

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

July 21, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to U.S. government officials traveling to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

Since the disastrous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, no U.S. government official has traveled to the country. Instead, U.S. officials meet weekly with Taliban representatives in Qatar, where conversations are held to ensure the continued evacuation of Americans and Afghan allies from Afghanistan. These weekly meetings more than satisfy the need for engagement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

Recently, foreign officials have begun traveling to Afghanistan, which helps to normalize the Taliban regime. This week, a British Member of Parliament was forced to apologize after visiting Afghanistan and downplaying the egregious human-rights abuses that the Taliban commits daily.

No country has recognized the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan due to their active support of al-Qaeda and their ruthless oppression of women and minorities, among other reasons. Traveling to Afghanistan to meet with the Taliban will legitimize their de-facto governance of Afghanistan, which continues to be contested. Travel to Afghanistan will do nothing to advance U.S. interests and will only embolden the Taliban's debauchery.

Since taking power, the Taliban have only worsened their behavior despite U.S. engagement. Today, the Taliban continues to take Americans hostage, disrupt humanitarian assistance efforts, appoint al-Qaeda officials to government positions, and enforce increasingly draconian rules on women and girls, such as barring them from receiving an education above the sixth grade. The U.S. must lead the international community in demanding reforms, not normalizing the Taliban's regime.

Any attempts by U.S. officials to travel to Afghanistan under the current Taliban regime would be an egregious betrayal of the memories of the fallen and the millions of Afghans who continue to hope for a free, prosperous, democratic Afghanistan.

Sincerely,

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

MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee