



## Afghan Journalist and Women's Rights Advocate Who Fled the Taliban Secures Asylum

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Prior to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, our client Faisal Karimi established himself as a leading journalist, media scholar, and advocate for freedom and women. In 2015, he founded the Afghan Institute for Research and Media Studies, which includes the Afghanistan Women's News Agency—a multimedia news agency staffed by female journalists. He was also a prominent critic of the Taliban and its treatment of women.

As a result of his advocacy for women and journalistic freedom, Faisal received multiple threats, his workplace (Radio Mardom) was bombed in 2014, and a colleague of his was physically attacked. So, when the Taliban captured his hometown of Herat on August 12, 2021, Faisal knew he had no choice other than to evacuate his family along with all of his female colleagues and their families.

With support from the National Endowment for Democracy, Faisal directed the evacuation of his family and his colleagues, their spouses, and their children. Ten days after the fall of Herat, they managed to escape from Afghanistan and the Taliban with nothing more than the clothes on their backs and a backpack filled with their individual belongings.

After spending time in a refugee camp in Abu Dhabi and a migrant camp in Albania, Faisal, his wife, and two children arrived in the United States. With the help of Winston attorneys, Faisal applied for asylum.

While his asylum application moved through the immigration system, he rebuilt his newsroom in exile, with a new team of mostly female journalists in Afghanistan who file their stories anonymously to avoid retribution from the Taliban. He was also awarded a John S. Knight Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University and is conducting research on journalism under the Taliban. He also serves as a visiting journalism scholar at San José State University.

Faisal and his family were recently granted asylum and are now free to live their lives without the constant threat of violence from the Taliban. The Los Angeles team that helped Faisal secure asylum included **Brandon Annette**, **Artem Bojadzian**, and **Amanda Groves**.

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