



American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy)

Division of South Asian American Psychologists (DoSAA) of the Asian American Psychological Association

Statement in Solidarity and Allyship with the Afghan People in the U.S. and Abroad

The American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy) and the Division of South Asian American Psychologists (DoSAA) of the Asian American Psychological Association stand in strong allyship and solidarity with our Afghan siblings amidst recent horrific events in Afghanistan, and in response to their decades long struggle for peace and justice after decades of military intervention. Although events in Afghanistan may have dropped out of the news cycle for most Western news outlets, the struggle of the Afghan people for justice continues, and remains at the forefront for our organizations, as well.

The tragedy that our Afghan siblings have withstood is astounding and painful to observe from afar, let alone endure firsthand. The trauma that has befallen the Afghan people — in all their diverse beauty and strength — has been ongoing and continues to affect the community deeply, even after those who gained sanctuary have resettled outside of the conflict zone. As MENA and DoSAA psychologists, we are all too familiar with how such trauma continues to impact individuals, families, and communities transgenerationally. Our hearts break for the suffering our Afghan siblings sustain not only today, but for years to come.

We call on President Biden to broaden visa eligibility and to increase support for Afghans seeking refuge in the United States. We also call on the president, with U.S. international allies, to ensure no door is closed to those seeking an opportunity to build meaningful lives free of violence and oppression. While the U.S. has hardly been a beacon of justice, American ideals are predicated on welcoming persons fleeing persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, gender, and political opinion. Moreover, we are obligated to provide safety and security to those fleeing conditions resulting directly from U.S. interventions abroad.

Once Afghan nationals and refugees arrive, we call upon federal, state and local governments to ensure they will not be subjected to biased background checks, monitoring, or surveillance simply because of their religion or national origin. We must welcome and provide necessary assistance to all Afghans resettling in this country. Clinical research demonstrates that relocation and resettlement of refugees is clouded with bias and unethical screening practices, does not effectively identify dangerous individuals, and only causes greater harm within the refugee communities. In fact, data demonstrates that the rate of terrorists within migrant groups is astoundingly low. Therefore, we call on our fellow psychologists to employ – and when necessary, develop – best practices that reduce the impact of bias, to inform resettlement programs as a means of reducing further psychological trauma.

AMENA-Psy and DoSAA applaud the many families, nonprofits, religious, educational, and corporate entities that have stood up and volunteered to assist our Afghan siblings. Their tireless efforts exemplify the care and concern for fellow human beings that our nation -- and planet -- must embody to create a just and peaceful world. Yet, we hope such assistance efforts are not tainted by a desire to rapidly assimilate Afghans into the white supremacist racial hierarchy, which has historically and disastrously undergirded many outreach efforts toward incoming immigrants and refugees. Instead, AMENA-Psy and DoSAA call for steadfast support and celebration of Afghan cultural practices, language, and religious ties, and a deep appreciation for the varied expressions of identity that incoming refugees and immigrants develop over time. As psychologists, we attest to the critical role the maintenance of such practices and traditions plays in reducing stress and healing the trauma associated with the losses of migration. As a diverse community of migrants, many of whom have been on U.S. soil for generations, MENA and South Asian people are well positioned to appreciate the necessity of maintaining linguistic, religious, and sociocultural traditions. We value the transformations that result from the influx of ideas, culture, and experiences incoming migrant communities contribute to U.S. society, and we anticipate the development of our union through these Afghan gifts.

Finally, AMENA-Psy and DoSAA ask that our administration honors the many losses - including that of Afghans who assisted US efforts and the innumerable losses Afghan people have undergone on the whole -- by stepping up efforts towards diplomatic solutions to violence and the unraveling political situation in Afghanistan. We implore the Administration to consider that revenge is endless. Rather than avenging losses of the past, which initially began with the September 11, 2001 attacks and have accumulated in the decades since, AMENA-Psy and DoSAA look toward a new future in which militarism, violence, and sustained efforts of global dominance are not our primary approach to ensuring world peace. To this end, the U.S. must combine holding perpetrators accountable with careful and thoughtful consideration of the long history that led to the infamous 9/11 attacks. The events of September 11th have altered this country's history, and led to insurmountable tragedy on a global scale. The loss of thousands of lives and incalculable pain and suffering in New York, Washington D.C., and nationwide, has had enormous reverberations in Afghanistan. Such losses have contributed to a massive refugee crisis and displacement of people, as well as an unfathomable cycle of surveillance, violence, and hatred that has stained MENA, South Asian, Afghan and Muslim people's experience in the U.S. and abroad.

AMENA-Psy and DoSAA look with reverence to those who have paid dearly with their lives, as well as with physical, material, social, and psychological wellbeing in the intervening years since planes hit the Twin Towers and the U.S.'s escalating response in Afghanistan led to our longest war ever. Yet, we also look with hope toward a future in which our Afghan siblings abroad can live in peace, those who have relocated here can settle with dignity, and conviviality, rather than dominance, violence, and empire.