
OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



April 2013

The Honorable Fredrik Reinfeldt
Prime Minister
The Prime Minister's Office
Rosenbad 4
SE-103 33 Stockholm
Sweden

Protective Asylum for Endangered Afghan Host Nation Linguists

Dear Prime Minister,

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 U.S.-based non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of translators and interpreters in high-risk settings, we urge you to take up the issue of Sweden's asylum policy with respect to Afghan host nation linguists in the current parliamentary session.

The undersigned, representing over 80,000 translators and interpreters worldwide, are deeply concerned about the fate of our colleagues who assisted the Swedish Armed Forces in Afghanistan. These individuals risked their lives to provide crucial linguistic and cultural services that enabled Swedish troops to engage with local populations. In fact, Commander-in-Chief Sverker Göranson emphasized to *Dagens Nyheter* that they are an extremely critical part of operations and that Sweden must take care of them if she hopes to recruit host nation linguists in the future. As you know, interpreters are repeatedly labeled traitors for having worked with foreign forces; the Taliban's brutal campaign of retaliation against them has been widely documented in the Swedish and international media.

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We understand that Swedish immigration law mandates that asylum seekers be on Swedish soil when they apply for asylum; however, other nations with similar legislation have created avenues that comply with prevailing law while also allowing them to meet their humanitarian obligations to linguists under threat. Indeed, some of Sweden's political parties, including your own, have put forward proposals that recognize and seek to remedy the current dilemma.

As language professionals, we sincerely hope that you and the members of Parliament will find a solution that welcomes allied interpreters to Sweden.

Sincerely,

Linda Fitchett
President, AIIC

Marion Boers
President, FIT

Aurora Humarán
President, IAPTI

Maya Hess
President, Red T

Cc:

The Hon. Beatrice Ask
Minister for Justice

The Hon. Karin Enström
Minister for Defence

The Hon. Tobias Billström
Minister for Migration and Asylum Policy