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POLICY BRIEF

ZINDAGI: LIVES OF THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY IN THE BAY AREA

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AFGHANISTAN & ITS PEOPLE

Located in the middle of Central Asia, bordered primarily by Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan is currently home to over 34 million people (1). While a full national census has not been conducted since 1979, based on estimates, the largest tribal groups in Afghanistan are the Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara peoples. The official languages and most commonly spoken languages in Afghanistan are Dari and Pashto. Dari (also known as Afghan Persian or Afghan Farsi) is spoken by 77% of Afghans. Since Dari is a multi-ethnic language, some Afghans speak both Pashto and Dari. Pashto speakers make up 48% of the population (2). Among Afghan people, dialects and accents can vary based on region and ethnicity (1).

Ethnolinguistic composition (2004)

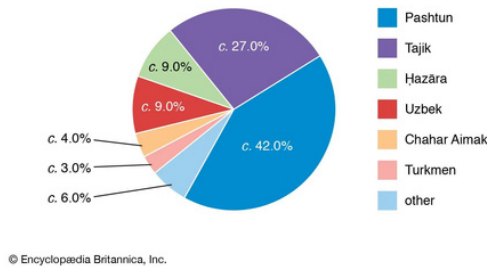


Figure 1: Ethnolinguistic Composition (1)

While overtime, tribal groups have merged through marriage and internal migration (e.g. migration for economic advancement and opportunity in other cities/provinces), the nation's topography has relatively maintained Afghanistan's tribal societal structure. Tribes remain relatively separated in different areas of Afghanistan - with Pashtun tribes settling on the Pakistan border and Tajik groups settling along the Iran and Tajikistan borders (3). This separation of tribes is likely indicative of longstanding tribal history of living in those areas, before the creation of state borders. For example, the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan - also known as The Durand Line - is a border established by the British after they conquered Pashtun tribes. The Durand Line mostly utilizes rivers and physical features, and not the existing ethnic boundaries. As a result, the Pashtun people live in both Afghanistan and Pakistan (4).



Figure 2: Ethnolinguistic Groups of Afghanistan (5)

1. Afghanistan - Languages | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Languages>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2022.

2. "Afghanistan." The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2 Mar. 2023. CIA.gov, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/afghanistan/>. 'Afghanistan - Languages | Britannica'.

3. Afghanistan - Languages | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Languages>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2022.; "Afghanistan - World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples." *Minority Rights Group*, 19 June 2015, <https://minorityrights.org/country/afghanistan/>; *Afghanistan and Pakistan Ethnic Groups | National Geographic Society*. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/afghanistan-and-pakistan-ethnic-groups>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2022.

4. The Durand Line. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/durand-line>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2023.

5. Afghanistan and Pakistan Ethnic Groups | National Geographic Society. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/afghanistan-and-pakistan-ethnic-groups>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2022.



MIGRATION FROM AFGHANISTAN

Variations in ethnic groups are also reflective of the division based on religious affiliation. The majority of Afghans are Muslim, with about 80% belonging to the Sunni group and 19% among the Shia group (6). For example, Hazara Afghans are a predominantly Shia Muslim ethnic group, and subsequently have faced discrimination for being a minority group (7).

The remaining 1% of Afghans practice Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism. Though most of these Afghan religious minority groups have since sought refuge in neighboring countries, likely due to religious persecution (8). For example, it is believed that in the late 19th century there were over 40,000 Jews in Afghanistan. However, the Jewish population in Afghanistan declined as they migrated to Israel in the 20th century (9).

For the Afghan Sikh community, it was estimated that their population was about 100,000 Sikhs in the late 1970's. Decades of conflict and persecution (even prior to Taliban rule) displaced this community. Afghan Sikhs are settling in the United States with the support of Sikh activist groups and settling in India with the support of India's repatriation efforts and visas (10).

Afghanistan is a country rich in history and culture, with an unfortunate socio-political history. Over the last 50 years, Afghanistan has bore witness to war inflicted by external/Western empires, internal conflict/violence, and political turmoil – forcibly displacing its people all over the world. Consequently, making Afghans one of the largest refugee groups in the world (11).

