GIBSON DUNN

The Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan: Update & Overview of Gibson Dunn's Recent Efforts

Client Alert | December 22, 2021

Related People

Katie Marquart

Laura Sturges

Patty Herold

In August 2021, amidst the rapid collapse of the Afghan government and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Gibson Dunn launched a firmwide effort to provide pro bono legal services to the Afghan community. What began as a small-scale effort to provide assistance to individuals and families with ties to the Firm, including through military service or family connections, quickly grew into something much bigger. Over the course of a few short months, the Firm began to work with hundreds of Afghan individuals and families who feared Taliban violence due to their collaboration with the U.S. military or government, their work to promote the Afghan government and civil society, or their public support for causes seen as antithetical to the Taliban's rule. Our clients included journalists, teachers, lawyers, doctors, women's rights activists, and those who worked with or for the United States military, most of whom were and are seeking humanitarian parole as a means of traveling to and resettling in the United States. As we close out 2021, that work is ongoing, though some of our focus has begun to pivot to providing pro bono services to those individuals and families who have made it safely to the United States and are now seeking permanent lawful status here, most often as asylees. We invite all our friends, colleagues, and clients to join with us in these efforts in the days, weeks, and months to come.

Section I of this report provides an update regarding the situation in Afghanistan and efforts to evacuate vulnerable Afghans to the United States. **Section II** discusses Gibson Dunn's ongoing efforts on behalf of Afghans at imminent risk of Taliban violence, many of whom are applying for humanitarian parole, as well as the Firm's leadership role in the Welcome Legal Alliance, an initiative to support Afghan evacuees who have arrived in the United States and require pro bono legal representation to navigate the U.S. immigration system and address other legal needs. Finally, **Section III** of this report provides additional context regarding the resettlement process and benefits available to Afghan evacuees who have arrived in the United States. To learn more about these efforts or to get involved, please reach out to Katie Marquart, Partner & Pro Bono Chair.

I. Overview of the Current Situation in Afghanistan

Beginning in late August 2021, tens of thousands of Afghans, along with U.S. citizens and permanent residents, tried desperately to flee the country—an exodus that has continued over the past several months. In the months following the Taliban's seizure of power, the situation in Afghanistan has become even more dire, with thousands of individuals internally displaced, in hiding, and at risk of Taliban reprisals. Nearly four months after the United States completed its military withdrawal from Afghanistan, approximately 44,000 displaced Afghans have settled into permanent housing and integrated into local communities throughout the United States. Another 32,000 remain in temporary housing on seven military bases across the country and a few overseas military posts, awaiting resettlement assistance while the Biden Administration, nonprofit organizations, and

© 2026 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. All rights reserved. For contact and other information, please visit us at www.gibsondunn.com. | **www.gibsondunn.com**

private sector partners work together to resettle families across the country. Others have been evacuated by U.S. allies and seek to resettle in countries like Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Thousands of Afghans who sought to escape Taliban rule remain in Afghanistan, where they face a perilous future. Individuals targeted by the Taliban—including dissidents, cultural rights defenders, artists in banned industries, religious and ethnic minorities, and individuals associated with Western culture—live in constant fear, witnessing and experiencing beatings, arrests, enforced disappearances, and killings. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") has received more than 30,000 humanitarian parole applications from Afghans seeking to enter the United States, and many other Afghans continue searching for alternate routes to safety, either in the United States or elsewhere. Because many of these individuals collaborated with the U.S. government and military, served in the Afghan government, or worked with nonprofit organizations and NGOs, they fear Taliban reprisals. Many of these individuals and families have been forced into hiding in Afghanistan, while others, in desperation, have embarked on perilous journeys to neighboring countries.

Additionally, with winter looming in Afghanistan, the country is facing an economic crisis with potentially devastating consequences for its citizens. There are already approximately 23 million people reportedly on the brink of potentially life-threatening food insecurity. And, as feared, the Taliban's newly-implemented policies have restricted women's freedom of movement and imposed compulsory dress codes, denied and curtailed access to education and employment, and restricted rights to peaceful assembly. Moreover, employment opportunities for women have declined, leading to diminished resources for families forced to rely on single income earners. Exacerbating these challenges, many individuals who worked with U.S. and Afghan forces over the last 20 years have gone into hiding and are now unable to support their families.

II. Gibson Dunn's Efforts on Behalf of Affected Families

a. Pro Bono Humanitarian Parole Applications

In the waning days of August, as the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan began to unfold, Gibson Dunn began working with dozens of families hoping to apply for humanitarian parole in the United States. These initial efforts were discussed in our September 2021 report, The Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan: Overview of Gibson Dunn's Recent Efforts. Since then, the Firm has remained steadfastly committed to helping these families seek refuge from the threat of Taliban violence, secure legal status in the United States, and reunite with family members.

