
OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



July 2014

Hon. Bronisław Komorowski
President of the Republic of Poland
Pałac Prezydencki
ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 48/50
00-071 Warszawa
Poland

Protective Asylum for Endangered Afghan Host-Nation Linguists

Dear Mr. President,

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 all Afghan host-nation linguists who served the Polish Armed Forces.

The undersigned, representing over 80,000 translators and interpreters worldwide, are concerned about the fate of our Afghan colleagues following the withdrawal of your troops. According to one of our sources, who was in communication with Polish military-affiliated interpreters on the ground, they have not been receiving adequate assistance and do not know what to expect once their assignments end. When Red T's Aleksander Szojda followed up on this with your Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its spokesperson, Mr. Marcin Wojciechowski, responded that no decisions have been made in terms of dealing with "their safety, as well as the actions necessary to provide it."

The Polish Armed Forces have been in Afghanistan since 2002 and have availed themselves of the critical services – both linguistic and cultural – provided by local interpreters. Over the past two years, based on information obtained from the Office for Foreigners, a total of three

OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



Page 2

visas have been approved for Afghan citizens who had worked as ISAF interpreters, with two similar cases still being processed. However, according to *Dowództwo Operacyjne Sił Zbrojnych*, since 2005 approximately 45 linguists have served the Polish troops, and because of this collaboration, all of them are now considered traitors and have become high-priority targets of insurgent groups. Also, as you may know, five of the interpreters working for the Polish military were injured while in its employ.

As representatives of the international community of language professionals, we respectfully ask that your government expedite the processing of all linguist asylum applications. In view of the volatile security situation in Afghanistan, offering these interpreters and their families a safe haven in Poland 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

Cc:
Mr. Donald Tusk
Prime Minister

Mr. Radosław Sikorski
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz
Minister of the Interior

Mr. Rafał Rogala
Head of Office for Foreigners