While the majority of Afghan migration is a result of war and/or conflict, Afghans have an identity beyond just the tragedy. This paper characterizes Afghan people for their resilience and culture - Afghans have resettled globally and have continued their lives - beyond the tragedies they have endured.

Some of the first instances of major migration out of Afghanistan began in 1978, namely, the beginning of the Afghan War. The Afghan War was a civil war between anti-communist Islamic guerrillas and the Afghan communist government (12). In April 1978, a wave of Afghans began to leave Afghanistan following the new communist regime (13).

6. Afghanistan - Languages | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan/Languages>. Accessed 23 Mar. 2022.

7. "Afghanistan: ISIS Group Targets Religious Minorities." Human Rights Watch, 6 Sept. 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/06/afghanistan-isis-group-targets-religious-minorities>.

8. "The Jews of Afghanistan." Museum of the Jewish People, <https://www.anumuseum.org.il/jews-afghanistan/>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2022.; Pasricha, Anjana. "Afghanistan's Dwindling Sikh Community Escapes to India." VOA, <https://www.voanews.com/a/afghanistan-s-dwindling-sikh-community-escapes-to-india-/6784763.html>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2022.

9. Press, Associated. "Last Member of Afghanistan's Jewish Community Leaves Country." The Guardian, 8 Sept. 2021. The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/08/afghanistans-last-jew-leaves-country>.

10. "Attacked at Home, Afghan Sikhs Find Community on Long Island." AP NEWS, 29 Aug. 2022,

<https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-islamic-state-group-kabul-taliban-f4fcea832e983f282d5f411059ca4a35>; Afghanistan's Last Sikhs in a Dilemma: To Stay or Leave. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/20/stay-or-go-dilemma-facing-last-afghanistan-sikhs>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2023.

11. "UNHCR - Refugee Statistics." UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2022.

12. Afghan War | History, Casualties, Dates, & Facts | Britannica. 6 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghan-War>.

13. Ufheil-Somers, Amanda. "Afghanistan's Refugee Crisis." MERIP, 24 Sept. 2001, <https://merip.org/2001/09/afghanistans-refugee-crisis/>.



In their first order of command, communist leaders began taking the communist revolution to Islamic tribal areas beyond Kabul (the capital of Afghanistan). This was met by armed opposition in the country (14).

Additionally, the deployment of agricultural and land reforms significantly affected tribal, rural communities. It is believed that the reforms increased social inequality and debt among the farming class (15). While it is unclear what the exact percentage of the rural population in Afghanistan left in 1978, based on roughly calculated statistical data, we know 117,186 Afghans across Afghanistan left that year (16).

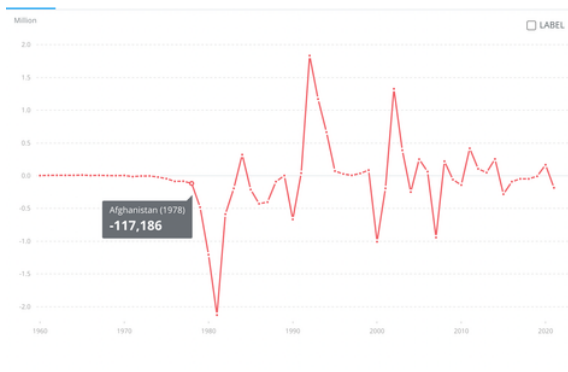


Figure 3. Afghanistan's Net Migration in 1978: 117,186 (16)

As the communist regime's power was threatened, communist leaders traveled to Moscow in the winter of 1978 to sign the Soviet-Afghan Friendship Treaty of 1978 (17). The treaty included a provision that allowed direct military assistance from the Soviet Union in the event that the Islamic insurgency (later known as the Mujahideen) threatened communist power. Throughout 1979, communist power wavered due to instability within leadership. By mid-1979, the Soviet Union sought to replace the leadership in Afghanistan's communist regime and supplied troops to an Air Base outside of Kabul.

