

August 25, 2021

Dr. Eric Lander  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Dr. Lander,

As you know, the Taliban represent an immediate threat to the safety of anyone in Afghanistan connected with the western world. This includes engineers, scientists and technical professionals, many of whom are trying to evacuate Afghanistan. It is becoming clear the Taliban are targeting technical professionals based on membership in professional associations. We expect this persecution to get worse as the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate.

Volunteers in professional societies help the global technical community conduct research, provide opportunities to network, share employment opportunities, and train the next generation of STEM talent. In countries like Afghanistan, professional societies also act as beacons of hope and inspiration for the next generation. Volunteers in Afghanistan and around the world are vital to these efforts, and we hope someday to the future of Afghanistan.

As the United States continues to evacuate vulnerable populations from Afghanistan, we ask that you extend assistance to engineers, scientists, and other educated professionals in the country, especially those who, despite all odds, have joined global technical communities. We specifically ask that you assist women in STEM in their exodus of Afghanistan. Women and girls, along with their STEM mentors, are currently being targeted by the Taliban.

Despite incredible hurdles and dangerous risks, these engineers, scientists, and technical professionals have built robots, researched cutting edge technology, and advanced many areas of engineering and science that are of interest to both the United States and Afghanistan. It is precisely their collaboration with US counterparts on these STEM projects as members of our technical societies that has led to being targeted by terrorists.

The professional STEM community stands ready to support the engineers, scientists, and technical professionals seeking to leave Afghanistan. We are already working with our Afghan members to provide what support and assistance we can. But we need your help to assist our members to leave Afghanistan and find refuge in a safer part of the world. Specifically, we need P-2 Priority designation visas for our volunteers and members of global professional societies to facilitate their rapid evacuation from Afghanistan. We cannot let wording on the visa application form lead to the harm or deaths of these technical professionals, engineers and scientists that are willing to come conduct research in the United States.

Thank you for your help with this urgent and critical matter.

Sincerely,

American Association of Geographers  
American Association of Physics Teachers  
American Astronomical Society  
American Education Research Association  
American Geophysical Union  
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Mathematical Society  
American Physical Society  
American Society of Agronomy  
Association for Women in Science  
Biophysical Society  
Computing Research Association  
Cornell University  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council of Scientific Society Presidents  
Crop Science Society of America  
Ecological Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
Eversole Associates  
Gerontological Society of America  
IEEE-USA  
Materials Research Society  
Michigan State University  
Northwestern University  
OSA—The Optical Society  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Society for Research in Child Development  
Soil Science Society of America  
Washington State University

cc: Allison Schwier  
Ian Brownlee  
Carol Perez