To date, approximately 200 Gibson Dunn attorneys and staff have dedicated more than 5,000 hours—valued at more than $4 million—to these efforts, including preparing approximately 300 humanitarian parole applications. Of course, Gibson Dunn is only a small part of the broader legal response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We are proud to have partnered with in-house attorneys from many of our corporate clients on many of these applications, and we are thankful to have collaborated with attorneys at nonprofit organizations that are on the front lines of these efforts.

The stories of these families and their bravery continue to inspire Gibson Dunn attorneys, who are committed to pursuing all legal avenues to help these families reach safety. Many of these families have demonstrated a longstanding opposition to the Taliban—from attorneys and judges who helped put Taliban fighters behind bars to families who ran clandestine schools for girls, from interpreters who worked with the U.S. military to student activists and advocates for peace, and from former members of the Afghan government to religious and ethnic minorities. By way of example, we have proudly partnered with the International Legal Foundation ("ILF"), an international NGO that hires, trains, and deploys local legal aid attorneys in post-conflict areas, to help file humanitarian parole

© 2026 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. All rights reserved. For contact and other information, please visit us at www.gibsondunn.com. | **www.gibsondunn.com**

applications for seven of their Afghan lawyers and their families. We sincerely hope that, while their mission continues around the world, we can help the ILF bring some of their colleagues to safety.

We are honored to work with these courageous individuals and hope to one day welcome them as our new neighbors and friends in the United States.

b. Welcome.US

Gibson Dunn also has played an active role in ***Welcome.US***, a new national effort to empower individuals, nonprofits, businesses, and others to welcome and support Afghan refugees arriving in the United States. In October 2021, Gibson Dunn Managing Partner Barbara Becker joined a roundtable meeting hosted by the White House to discuss ways in which private sector leaders are working together to help support Afghan evacuees.

As part of this effort, Gibson Dunn has teamed up with Welcome.US, Human Rights First, and the Afghan-American Foundation to lead the ***Welcome Legal Alliance***, which will mobilize law firms, corporate legal teams, and the broader legal community to ensure that Afghans arriving in the United States have access to legal services throughout the entire resettlement process. Gibson Dunn, together with other co-leaders of the Alliance, is actively recruiting new legal volunteers from law firms and businesses, sourcing Dari- and Pashto-speaking legal professionals, and coordinating a working group to triage legal needs and reduce the barriers to obtaining quality legal representation. A growing list of organizations and law firms, including The International Refugee Assistance Project, Kids in Need of Defense, Pars Equality Center, Tahirih Justice Center, and We the Action, have committed to joining the Alliance. If you are interested in joining this effort, please reach out to WelcomeLegalAlliance@gibsondunn.com.

III. Resettlement Process and Benefits for Afghan Arrivals

As an increasing number of Afghan refugees arrive in the United States, the Firm's work is shifting to help Afghan evacuees settle in their new homes and obtain permanent immigration status. Many of these families are eligible for Special Immigrant Visas ("SIVs") or other priority visas, and currently are awaiting resolution of their applications. Others, who have been granted humanitarian parole for a period of two years, intend to lawfully seek asylum upon their arrival in the United States.

Given the significant logistical and regulatory challenges inherent in resettling in the United States, Gibson Dunn is committed to helping these families navigate the intimidating and often confusing legal landscape to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled. Below, we describe some of the requirements placed on Afghan humanitarian parolees to maintain their parole status, discuss the process of registering for health and housing benefits, and provide a brief overview of the resettlement process.

a. Parole Requirements and Accommodations Upon Arrival to the United States

Every applicant approved as a humanitarian parolee must undergo a series of processing, screening, and vetting processes—both before and after arrival in the United States—if they wish to maintain their parole. U.S. Customs and Border Protection ("CBP") has placed conditions on all paroled Afghan nationals, including medical screenings and vaccination requirements. Intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals conduct biometric and biographic screenings for all Afghan arrivals into the United States. Additionally, parolees are tested for COVID-19 upon arrival to the airport, and are given the option to receive the COVID-19 and other required vaccinations at various U.S. government-run sites, or at a designated Department of Defense ("DOD") facility. The testing and vaccinations are provided at no cost to the Afghan arrivals.

© 2026 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. All rights reserved. For contact and other information, please visit us at www.gibsondunn.com. | **www.gibsondunn.com**

Once tested, Afghan parolees are welcomed onto U.S. military bases, where they have the option to receive services through the U.S. government's Afghan Placement and Assistance ("APA") program. The APA is an emergency program created in response to the evacuation efforts in Afghanistan, and is designed to provide initial relocation support and benefits to Afghan parolees admitted to the United States between August 20, 2021, and March 31, 2022.

