



South Asian Network

A grassroots community-based organization dedicated to promoting the health, empowerment, and solidarity of persons of South Asian origin

October 21, 2005

George W. Bush
President
United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: Policy Relief and Temporary Protected Status for Earthquake-Related Residents

Honorable President Bush:

I write to you today with deep concern for immigrants from Pakistan. Since 1990, the South Asian Network (SAN), a grass roots community based nonprofit organization, has worked to advance the health, empowerment and solidarity of persons of South Asian origin, one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the United States. We have effectively served and advocated for South Asians in the areas of health care, consumer protection, employment and housing discrimination, hate crimes, domestic violence and immigration. But never before has their need for help been so dire.

Many immigrants from Pakistan currently in the United States, including myself, have witnessed their homeland destroyed by the massive earthquake that hit on October 8, 2005. These people now find themselves utterly disconnected from their families and homeland, and in many cases have no home, no job, and no one left to go home to. In addition to the invaluable monetary and material aid being sent to the earthquake affected region, I urge the Department of Homeland Security to create public policy relief for Pakistanis here in the United States. One viable and proven form of relief is Temporary Protected Status - TPS, a procedure established by Congress in 1990, as part of the Immigration Act of 1990 ("IMMACT"), P.L. 101-649, by which the Attorney General and since 2003 the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security may provide TPS to aliens in the United States who are temporarily unable to safely return to their home country because of ongoing armed conflict, the temporary effects of an environmental disaster, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. This earthquake is a disaster of historic proportions that clearly calls for such action. This act of relief and compassion on your behalf would grant temporary legal status and give work authorization to immigrants from Pakistan, enabling them to work lawfully in the United States and send much-needed money home to assist with rebuilding and family stabilization, and to forestall a mass exodus. As you know, TPS has been used in similar situations where crises in nations of origin prevent immigrants in the U.S. from returning to their homes. As an immediate measure, and for similar same reasons, I also request that you implement a moratorium on removals to Pakistan.

I also suggest that DHS in Washington D.C. form a working group consisting of relevant federal agencies (DHS, State Department, etc.), the embassy of Pakistan, and community-based organizations to work through the immigration-related issues that will arise because of what has happened. I know of cases where immigrants in the process of adjusting their status cannot get the required police records from their home countries because the authorizing offices have been destroyed and such record retrieval is not a priority right now. Others have no access to important documents and information, such as their family histories, passports, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and photos attesting to the validity of a marriage because such materials were lost in the earthquake. It would seem of great benefit to form a diverse working group to ensure there is responsive dialogue between the United States government and the government of Pakistan to address these issues before they become major hurdles.

I hope the United States Government will look upon Pakistan and Pakistanis in the United States with compassion and thoughtfulness, and craft policies and mechanisms for dialogue to aid the suffering people when they need it most.

The South Asian Network stands ready to assist you in such an endeavor. Should you need further information please call me at 562-403-0488.

Sincerely,

Hamid Khan
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Honorable Jehangir Karamat
Ambassador, Embassy of Pakistan
3517 International Court, N.W.
Washington D.C., 20008

Honorable Sohail Khan
Counsellor (Cr - II), Embassy of Pakistan
3517 International Court, N.W.
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