

## Afghans Who Worked for The Times Arrive in the U.S.

The group, 124 people including families, flew to Houston from Mexico City after their escape from Kabul. One Afghan journalist in the group has not been cleared by U.S. border officials.



By Tiffany Hsu

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Two weeks after escaping from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, and after intricate negotiations involving government officials in multiple nations, a group of Afghans who worked for The New York Times, along with their families, have reached the United States.

The 124 people, including reporters, drivers, cooks, interpreters and more than 60 children, arrived at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston on Tuesday, having taken a chartered flight from Mexico City, paid for by The Times. They were accompanied on the flight by a team from The Times, and met at the airport by representatives of the Catholic Charities resettlement program.

As of Thursday, all but one of the 124 people had been cleared to leave the airport by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. Farooq Jan Mangal, an Afghan journalist who had worked as a full-time stringer for The Times in the eastern part of Afghanistan in Khost, remained in processing.

“We hope border officials quickly resolve whatever issues have delayed the processing of one remaining Times journalist, Farooq Jan Mangal, who for more than a decade has reported bravely to help keep the world informed about Afghanistan,” A.G. Sulzberger, the publisher of The Times, said in a statement.

The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment.

The 123 Afghans who were allowed to enter the country are to be placed in furnished apartments with the assistance of Catholic Charities, a nonprofit group that will also help enroll the children in schools, ease access to counseling and English lessons and offer connections to potential jobs once the members of the group are authorized to work. There are 26 families in all, The Times said.

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“It is hard to overstate my admiration for the courage and perseverance these colleagues and their families have shown through this difficult journey,” Mr. Sulzberger said in a note to Times employees on Thursday. “They were supported at every step by caring, tireless and at times truly heroic colleagues from around the company, who worked around the clock and moved mountains to get this group to safety and are continuing to do the same for others still on the ground.”

The Afghans were evacuated from Kabul on Aug. 19, aided by the government of Qatar, which arranged passage to Doha. From there, Mexican officials helped ease the journey to Mexico City, where the group had stayed since last Wednesday while waiting for The Times to get resettlement services lined up in Houston.

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The people stayed in corporate apartments in Mexico City, where they completed medical checks and Covid-19 tests and were offered trauma counseling. Colleagues from The Times helped provide them with clothing, diapers and even Kandahar raisins and other dried treats bought from an Afghan market in Washington.

Mr. Sulzberger said in a statement that he was grateful for the support of the American government for quickly processing the group's entry into the country and also thanked the Qatari and Mexican governments for their help in the rescue. The Times is assisting the group, which is entering the United States through a humanitarian parole program, with immigration matters. Some Afghans who worked for The Times remain in transit, Mr. Sulzberger said in a statement.

“We are doing all we can to get other former colleagues on the ground to safety and will continue pushing the international community to help safeguard the many more brave Afghan journalists still at risk,” he said.

### Understand the Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan

**Who are the Taliban?** The Taliban arose in 1994 amid the turmoil that came after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989. They used brutal public punishments, including floggings, amputations and mass executions, to enforce their rules. Here's more on their origin story and their record as rulers.

Other large news organizations have helped Afghans who worked with them leave the country in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal.

All the Afghans who worked for The Wall Street Journal during the conflict have been evacuated, along with their families, according to a Journal spokeswoman. Out of this group of 80 people, four went from Kabul to Ukraine, and the 76 others went to Qatar for a time before moving on to Mexico City on Sunday, where they remain. The group included reporters, translators, interpreters and support staff. The Journal declined to comment on future plans for the group.

The Washington Post said that two Afghan employees and their families, a group of 12, have arrived safely in the United States. The paper added that it continues to assist another former Afghan employee who is trying to leave Kabul.

USA Today helped 12 people leave Afghanistan, including a freelancer and an Afghan helper and their families. They were relocated to Kyiv, Ukraine, last week. A spokeswoman for Gannett, which owns USA Today, said that the company was also working to assist another Afghan family.

Many journalists working for international news organizations exited Afghanistan in recent weeks as the Taliban swept through the country, but some Afghan citizens who worked alongside the outlets have remained there.

The Taliban have officially pledged to protect the news media, but they have harassed and beaten journalists working for an Afghan television station, according to a recent report from Reporters Without Borders.