
OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



September 2013

Mr. Pedro Morenés
Minister of Defense
Paseo de la Castellana, 109
28071 Madrid
Spain

Protective Asylum for Endangered Afghan Host-Nation Linguists

Dear Minister Morenés,

On behalf of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), the International Federation of Translators (FIT), the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), and Red T, a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of translators and interpreters in high-risk settings, we urge you to grant asylum to local Afghan linguists who served the Spanish Armed Forces.

The undersigned, representing over 80,000 translators and interpreters worldwide, are concerned about the fate of our Afghan colleagues after Spanish troops withdraw from the Badghis region at the end of September. Your ministry confirmed the existence of a plan to ensure their safety after *El Mundo* published articles about them and *Unión de Progreso y Democracia* raised questions in Parliament. Few details have been released, however, and the interpreters complained that they were never informed. General dissatisfaction with the Spanish government's handling of this issue is palpable, and a petition on change.org calling on Spain not to abandon her interpreters has gathered over 60,000 signatures to date.

Minister Morenés, this is a matter of life and death. For the past seven years, local Afghan interpreters have provided crucial linguistic and cultural services that enabled your military to engage with local populations. Due to this collaboration, these interpreters are now considered traitors and have become high-priority targets of insurgent groups. Just this year, the lives of

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at least two interpreters contracted by your government were seriously endangered by the Taliban. In one case, the interpreter's home was set on fire after he did not comply with an extortion letter. In another case, an interpreter's mother was seriously injured when his home was bombed with 12 kilograms of explosives. Other interpreters have reported receiving death threats.

We understand that 24 of the approximately 40 interpreters who served the Spanish military are appealing for political asylum in your country. The international community of language professionals hopes that all 24 applications will be processed quickly and favorably. Given the steadily deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, providing these interpreters and their families a safe haven in Spain is the only way to ensure their survival.

Sincerely,

Linda Fitchett
President, AIIC

Marion Boers
President, FIT

Aurora Humarán
President, IAPTI

Maya Hess
President, Red T