



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

November 28, 2018

The Honorable Jeff Denham
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Denham:

Thank you for your July 31, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen has asked that I respond on her behalf.

As you may be aware, overseas in-depth in-person interviews are conducted for every refugee applicant by highly trained U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officers to elicit information about eligibility for refugee status. During the interview, the officer:

- Confirms the basic biographic data of the applicant;
- Verifies that the applicant was properly given access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP);
- Determines whether the principal applicant has suffered past persecution or has a well-founded fear of future persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion in his or her home country;
- Determines whether the applicant is admissible to the United States and has not participated in persecution of others;
- Determines whether the principal applicant has been firmly resettled in another country – the finding of which would make him or her ineligible for resettlement through the USRAP; and
- After considering all available information, determines whether discretion should be exercised favorably to approve the application.

The screening of refugee applicants also involves numerous biographic checks that are initiated by the Resettlement Support Centers and are reviewed and resolved by U.S. government agencies.

By statute, the Secretary of Homeland Security may parole a foreign national, who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for admission, into the United States temporarily for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. Parole is not intended to be used solely to avoid normal visa processing procedures and timelines, to bypass inadmissibility waiver processing, or to replace established refugee processing channels. Parole decisions are based upon a review of all available evidence.

With regard to your inquiry about Mr. Muhammad Kamran and his family, please note that federal regulations at 8 C.F.R. 208.6, which implement the Immigration and Nationality Act, govern the disclosure to third parties of personal information pertaining to asylum applications, and generally prohibit such disclosure absent written consent from the applicant. As a matter of longstanding policy, the Department of Homeland Security extends these protections to refugees. Accordingly, without such written consent, we are unable to comment on this specific matter in response to your inquiry. We note that the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, may impose additional restrictions on our ability to comment on this and other specific cases, including but not limited to Exemption 6 (information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy of the individuals involved), and Exemption 7 (records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes).

Please find responses enclosed with regard to your questions seeking data on refugee applications.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. The co-signers of your letter will receive separate, identical responses. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LFC", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

L. Francis Cissna
Director

Enclosure

**The Department of Homeland Security's Responses to
Rep. Denham's July 31, 2018 Letter**

(a) How many principal applicants for refugee cases have been Afghan and Iraqi U.S. military interpreters or former interpreters?

Below is information from the U.S. Department of State (DOS) on Iraqis with access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions (USRAP) Program under the category of U.S.-affiliated "interpreter" who arrived in the United States between Fiscal Years (FY) 2015 and 2018. DOS was unable to provide information regarding Afghan interpreters. Please be aware that the data below may include Iraqi interpreters who were associated with the United States but not specifically with the U.S. military. Additionally, there may be other Iraqis who served as military interpreters but gained access to the USRAP through a processing priority unrelated to their work with the U.S. Government. DOS was unable to identify such individuals through its data search.

Arrival numbers for Iraqis who gained access to the USRAP due to employment as an "interpreter"				
Fiscal Year	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total:	618	325	196	2

(b) How many of those were denied for discretionary security reasons?

Please see below. As noted in the previous response, DOS was unable to provide information regarding Afghan interpreters and there may be Iraqi interpreters not included in this data who gained access to the USRAP through a processing priority unrelated to their work with the U.S. Government.

Fiscal Year	Denied for National Security Concerns
2015	75
2016	83
2017	16
2018	24
Total:	198

Source: Department of State/Refugee Processing Center, August 14, 2018.

(c) What percentage of US refugee applications overall have been denied for discretionary security reasons?

Cases with USCIS interview results during each fiscal year			
Fiscal Year of Initial USCIS Interview	Cases that Received a Final Decision*	Cases Denied as a Matter of Discretion - National Security Concerns	% of Total
2015	23,383	914	3.91%
2016	38,808	1,843	4.75%
2017	11,592	675	5.82%
2018	5,935	145	2.44%
Total:	79,718	3,577	4.48%

Source: U.S. Department of State/Refugee Processing Center, October 30, 2018.

* A final decision includes 1) cases that were stamped approved and are stateside, 2) cases that were stamped approved and are pending travel, 3) cases that were stamped denied, and 4) a small number of cases where USCIS found the applicant should not have had access to the USRAP. These numbers do not include cases that are undergoing further review. Also, for statistical purposes, a final decision is counted in the same year as the initial interview even if the final decision was issued in a subsequent year.