

The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program

August 2025

What is the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program?

The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program is a program created by Congress to offer a pathway to Afghan nationals who directly served the U.S. military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan that began in 2001.

Who is eligible for an SIV in the Afghan SIV program?

To be eligible, Afghan nationals must demonstrate they were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Afghanistan at some point since October 2021 for at least a year of “faithful and valuable” service to the U.S. government.

What are the steps in the Afghan SIV program?

Afghans must first gather various documentation to demonstrate their service, such as letters of employment and recommendation. Once they have the required documentation, the materials are reviewed by the U.S. Department of State for “Chief of Mission” (COM) approval, to determine whether they meet the program’s requirements. Afghans with COM approval can then apply for a green card to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status and come to the United States (before having LPR status).

Why was the Afghan SIV program created?

Afghan nationals were critical to the U.S. and NATO military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan, serving as interpreters, guides, logistics support, and other critical roles at great personal risk. Due to their support for U.S. and Western forces, Afghan nationals and their family members faced reprisal attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups—threats that have greatly intensified since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. The Afghan SIV program is and has had bipartisan support as an important pathway to safety for America’s Afghan allies.

Are Afghan SIVs vetted?

Like other populations, Afghan SIVs undergo security checks through a multi-layered, inter-agency process of biometric and biographic screenings by the government. Afghan SIVs also must be admissible under U.S. immigration law, clearing health, security, criminal, and other grounds.

How have Afghans arrived in the United States in recent years?

Afghan SIVs and their family members have been eligible for resettlement by the [Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts](#) (CARE), an office in the Department of State that arranged travel for at-risk Afghans out of Afghanistan. Afghan SIV applicants were relocated to third countries where they completed their processing and could move onto the United States.

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Doesn't the United States also resettle Afghan refugees?

Yes. The Afghan SIV program is separate from the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which vets, processes, resettles, and supports refugees who have fled persecution in their home countries. While both programs resettle Afghan nationals, the criteria and processes for the two programs are different and serve related but distinct needs. Afghan SIVs all have some tie to assisting the U.S. mission and government during the war in Afghanistan.

How have executive actions affected the Afghan SIV program?

The suspension in the U.S. refugee resettlement program [announced](#) on January 20, 2025, affected relocation processing critical to the program—even though the SIV program was not suspended by the refugee program order. A stop-work order tied to [a freeze on foreign assistance](#) also ceased initial resettlement support for Afghan SIVs in the United States for several months.

Can Afghan SIVs still come to the United States?

Afghan SIVs may still travel to the United States, as they have a valid immigrant visa for entry and admission. However, U.S. government efforts to facilitate Afghan SIV resettlement through CARE have frozen and have not resumed.

Are the eligible for Reception & Placement?

Yes. Afghan SIVs in their first 90 days in the United States are eligible to enroll in Reception & Placement (R&P), which is initial resettlement support provided by resettlement agencies. R&P access for SIVs was unavailable for several months beginning in January 2025 after a stop-work order.

Has the Afghan SIV program been impacted by travel restrictions?

The “Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats” [executive order](#) resulted in [a June 4 travel ban proclamation](#) that included a total ban of Afghan nationals.

Afghan Special Immigrant Visas were specifically exempt from the proclamation’s restrictions. Since the order’s implementation on June 9, Afghan SIVs have still been able to travel to the United States.

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What's the future of the Afghan SIV program?

The U.S. government continues to grant decisions on COM, and visas continue to be issued, albeit at a slower pace than previous years.

Congress has increased the number of visas allocated for the Afghan SIV program as the visas are used by applicants. Currently, it is estimated there are less than 10,000 visas remaining after the last authorization passed by Congress [in March 2024](#). Without additional visas authorized by Congress in the near future, the Afghan SIV program may run out of visas to allow individuals who helped our military in Afghanistan to come safely to the United States.

Is there still a need for the program?

Yes. It is estimated that thousands of SIV-eligible individuals remain in Afghanistan. These are Afghan nationals [who supported the U.S. mission and former Afghan central government at grave personal risk](#) and cannot safely remain in Afghanistan.

Why should Afghan SIV resettlement to the United States continue?

The Afghan SIV program makes the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous by providing a vetted, protection pathway for Afghans who supported the United States during the war in Afghanistan. It pushes back against Taliban rule in Afghanistan and signals American resolve to other allies. Continued Afghan relocation and resettlement has enjoyed [bipartisan support](#) in recent years, as Americans from all walks of life believe in the United States keeping its word to Afghans who supported U.S. troops, diplomats, and aid workers in Afghanistan.

What can you do to support the program?

[Use our action alert](#) to write to your lawmakers about the need for an additional SIV visa allocation in the 2026 Fiscal Year. In May, more than 100 lawmakers supported [a bipartisan request from Rep. Crow of Colorado and Rep. Nunn of Iowa](#) for additional visas. Continued outreach and engagement with lawmakers will demonstrate further support for the program.

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