

MICHAEL T. McCAUL, TEXAS
CHAIRMAN

BRENDAN P. SHIELDS
STAFF DIRECTOR



GREGORY W. MEEKS, NEW YORK
RANKING MEMBER

SOPHIA A. LAFARGUE
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

January 18, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas,

I write to express my growing concern that the Biden Administration's policies related to the Emirates Humanitarian City (EHC) are endangering our Afghan allies who have been waiting at EHC for two and a half years for the Administration to complete their immigration processing.

Following the Administration's chaotic and deadly withdrawal from Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands of Afghans were evacuated to locations across the world where the U.S. could vet and process applicants eligible for resettlement in the United States. One location, the Emirates Humanitarian City (EHC) in the United Arab Emirates, received thousands of Afghans during and immediately following the U.S. withdrawal, many of whom are awaiting U.S. vetting and processing for resettlement in the United States. The majority of those at EHC were longtime partners of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, including Afghan military members who served alongside U.S. forces, employees of U.S. agencies, well-known human rights defenders, and women's rights activists, among others.

Afghans who made it to EHC were luckier than most; the Emirati government generously provides lodging, food, healthcare, and schooling free of charge. And Afghans at EHC are safe from the Taliban, who continue to hunt down, torture, and murder our allies who were abandoned by the Administration. Even so, the Afghans at EHC have been paralyzed for nearly two and a half years, unable to restart their lives while waiting on U.S. processing. No other

processing platform for those evacuated during and after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has seen such long wait times.

Recently, this Committee learned that several Afghans at EHC were denied for resettlement to the United States as a result of the Administration's unique discretionary denial policy at EHC, which prioritizes rapid denials, rather than fulsome vetting. EHC is the only vetting platform servicing Afghan evacuees that operates with this policy, as the Administration has chosen to deprioritize EHC for political purposes, electing to send vital vetting resources elsewhere. Many of the Afghans currently considered denied at EHC would be eligible for fulsome vetting opportunities and potentially already approved for admission to the United States if they were located at a different vetting platform.

As a direct result of the slow pace of processing at EHC and the unique discretionary denial policy, several Afghans who were at EHC have elected to return to Afghanistan, and some have subsequently been attacked by the Taliban. The Administration's malpractice has once again placed Afghans in harm's way.

For several months, the Committee has engaged the Administration on ongoing issues at EHC, but responses from your offices have been slow and lacking candor. Often, your departments blame each other or blame the White House when questioned about EHC. Recently, your departments and the National Security Council briefed House Foreign Affairs Committee staff that the discretionary denial policy at EHC has *not* led to premature denials and that the number of cases of denied applicants at EHC would *not* change if additional vetting resources were offered—this is inaccurate according to several individuals with expertise on the subject and experience on the ground at EHC.

Our Afghan allies deserve better, and it is imperative that we surge the necessary vetting resources to EHC immediately. As such, please respond with any and all communications, documentation, and correspondence with respect to the following questions and requests by February 18, 2024.

1. Why has the Administration refused to provide additional vetting resources to EHC?
2. How many Afghans have left EHC and returned to Afghanistan?
3. Please detail all known instances of Taliban reprisal attacks against Afghans who have returned to Afghanistan from EHC, including both instances and threats of attacks.
4. Please describe the policy of discretionary denial at EHC and explain how this differs from other vetting platforms where Afghan allies are provided several rounds of vetting prior to denial. Please also include a description of what agency or office established this policy, which is unique to EHC.
5. If additional resources were provided to vet Afghans at EHC, how many cases currently considered denied would be likely to reach approval following additional vetting? In your response, please detail how you came to this conclusion and which staff were consulted while preparing your answer.
6. Has the Administration chosen to prioritize resources that could be used to vet Afghans at EHC to other refugee populations around the world? If yes, please provide all directives

to reassign resources and identify how the decision was made to prioritize refugee populations other Afghans at EHC, who are only residing at EHC as a direct result of the Administration's botched evacuation from Afghanistan.

7. For all cases currently considered denied at EHC, please provide a description of why each case has been denied and all relevant supporting documents and background information. A classified transmittal is acceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael T. McCaul". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs