, where they await background checks before being brought to the U.S. or sent to a third country for relocation.³ Upon arrival in the U.S., evacuees receive a health screening and help in applying for work authorization, along with other services. Those with green cards or U.S. citizenship are allowed to head to their final destinations, while those who do not possess such documentation are being sent to military installations for further processing before they eventually will be placed in communities.⁴



³ BBC: [“What now for Afghans arriving in America?”](#)

⁴ U.S. Department of Defense: [Comments from Press Secretary John Kirby](#)

Afghan refugees are currently being placed in one of seven installations: Fort Lee (Virginia), Fort Bliss (Texas), Fort McCoy (Wisconsin), Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (New Jersey), Marine Corps Base Quantico (Virginia), Fort Pickett (Virginia), and Holloman Air Force Base (New Mexico).⁵ Combined, these seven installations have the capacity to support up to 50,000 Afghans and their families.⁶



⁵ BBC: [“What now for Afghans arriving in America?”](#)

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Human Trafficking Threats

In the U.S. State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, Afghanistan was classified as Tier 3, meaning it did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was not making significant efforts to do so. Traffickers prey on victims with little or no social safety net, and Afghan evacuees are particularly vulnerable due to the instability of their situation.⁷

The TIP Report found that some Afghan families force girls into marriage. The economic effects of the pandemic as well as other conditions have exacerbated the problem of families selling girls into marriage. Girls and women who are sold to husbands are vulnerable to exploitation in sex trafficking and domestic servitude.⁸ While child marriage and forced marriage are not recognized as trafficking under U.S. law, they are considered trafficking by the International Labour Organization and other intergovernmental agencies.⁹

Signs

There are many indicators that an individual could be a victim of trafficking. Physical and environmental indicators include, but are not limited to:

- physical abuse (e.g. bruises, cuts, burns, broken bones)
- being closely monitored at all times
- lack of free will
- having no identification

Psychological and behavioral indicators include, but are not limited to:

- aggression
- anxiety
- fearfulness
- submission¹⁰

For additional information, see the attached document "Human Trafficking Visual and Verbal Indicators."

⁷ U.S. Department of State: "[Afghanistan](#)"

⁸ U.S. Department of State: "[Afghanistan](#)"

⁹ 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, the International Labor Organization (ILO), which notes, "at any given time in 2016, an estimated 40.3 million people were living in modern slavery; This includes 24.9 million in forced labor and 15.4 million in forced marriage."

¹⁰ [U.S. DoD CTIP PMO](#)

Important: Any minor (any person under the age of 18) not traveling with an adult is considered an Unaccompanied Minor and must immediately be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services for special services and settlement with a family sponsor.

Reporting

If you suspect a TIP situation, do not get directly involved. Report the situation to your Chain of Command immediately or contact the Department of Defense Inspector General Hotline at either 1-800-424-9098 or <http://www.dodig.mil/hotline>

Trauma-Informed Care in the Screening Process¹¹

Trauma screening is a process of asking questions about traumatic events and stress reactions from those events. Screening provides a lens to understand a person's behavior related to what happened to them. This is a more helpful method for assessment and formulation that guides decision making for the most appropriate treatment intervention.

The ultimate goal of trauma-informed care is to avoid re-traumatization. The trauma-informed approach is guided by four assumptions, known as the "Four R's": realization about trauma and how it can affect people and groups, recognizing the signs of trauma, having a system which can respond to trauma, and resisting re-traumatization.

The trauma-informed approach also operates under six key principles:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice,
6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues.

Trauma-informed care takes many forms, including explaining why a provider must ask sensitive questions and allowing the patient to set the pace of the screening. It emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety both for the patient and provider, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.¹²

¹¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: "[SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#)."

¹² For more information: [U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime](#)