

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