



AILA Presents AILA's Afghan Response Task Force with the 2022 Michael Maggio Memorial Pro Bono Award

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WASHINGTON, DC - The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) recognizes the AILA Afghan Response Task Force with the 2022 Michael Maggio Memorial Pro Bono Award for outstanding efforts in providing pro bono representation in the immigration field.

In August 2021, when the world's attention focused on the aftermath of the U.S. departure from Afghanistan and the swift takeover by the Taliban, the attention of AILA members turned to what they know best: immigration law. They looked for a way to use their expertise and understanding of one of the most complicated areas of law to help our allies, vulnerable women, children, journalists, and other human rights activists who were now fearful for their lives due to the Taliban rule.

As desperate people sought answers, and cries for help were amplified, a few dedicated AILA Members stepped up to lead a massive pro bono effort. As more than a thousand AILA Members joined a newly created Afghan Evacuation listserv and AILA staff fielded hundreds of inquiries, these individuals spent nights and weekends finding resources for AILA Members, answering questions, attending hundreds of meetings on the Hill and with Administration officials to advocate for reforms, working with coalition partners, and appearing on numerous roundtables.

Despite the myriad frustrations and challenges, the taskforce organized a massive pro bono response to help individuals filing humanitarian parole applications, as well as resettlement efforts for the more than 70,000 Afghans who were evacuated to the United States. While the plight of the Afghans seeking safety in the United States may have fallen off the front page as attention turns to other global turmoil, the task force remains steadfastly and uniformly focused on helping individuals and families and keeping America's promise alive.

This was an enormous undertaking led by Co-Chairs Parastoo Zahedi and Mahsa Khanbabai, and included the following champions: Sima Alizadeh, Dan Berger, Jill Marie Bussey, C. Lynn Calder, Christopher Chaney, James Lance Conklin, Jennifer Guilfoyle, Martha Jenkins, Aik Wan KOK, Laura Lichter, Catherine Lindgren, Spojmie Nasiri, Eleanor Pelta, Michelle Saenz-Rodriguez, Adonia Simpson, Hardeep Sull, Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia, Emma Wells, and Rachel Zoghlin.

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The American Immigration Lawyers Association is the national association of immigration lawyers established to promote justice, advocate for fair and reasonable immigration law and policy, advance the quality of immigration and nationality law and practice, and enhance the professional development of its members.

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