**SWORN DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF ASYLUM**

I, X, swear under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the following is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I file this statement in support of my application for asylum.

1. My name is X, and I am 32/33 years old. I am a citizen of Afghanistan. I arrived in the U.S. at New York City, NY via JFK International Airport on Date. I fled Afghanistan in August 2021 due to the government collapse and Taliban takeover, which made me a target of violence and assassination as a former government official. I make this declaration in support of my application for asylum.
2. I currently live at Address.
3. I am seeking asylum from my home country of Afghanistan because of my high-visibility role in the security sector of the democratic Afghan government and my history of publicly opposing the Taliban. My extensive ties to the United States, which include not only being a Fulbright Scholar, but working with the United States military in Afghanistan, participating in research projects for the U.S. Department of Defense, and being a speaker at the NASPAA Annual Conference, also make me a target for the Taliban.

**My Background**

**Childhood**

1. I was born in Town, Afghanistan. As a child, I lived and went to school under the Taliban regime. We were forbidden from listening to music, watching TV, studying anything outside of Islamic texts, and generally we lived in fear of the extremist, illegitimate governing body that ruled our villages with force. After 9/11, the U.S. intervened to oust the Taliban regime that had aided Al Qaeda in planning and carrying out the attacks. A democratic government replaced them.
2. During my teenage years and early adulthood, I experienced life in a democratic state for the first time. I went to school, and worked to build and fortify the democratic state of Afghanistan, formed with the support of the United States and its NATO allies. Under the new government, my generation had hope for a better world with so many possibilities, including education, work, a prosperous economy, and the chance for a dignified life with individual rights protected in a Constitution.

**Pre-University**

1. I finished high school in Year. During this time I was involved in civic activities in my community. My peers and I started a library, we managed a radio station, and we enjoyed the perks a free society could offer. As head of a local radio station in District of Province, a rural and conservative town, for the first time in my life I had the chance to interact with American troops. They were special forces, and they were based in Kundaz province, but they would occasionally stop in our district to provide support and training to the police in the town. I remember during those early years, young boys and girls would cheer when they saw a convoy passing and run out to greet them. The radio station needed support and the town had no electricity, so we used a generator for power. One day, when the American convoy stopped in my district, I went to say hello to them and introduced them to the radio station with my limited English. I told them that the radio station could broadcast anti-terrorism and anti-drug advertisements. They liked the idea and their commander made a decision on the spot. They would help the radio station with a monthly stipend, and in return we were to run anti-Taliban ads. This is how my first partnership with Americans started.

**University Studies**

1. After graduating high school, I attended University in the major northern urban center of City. Given my family’s financial situation and my own desire for practical work experience, I never stopped working while in pursuit of my undergraduate degree. I took a job with a project of the United States Institute for Peace run by the Killid Group (an Afghan organization partner) in late 2009. My responsibilities included documenting gross human rights violations and war crimes during the autocratic regimes of the Taliban and the Soviet-backed state in Afghanistan.
2. After a year, I started working for the Government Office. My job was based in the regional police headquarters for Provinces. As civilian specialist/advisor, my tasks included liaising between the Afghan and international personnel for coordination and collaboration purposes. The French, German, and American troops were embedded in the headquarters to provide training and support whenever the Afghan police needed. I closely worked with the American army at that time. One of the captains gifted me books to learn and prepare for the Graduate Record Examination and TOEFL tests. They also coordinated efforts regarding the war with the Taliban. On Date in a Taliban explosion, my boss, the General of the Police, was killed along with several German and Afghan soldiers. I was supposed to be traveling with him that day, but he asked me at the last minute to stay behind.
3. In Year, I completed my undergrad and relocated to City for a job at the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, a government entity that was responsible for sub-national governance and development. It was during this time, and after being encouraged by American friends and partners, that I applied for a Fulbright Scholarship, sponsored by the United States Department of State to pursue an advanced degree in the U.S. I failed twice, but finally received the scholarship in Year and set off to the U.S. for my master’s degree at American University.
4. In Year, I participated in a research project with the Department of Defense in Washington, D.C. on the security dynamics in Afghanistan. Later that year, I was a guest speaker at Annual Conference. Between Year-Year I published a number of publicly-available essays and opinion pieces on the work of the democratic Afghan government, which were widely circulated in Afghanistan.

**Post-University**

1. When I graduated in Year, I returned to Afghanistan immediately and began working at Government Office, where I remained in various upper-level management positions, eventually reporting directly to the Government Official, until the government collapsed in August 2021. At Office, I served as the senior advisor and head of strategic programs. I worked on security sector reform, developed and renewed the national security threats documents, national security policy, national security strategy. In this role, I also oversaw the reform of Airport and its security coordination at the strategic level. Prior to that, I served as the Government Official, where I was responsible for conducting assessments, analysis, and the national intelligence priority framework.