Afghan parolees receive temporary housing facilities on military bases until they are resettled into the local community. DOD has provided temporary housing facilities to parolees at eight installations: Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia; Fort Pickett, Virginia; Fort Lee, Virginia; Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; Fort McCoy, Wisconsin; Fort Bliss, Texas; Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey; and Camp Atterbury, Indiana.

b. Health Insurance and Other Health Benefits

Almost all Afghan parolees receive health coverage provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement ("ORR") during their stay on the DOD bases. After leaving the bases, almost all Afghan refugees will be eligible for health insurance through Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program ("CHIP"), the Health Insurance Marketplace, or the Refugee Medical Assistance Program ("RMA"). These benefits are available under Section 2502 of the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, H.R. 5305, P.L. 117-43 (enacted September 30, 2021), which extends health insurance to Afghans paroled into the United States on or after July 31, 2021. The act expands eligibility for resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits available to refugees until March 31, 2023, or the term of parole granted to the parolee, whichever is later.

c. Access to Resettlement Agencies and Additional Benefits

Parolees may resettle in a community either on their own or through a resettlement agency. The agencies factor in a parolee's geographical preference for resettlement, but housing shortages in certain locations may require resettlement elsewhere. On base, parolees eventually will be processed and connected to a local resettlement agency that will complete the process of fully integrating the parolee into a local community. Parolees may remain on the military base while they await being connected to a resettlement agency, or they may voluntarily depart from the base and independently seek assistance from a resettlement agency. Although the process of being connected to an agency and resettled off base has been quite lengthy—a recent report estimated it to take more than a month—for evacuees on the military bases, the government hopes to complete these efforts by February 15, 2022.

Regardless of how the parolee is connected to the resettlement agency, the parolee will receive certain benefits and services through the agency after processing is complete. Although benefits available to parolees will vary by location, resettlement agencies typically offer benefits and resources relating to housing, clothing, cultural orientation, counseling, English language training, job skills training, and job placement. The resettlement agency also can assist the parolee in signing up for government benefits like Supplemental Security Income (if eligible) or temporary assistance for needy families ("TANF"). Parolees ineligible for these benefits may still receive assistance through ORR's Refugee Cash Assistance ("RCA") program, which provides eight months of cash assistance to help families meet their most basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and transportation).

The nine resettlement agencies working with the U.S. government are:

Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service United States Conference of Catholic

© 2026 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. All rights reserved. For contact and other information, please visit us at www.gibsondunn.com. | **www.gibsondunn.com**

(“LIRS”)
700 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
(410) 230-2700
lirs@lirs.org
www.lirs.org

Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc. (“ECDC”)
901 S. Highland Street
Arlington, VA 22204
(703) 685-0510
www.ecdcus.org

HIAS
1300 Spring Street, 5th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 844-7300
www.hias.org

Church World Service (“CWS”)
Immigration and Refugee Program
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 700
New York, NY 10115
(212) 870-2061
www.cwsglobal.org

Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society (“DFMS”)
Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)
815 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017
(212) 716-6000
emm@episcopalchurch.org
www.episcopalmigrationministries.org

Bishops (“USCCB”)
Migration and Refugee Services
3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 541-3000
www.usccb.org/mrs

U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (“USCRI”)
2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 350
Arlington, VA 22202
(703) 310-1130
www.refugees.org

International Rescue Committee (“IRC”)
122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168
(212) 551-3000
www.rescue.org

World Relief (“WR”)
7 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
(443) 451-1900
www.worldrelief.org

IV. Conclusion

The mobilization of lawyers to help those affected by the continuing—and worsening—upheaval in Afghanistan has only just begun. Gibson Dunn is proud to partner with the broader legal community, including legal aid organizations, resettlement agencies, and attorneys across the private sector, to fight on behalf of these courageous families. Through coordinated and cooperative efforts, such as the Welcome Legal Alliance, we can maximize our impact and assist Afghans in need, both in Afghanistan and here in the United States.

Gibson Dunn lawyers are available to assist in addressing any questions you may have about these developments. Please contact the Gibson Dunn lawyer with whom you usually work or the following:

Katie Marquart – New York (+1 212-351-5261, kmarquart@gibsondunn.com)
Patty Herold – Denver (+1 303-298-5727, pherold@gibsondunn.com)

© 2021 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Attorney Advertising: The enclosed materials have been prepared for general informational purposes only and are not intended as legal advice.

Related Capabilities

ESG: Risk, Litigation, and Reporting

© 2026 Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. All rights reserved. For contact and other information, please visit us at www.gibsondunn.com. | **www.gibsondunn.com**