As a result, the Carter administration supplied aid to the Mujahideen. Ultimately, by late 1979, it was unclear whether the Afghan Army (supporting the communist regime) would be able to withstand the Mujahideen (14). On Christmas Eve of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded and remained in Afghanistan until mid-1989. Soviet tactics involved bombing and depopulating rural areas to eliminate Mujahideen support, creating casualties and sparking major migration (18).

As a result of the war, it is estimated that 1 million Afghans died, 2 million were internally displaced, and more than 5 million Afghans who sought refuge in Iran and Afghanistan (19).

14. Milestones: 1977–1980 - Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

15. Afghan Peasant.Pdf. <https://dgibbs.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Afghan%20Peasant.pdf>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

16. "World Bank Open Data." World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

17. "Soviet Union Invades Afghanistan." History.Com, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/soviet-tanks-roll-into-afghanistan>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

18. Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan | Summary & Facts | Britannica. 7 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Soviet-invasion-of-Afghanistan>.

19. Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan | Summary & Facts | Britannica. 7 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Soviet-invasion-of-Afghanistan>; Miller, Laurie C., et al. "Afghan Refugee Children and Mothers." Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, vol. 148, no. 7, July 1994, pp. 704–08. Silverchair, <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.1994.02170070042007>; Crews, Dr Robert D. "America's Afghan Refugee Crisis." Foreign Policy, 4 Feb. 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/04/americas-afghan-refugee-crisis/>; "Afghanistan's Refugees: Forty Years of Dispossession." Amnesty International, 20 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/afghanistan-refugees-forty-years/>.



Due to the context of war, ongoing migration reporting measures were inconsistent. However, if we turn to refugee statistics, we see that by 1990, over 6 million registered refugees originated from Afghanistan.



Figure 4. Refugees from Afghanistan in 1990: 6,339,095 (20)

Following the Soviet Invasion, the Mujahideen established a transitional government in Afghanistan. They were a politically fragmented group, initially agreeing to share power among the different groups in the Mujahideen, which ultimately led to internal conflicts (21).

A new group, known as the Taliban began taking control of the country, and by 1996 they occupied Kabul and controlled $\frac{2}{3}$ of the country (22).

By 2001, the Taliban controlled most of Afghanistan, despite being met with great opposition. Following the attacks of 9/11, the Taliban provided refuge to Osama Bin-Laden. As a result, the Bush administration provided support to anti-Taliban efforts and invaded Afghanistan (23). These early years of the Afghanistan war mark yet another uptick in migration. By 2002, nearly 900,000 Afghans were forcibly displaced (500,000 were considered internally displaced). Nearly 300,000 Afghans had settled in Pakistan and 80,000 in Iran (24). By the end of 2001, there were about 3,800,00 registered refugees from Afghanistan.



Figure 5. Refugees from Afghanistan in 2001: 3,809,763 (20)

20. "World Bank Open Data." World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

21. Mujahideen | Afghanistan, History, Meaning, Significance, & Facts | Britannica. 6 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>; Afghanistan War | History, Combatants, Facts, & Timeline | Britannica. 6 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghanistan-War>;

22. Mujahideen | Afghanistan, History, Meaning, Significance, & Facts | Britannica. 6 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>.

23. Taliban | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica. 24 Apr. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taliban>.

24. "UNHCR's Plan of Action for Afghanistan." UNHCR US, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/news/unhcrs-plan-action-afghanistan>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.; "2001 Global Refugee Statistics." UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news/2001-global-refugee-statistics>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

ARRIVAL OF AFGHANS IN THE UNITED STATES

A key event that has recently impacted Afghan migration is the withdrawal of United States troops in 2021, causing the Taliban to gain control of Afghanistan yet again. The subsequent rise of the Taliban came with several consequences - a ban on women from working, attending school beyond the 6th grade, and a significant loss in jobs and exponential rise in malnutrition. With their rise to power, it was unclear the severity of consequences Afghans would suffer, but now two years later, the effects are alarming (25). Since 2021, there are about 6 million Afghans that have been forcibly displaced, 3.5 million Afghans are internally displaced within Afghanistan, and 2.7 million Afghans are hosted as refugees (26).

