

# 840,000 Afghans who applied for US resettlement program still waiting

[Jaime Moore-Carrillo](#) Sunday, Sep 3

More than 840,000 Afghans who applied for a resettlement program aimed at people who helped the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan are still there waiting, according to a report that lays out the challenges with a program intended to help America's allies in the two-decade long conflict.

The report released Thursday by the State Department's inspector general outlines steps the department took to improve processing of special immigrant visas for Afghans. But [two years after the U.S. pullout](#) from Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to power, challenges remain.

[The visa program was started in 2009](#) to help Afghans who worked side-by-side with Americans and faced significant risks for doing so. A similar [program exists for Iraqis](#). Both programs have been plagued by criticism that cases move much too slowly, leaving applicants in dangerous limbo.

And since the U.S. left Afghanistan the number of people applying for the visas has skyrocketed. According to the report, there were a little less than 30,000 applicants in October 2021, but by December 2022 that number had grown to roughly 155,000. Those figures do not include family members who are allowed to resettle with them if their application is approved.

The State Department estimates that as of April of this year more than 840,000 applicants for the special visa program and their family members remain in Afghanistan, the report said. Not everyone who applies is

accepted; the State Department noted that about 50% of applicants do not qualify when their applications are reviewed at a key stage early in the process.

The department also said since the start of the Biden administration in January 2021 through Aug. 1 of this year it's issued nearly 34,000 visas for the applicants and their family members, which it said was a substantial increase from previous years.

The report said the department has hired more staff to process applications, coordinated with the Pentagon to verify applicants' employment, and eliminated some of the steps required of applicants. But, the report said, there was more it could do. For example, the report noted that a key position overseeing the special immigrant visa process has seen frequent turnover and vacancies.

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