



Ms. Ur M. Jaddou, J.D.
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20529

10/25/2022

Dear Director Jaddou,

First, thank you for serving our nation as Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. As a retired Colonel from the United States Air Force and now overseeing both immigration legal services and refugee resettlement services as Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City (CCAOKC), I know well the constructive tension you face between ensuring opportunity for new arrivals and security against those who intend ill. Second, while the issue I bring to you today *should not* require your attention, I request it nonetheless, as previous efforts have not resolved this concern. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City has both attorneys and DOJ-accredited representatives serving immigrant arrivals, and we are also a formal affiliate of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for Refugee Reception and Placement services within Oklahoma. Catholic Charities additionally provides other refugee services in contract with the State of Oklahoma's Department of Human Services. As you may know, our agency received 1,806 Afghan arrivals into Oklahoma between 9/22/2021 through 2/17/2022 – 1,006 into Oklahoma City and 800 into Tulsa. As an agency, this was the single largest number of arrivals within the USCCB network, and as a state, Oklahoma received among (if not) the highest Afghan arrivals per capita. It was a huge undertaking and we are proud of our ongoing service to this population.

The challenge for which we ask your assistance is to secure a more effective location for Oklahoma's 1,800 Afghan arrivals that need asylum interviews to continue the legal process of status adjustment. Initially, asylum interviews for this entire group were scheduled in Houston, TX, and my agency assisted a small number of families to undertake the eight hour trip (each way) and associated lodging and local transportation requirements.

After considerable advocacy efforts, the interview venue was favorably moved from Houston to Ft. Smith, AR. While not ideal, this is a significant improvement: Ft. Smith is about three hours from OKC and less than two from Tulsa. This change reduced the time commitment for our Afghan arrivals significantly. Instead of missing work or school for three days, two nights hotel stay minimum and three days of meals, along with driver and/or vehicle expense, the Ft. Smith location reduced the time invested to two days and a single overnight hotel stay. We are grateful for that improvement, but the situation could still be much-improved.

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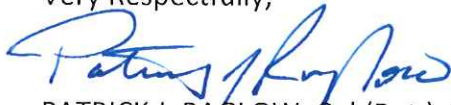
Sadly, we recently learned during a call with the USCIS New Orleans office that Ft. Smith would no longer be available as an interview location and future interviews would be scheduled in Houston. In addition, some interviews already scheduled for Ft. Smith were canceled and have not yet been rescheduled. It appears those interviews will likely be rescheduled for Houston.

Our team's experience with interviews in Ft. Smith is that the only people attending the interview in person is the Afghan primary applicant and family – the entire family. Both the USCIS interviewing officer and attorney representing the family attend *virtually*. This bears repeating: Neither the USCIS representative nor the attorneys representing clients attend in-person; the only in-person presence is the actual applicant (family).

One additional bit of information: USCIS has an active and currently underutilized field office in Oklahoma City which has fully-equipped interviewing facilities with virtual capability. This, then, is our request: **Please allow the Oklahoma City office of USCIS to serve as the interviewing facility for the Afghan arrivals formally brought into Oklahoma for resettlement.** We are unaware of any legal, technical or operational deficit which would prevent Oklahoma City's USCIS office from serving in this capacity and can easily identify significant savings in time and expense with no apparent loss in efficacy for the United States government.

We respectfully request your full consideration of this request, and should it not be possible, an explanation so we can explain this decision to our Afghan families, agency staff and volunteers. CCAOKC is happy to work with you or your staff to explore additional options or to alter our approach if a better alternative is possible. I can be reached at 405.526.2308 or praglow@ccaokc.org should you have additional questions. Again, thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to hearing from you or one on your team for resolution.

Very Respectfully,



PATRICK J. RAGLOW, Col (Ret.), USAF
Executive Director

PJR/sg

cc: Tara Jordan de Lara, attorney, OKC Afghan Legal Network
Rachel Pollock, MSW, US Conference of Catholic Bishops

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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

December 16, 2022

Patrick J. Raglow, Col (Ret.), USAF
Executive Director
Catholic Charities of Archdiocese of Oklahoma City
1232 N. Classen Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73016

Dear Mr. Raglow:

Thank you for your October 25, 2022 letter sharing your concerns with the interview locations for Afghan asylum applicants who were paroled into the United States through Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) and who are living in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is actively exploring possible interview locations for these asylum applicants.

Asylum applicants living in Oklahoma City and Tulsa who are not able to attend an interview at the Houston Asylum Office should contact that office via the public mailbox, houston.asylum@uscis.dhs.gov, to notify the office of the applicants' inability to attend an interview there. This notification will help inform our consideration of alternate interview locations for those OAW asylum applicants.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ur M. Jaddou" followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director