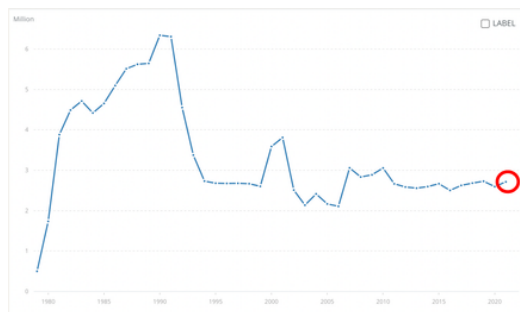


Figure 6. Refugees from Afghanistan in 2021: 2,712,858 (27)

Within the United States, there is a robust Afghan population. It is currently estimated that there are over 130,000 Afghans across the nation (28). Within the U.S. Census Data and other bodies of demographic data collections, there are no racial and ethnic categories that encapsulates the Afghan ethnicity. Consequently, there is no statistically accurate number defining the Afghan population in the United States. Our data from the U.S. Census relies on those that self-report their ancestry as Afghan. As a result, estimates from the census of the Afghan population have significant data gaps. However, based on estimates we know that California, New York, and Virginia are states with the largest populations of Afghans migrants, with California being the highest, home to 44% of the Afghan population (29).

25. "What Is the Taliban?" Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>. Accessed 1 June 2023.; Afghanistan School Year Starts without Millions of Teenage Girls | Education News | Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/23/afghanistan-school-year-starts-without-teenage-girls>. Accessed 1 June 2023.

26. Refugees, United Nations High Commissioner for. "Afghanistan Emergency." UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/afghanistan-emergency.html>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2022.; Displacement, Humanitarian Needs Surging inside Afghanistan and across Region || UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1111532>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2022.; Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>. Accessed 14 May 2023.

27. "World Bank Open Data." World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org>. Accessed 24 Apr. 2023.

28. McHugh, Patrick. "Immigrants from Afghanistan." CIS.Org, 14 Sept. 2021, <https://cis.org/Report/Immigrants-Afghanistan>.

29. Stempel, Carl, and Qais Alemi. "Challenges to the Economic Integration of Afghan Refugees in the U.S." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 47, no. 21, Dec. 2021, pp. 4872–92. Taylor and Francis+NEJM, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1724420>.

In 2021, it was reported California had 56,378 Afghans according to the census (30). Again, this number may not be representative of all Afghans in the state due to census data collection practices. Aside from the census, migration data has been critical in formulating an understanding of what the Afghan population looks like. California has historically welcomed immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Special Immigrant Visa holders.

In California, refugees are considered people who have been granted refugee status before coming to the United States because they are escaping a defined threat or conflict (31). Since 2002, California has welcomed over 3000 refugees from Afghanistan (32). Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders are people from Afghanistan and Iraq who worked with the U.S. Armed Forces (33). In terms of SIV holders, California has welcomed over 31,551 Afghans since 2012. 2012 is the earliest publicly available data; the program was started in 2009 (34).

There are a few other groups of arrivals. As of 2021, there are Afghans who fled Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover - estimates from U.S. officials say about 76,000 Afghans fled. At this time, it is not exact what the numbers of those newly arrived Afghans in California. These newly arrived Afghans may have applied for Temporary Protected Status through the humanitarian parole program, applied for asylum when they arrived to the U.S., or applied for a fast tracked visa (35).

Asylum-seekers are those who arrive in a country and then request for sanctuary (36). Humanitarian parole is a newer program created as a result of the drawbacks in 2021. Of these groups, their numbers in general, let alone their numbers in California, have not been specifically identified.

As a result, the data on Afghans arrival to the United States have not all been labeled as immigrants. There are other migrants and forcibly displaced groups that may not be perfectly accounted for in immigrant arrival data, since there are so many paths to enter the United States for Afghans (such as the SIV, humanitarian parole, asylum-seekers, etc.).

