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# OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS  
AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



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October 2015

H.E. Alexis Tsipras  
Prime Minister  
Megaro Maximou  
Irodou Attikou 19  
106 74 Athens  
Greece

## Protective Asylum for Afghan Interpreters

Dear Prime Minister Tsipras,

The Hellenic Army's Operational and Mentor Liaison Team (OMLT – later renamed the Military Advisory Team) employed five local Afghan interpreters during its mission, which lasted from 2010 until the summer of 2012. On January 21, 2015, an article in the Greek daily, *Kathimerini English Edition*, reported that your government had started the process of issuing visas to these five interpreters and their families; however, it now appears that the process has decelerated drastically or has even come to a standstill.

We trust you are aware that the security situation in Afghanistan is extremely volatile. In the aftermath of the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force, interpreters are high-priority targets of insurgent groups, who consider them traitors. Many interpreters, and members of their families, have been kidnapped and murdered in punishment for their collaboration with foreign troops.

In their effort to obtain visas from Greece, the five interpreters explored many avenues to no avail. They contacted their former Chief of Mission, who suggested that they approach the Greek embassy in Pakistan to press their cases – not an easy task for someone living in Afghanistan. Moreover, their repeated attempts to obtain appointments were unsuccessful.

While the undersigned recognize that your country is dealing with unprecedented challenges, these interpreters provided critical linguistic and cultural services without which the OMLT could not have operated in Afghanistan. We therefore believe that it is the duty of the Greek government to come to their aid.

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On behalf of the international language community, Red T, a non-profit organization for the protection of linguists in high-risk settings, and the five major international language associations – the International Association of Conference Interpreters (and especially its Greece and Cyprus Region), the International Federation of Translators, the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters, Critical Link International, and the International Association of Sign Language Interpreters – urge you to honor the visa commitment your government gave at the beginning of the year and grant asylum to these interpreters without further delay.

Sincerely,

Maya Hess  
President, Red T

Linda Fitchett  
Chair, AIIC Conflict Zone Interpreters

Henry Liu  
President, FIT

Aurora Humarán  
President, IAPTI

Angela Sasso  
President, CLI

Debra Russell  
President, WASLI

Jennifer Fearnside-Bitsios  
Secretary, AIIC Greece and Cyprus

Cc:

H.E. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Republic  
Mr. Ioannis Dragasakis, Deputy Prime Minister  
Mr. Nikos Kotsias, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Mr. Yiannis Mouzalas, Minister for Immigration Policy  
Mr. Nikos Xydakis, Deputy Minister for European Affairs