**Beliefs**

1. During my schooling, my occupations, and my civic activities, I have always been an activist in support of a democratic government. I am a product of democracy and the post-9/11 world of possibilities in Afghanistan. My peers and I wanted to spark social change in our conservative hometown. When the Taliban regrouped in 2007-08, we openly played music on the radio station, and campaigned against the Taliban. We saw first-hand that they had nothing to offer to our community apart from violence, destruction, and chaos. Pro-democracy and anti-Taliban beliefs have always been risky in Afghanistan because democracy was such a new and experimental idea. By contrast, tribal conflict, warlords, and local gangs were much more familiar. It was even a challenge for many of our state’s leaders to decouple the new democratic experiment from our country’s long history.
2. I grew up with the democratic state of Afghanistan. My generation owed so much to the new free political order and to our partnership with the international community. I felt a sense of responsibility to work for the government. I believed then, and I still believe, a republic system of government is fitting for a diverse society like Afghanistan. Therefore, I have been vocal in support of democracy, the former Western-backed government, and the republic.
3. In my published writing, speaking at events, relationships with international delegations in Afghanistan, policy perspectives, and other avenues, I supported the democratic institutions we had built. Since my earliest civic engagements through to my latest role at Government Security Office, I have been steadfast in my commitment to communicate to Afghans that the Taliban, as a violent group, has hijacked our identity in the world. They are not worthy of Afghanistan and its diverse people. Our society should not have a place for a group of fanatics like the Taliban.

**What Happened to Me**

**Pre-Collapse**

1. I am from northern Afghanistan, and I belong to the Tajik tribe. Both these characteristics culturally mean that I am anti-extremism and anti-Taliban. Throughout my life in Afghanistan, my family has contributed with their time and blood for the democratic state to work. My cousins joined the Afghanistan Armed Forces that the U.S. and NATO allies funded in the post 2001 state. They served with honor and fought the Taliban and other terrorists groups together with our allies. Two of my cousins, Cousin 1 and Cousin 2 were killed in Taliban raids in Year and Year, respectively. Cousin 2 was killed in Badakhshan province when his Humvee was blown up by a Taliban roadside bomb. Cousin 1 was killed when his check-post was attacked by the Taliban in the middle of the night. I appreciate and I can relate to the fact that so many American fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and cousins, who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan.
2. Given my family’s history and collective memory, I never stopped thinking or working for a better Afghanistan, even though I was threatened by the Taliban. In the early days, the Taliban threats were mostly in the form of phone calls on my cell phone. Later on, when I started to work for the government, we started to receive threats through official channels, usually through letters from our intelligence agencies that the Taliban were planning to harm me and some other colleagues. Some of my colleagues were targeted, wounded, and killed.

As a government employee, I continued to work and remain in City despite the worsening signs of security and an imminent Taliban takeover. I believed that it was possible to reverse this situation. I contributed however I could until the last minute.

**Collapse and Aftermath**

1. On August 15, 2021, the democratic state of Afghanistan collapsed. Taliban entered Kabul city, and I along with a few close friends and colleagues went into hiding in Kabul after trying to leave through commercial flights unsuccessfully. We immediately changed our phone numbers and moved cautiously in the city. I spent a week in hiding and during this time was not able to visit my family members who were in City. After several attempts, my colleagues and friends were able to enter the Airport and left for Country onboard a military cargo plane. I left City, my home, my country and walked away from my entire life, with my passport, wallet, phone, and the clothes that I was wearing. Mere days after I was able to leave the country, the Taliban showed up at my apartment in City, interrogated my family, damaged the apartment, all to locate me. They also stole my government-issued armored car.
2. In the aftermath of the collapse, the Taliban started to harass my family members. It was no longer safe for my parents, my brother and sister, all of whom are financially and emotionally dependent on me, to stay in Afghanistan. Thankfully, they were able to leave the country. However, that did not stop the Taliban from harassing extended family, including my married sisters, cousins, and uncles in my home province. They raided my parents house in the province – my childhood home – searched everywhere and broke locks, doors, and made a mess. They questioned my sisters. Taliban brutality against us did not stop there, one of their fighters, has usurped a piece of land that belongs to my family. Their justification for this is that my family and I worked with the government, and to promote the interest of the West in Afghanistan. The Taliban said that they consider former government employees to be facilitators of ‘Western occupation’ of Afghanistan, and therefore this group do not have rights.

**Why I Cannot Return to Afghanistan**

1. The Taliban thrives on violence and their group cohesion and unity is dependent on revenge. Particularly, revenge against those who think differently from them and those who have a different political opinion. According to their ideology, anyone who worked closely with the Americans, worked with the security sector of the democratic government of Afghanistan, and anyone with anti-Taliban civic and political activities, is subject to torture, harassment, and death. Since their take over in August 2021, they have systematically targeted previous security sector workers, intelligence officers, and armed forces. Gross videos of their torture and killings of these people are available and circulating by Taliban on social media.
2. Because of my American education and my extensive work in the United States and with the democratic Afghan government, and my public statements against the Taliban, I present a clear and present target for the Taliban. My family has been harassed on the basis of my work and studies, and the Taliban have made it clear they are looking for me. The democratic Afghan government believed the Taliban were targeting me even before Kabul fell; now the Taliban have only more power and freedom to punish anyone who has spoken against them.
3. Now that the Taliban has consolidated their power more and have access to previous government records, including biometric data systems and biodata of government employees, they can easily identify and track their victims if they are inside Afghanistan. As long as the Taliban are in power in Afghanistan, I cannot return to the country. If I return to my country, I am certain that the Taliban will find me and my life will be in immediate danger.

*Signature* Date: 04/26/2022