However, after examining the U.S. Census closely, roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of California's Afghan population are living in the San Francisco/Bay Area counties (the majority of which are in Alameda county). In 2021, Alameda County alone collected a number of 10,214 Afghans that self-reported their ancestry (37).

30. Jung, Yoohyun. "California's Afghan Population Is Already the Largest in the U.S. The Community Is Preparing to Welcome Many More." San Francisco Chronicle, 27 Aug. 2021, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/California-is-home-to-the-U-S-s-largest-16415531.php>.

31. UNHCR - What Is a Refugee? <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/what-is-a-refugee.html>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

32. Refugee Arrivals | CIDP. <https://immigrantdata.ca.org/indicators/refugee-arrivals#/?breakdown=trend&racethd=0032>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

33. Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi and Afghan Translators/Interpreters. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/siv-iraqi-afghan-translators-interpreters.html>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022

34. "Refugee Processing Center." Refugee Processing Center, <http://www.wrapsnet.org>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2023.

35. Kessler, Glenn. "Analysis | Numbers behind Afghanistan Evacuation Come into Focus." Washington Post, 25 May 2022. [www.washingtonpost.com, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/25/numbers-behind-afghan-evacuation-come-into-focus/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/05/25/numbers-behind-afghan-evacuation-come-into-focus/).

36. "Asylum-Seekers." UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers.html>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

37. B04006: PEOPLE REPORTING ANCESTRY - Census Bureau Table. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=alameda%20%2B%20ancestry&tid=ACSDT5Y2020.B04006>. Accessed 18 Oct. 2022.



Alameda County's large Afghan population has allowed it to become a cultural hub for the Bay Area Afghans. For example, the City of Fremont has been dubbed a "Little Kabul" named after the capital of Afghanistan (38). Fremont is home to many Afghan grocery stores, like the Maiwand Market (which first opened in 1996). Afghans across the Bay Area make the trip to Fremont for their necessities like fresh baked bread and halal meats. There are also thriving restaurants, clothing stores, and banquet halls in Fremont. Cities like Fremont are indicative of the Afghan community's flourishing presence in the United States. While it is unclear why Fremont or the East Bay in general has become a hub for Afghans, some believe it is due to the mild weather and the allure of a calm suburb (39).



Image 1. Maiwand Market in Fremont, California (40)

AFGHAN CULTURE & THE BAY AREA

Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage has been influenced by many factors such as Islamic traditions and historical ties to the region of Persia.

Afghans celebrate Nowruz, which is celebrated on the first day of Spring of the Solar Hijri calendar, and typically falls on the 20th or 21st of March on the Gregorian calendar. In the United States, Nowruz can be found as festivals and gatherings where Afghans picnic outdoors all day to celebrate the arrival of Spring. Religious holidays like Eid-al fitr, where many groups congregate for the Eid prayer, can be found all over the Bay Area. For example, multiple mosques coordinate a group prayer in Fremont, California, bringing Afghan Muslims together from all over the Bay Area.

In the realm of art, poetry has a longstanding history. Rumi, one of the most notable Sufi poets hails from Balkh, Afghanistan (41). Sufism is an Islamic belief that emphasizes inner reflection and contemplation (42). There are many other notable poets from Afghanistan, such as Ferdowsi, Khushal Khan Khattak, and Ahmad Shah Durrani to name a few.

38. Curiel, Jonathan. "Little Kabul." The New York Times, 4 June 2011. NYTimes.com, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/us/05intel.html>.

39. "The Afghans of Fremont." City Journal, <https://www.city-journal.org/article/the-afghans-of-fremont/>. Accessed 13 June 2023.

40. Fuller, Thomas, et al. "We Haven't Slept, We Haven't Eaten": U.S. Afghans Watch the Chaos With Horror." The New York Times, 17 Aug. 2021. NYTimes.com, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/17/us/afghanistan-usa.html>.

41. Rumi | Biography, Poems, & Facts | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rumi>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2022.

42. Qazizai, Fazelminalah. "Afghanistan's Sufis Are Under Attack." New Lines Magazine, 1 June 2022, <https://newlinesmag.com/newsletter/afghanistans-sufis-are-under-attack/>.



Among some Afghans, it is a cultural tradition to memorize and orally recite poems written by others, or one's original works (43). There are even games called shir jangi, known as "poetry fighting" where the practice of oral recitation of poems is made into a competition style game.

In the United States, mosques and other cultural institutions have provided spaces for Afghans to gather and have allowed the art of oral recitation to thrive. There are multiple mosques in the Bay Area with Dari-speaking programs led by Afghans (44). Many mosques lead lectures with scholars in the community in their weekly jummah (Friday) prayer's khutbahs (lectures).

Furthermore, these institutions in the Bay Area have allowed Afghan Muslims to continue their Islamic traditions. Mosques can support Afghan Muslims with their wedding processions. Afghans who choose to do a nikah (an Islamic wedding contract) can do these services with their mosque (45). Following the nikah, many Afghans choose to have their engagement parties and wedding receptions at a number of the Afghan banquet halls and restaurants in the Bay Area.

Additionally, mosques can support Afghans with funeral services and can facilitate selling plots at graveyards. The Islamic funeral service essentially involves a process of washing the body, wrapping the body in a white cloth known as a kafan, and then a burial. With mosques, you can get connected to community members, graveyards, and mortuaries who offer services for burials following Islamic guidelines (46). This is critical for the Afghan community to maintain their religious and cultural practices as they live in the United States.

In the Bay Area, colleges (like the University of California, Berkeley) offer coursework on literature and the history of Afghanistan (47). At Cal State University East Bay, Dr. Farid Younos, a notable Afghan scholar and TV show host, formerly taught classes on Islam and sociology (48). Across these educational institutions, Afghan Student Associations (ASA) provide a space for students of the Afghan Diaspora to connect. Through cultural events and activism, these spaces become a haven for students to honor their identities in the academic world. Many ASA's host yearly banquets with live music and a traditional attan dance by the students, which some of these videos are shared on YouTube and receive praise globally (49).

All in all, Afghans in the Bay Area have founded businesses and organizations to support maintaining their cultural traditions and practices.

43. "FEATURE: In Western Afghanistan, an Ancient Love of Poetry Thrives Again." *UN News*, 5 Oct. 2017, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/10/567862>.

44. Munir. "Afghan Community Support." *MCC East Bay*, <https://mccceastbay.org/afghanistan/>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

45. "Nikah Marriage Services." *MCC East Bay*, <https://mccceastbay.org/nikah-services/>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

46. *SABA Islamic Center*. <https://saba-igc.org/general/funeral-services>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

47. Wali Ahmadi | Research UC Berkeley. <https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/faculty/wali-ahmadi>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

48. "Videos of Dr. Farid Younos." Dr. Farid Younos, <https://www.drfaridyounos.com/videos.html>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

49. ATTAN || UC Berkeley Afghan Student Association || Banquet 2019. Directed by Afghan Student Association At UC Berkeley, 2019. YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5iUgXETvcA>.



AFGHANS: AN IDENTITY BEYOND CONFLICT

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that Afghans have an identity beyond war, turmoil, and conflict. We are resilient people who have established lives in foreign countries. We have found ways to keep our culture and art alive. We have found ways to survive and support our families.

I urge all people to educate themselves on the history of Afghan migration to gain insight into their displacement. Furthermore, I encourage everyone to stay current on the congressional measures relevant to Afghans. There are evolving regulations for Afghans who came via the Humanitarian Parole pathway in 2021. I encourage you to follow the news or Afghan activist groups to get a sense of how you can support.

Lastly, I encourage everyone to find their local resettlement organization or Afghan led non-profit. These organizations are critical to supporting Afghans when they newly arrive. Find ways you can support - either by volunteering your time or providing donations.

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Nilufar Kayhani graduated with her bachelors in public health from UC Berkeley in May 2022. She is the child of Afghan refugees and is committed to resolving health inequities among forcibly displaced communities. Motivated to address the health needs she witnessed growing up, Nilufar decided to pursue a career in public health. Nilufar is passionate about health equity and ensuring forcibly displaced communities have access to the resources they need.