



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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September 13, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As our country commemorates the 20th anniversary of the 9-11 terrorist attacks, I wanted to draw your attention to the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement](#) on the occasion. With this pretext, I, like many, have followed the U.S. exit from Afghanistan with great humanitarian concern. As Chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace, I urge every effort to evacuate all remaining U.S. citizens and as many SIV applicants and other refugees as possible assuring all necessary and due vetting of such applicants is accomplished. I understand that President Biden has authorized the use of up to \$500 million from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund to meet the urgent needs of Afghan refugees and SIV applicants. And yet more needs to be done to protect the vulnerable who remain, especially women, girls, and religious minorities.

I echo Pope Francis' comments about Afghanistan made on August 29. In that context he stated, "I ask everyone to continue to assist the needy and to pray that dialogue and solidarity will lead to the establishment of a peaceful and fraternal coexistence and offer hope for the future of the country."

Catholic organizations and other faith-based groups have worked for years to provide humanitarian and development aid to those sorely in need in Afghanistan. In early 2021, it was already estimated that half of the population, including millions of women and children, were in need of food and other critical supplies. The conflict with the Taliban, drought, and the pandemic have only increased the humanitarian need as the number of displaced reached 550,000. Navigating the complexities of corruption and insecurity, it is our hope that aid programs can securely continue given these dire needs.

Mr. Secretary, I urge that in addition to calling for an end to fighting and for the respect for human rights in Afghanistan, the Government of the United States should take further steps, namely:

1. Continue to provide United States Government funding for humanitarian programs in Afghanistan and encourage other countries and donors to do so as well, allowing for flexibility so that funds can be channeled in ways so they can be quickly accessed by accountable organizations already doing community-based work in country, verifying high levels of service delivery to the most vulnerable.

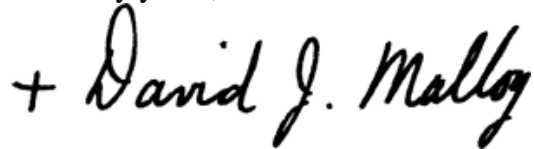
2. Coordinate with other countries and international multilateral agencies on the humanitarian response and on a diplomatic strategy to allow for increased humanitarian access and protection of Afghan civilians as well as the men and women delivering lifesaving assistance.

3. Support efforts by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to reach out to Taliban leaders and leaders of other Muslim majority countries in the region to implement recommendations raised in their August 22 communique such as: a) cooperation in facilitating safe evacuation operations, b) renouncing violence and restoring security and order throughout Afghan society, and c) protecting the right to life, security, and dignity of the Afghan people “in compliance with tolerant Islamic principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

This latter measure would be in keeping with the document on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living” that Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed el-Tayeb, signed in February 2019 which stated: “this Declaration may be an appeal to every upright conscience that rejects deplorable violence and blind extremism; an appeal to those who cherish the values of tolerance and fraternity that are promoted and encouraged by religions.”

Evolving conditions in Afghanistan present enormous security and humanitarian challenges to all who seek peace, safety and protection. It is our hope that by working with international partners and with parties in Afghanistan we can bring some stability to this nation that has seen so much war and turmoil.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David J. Malloy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace