

ABA ILS Afghan Legal Professionals Scholarship & Mentoring Pilot Program

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Introduction

Chair: **ABA ILS Afghan Legal Professionals Resettlement Task Force**

Developed **ABA ILS Afghan Legal Professionals Scholarship & Mentoring Pilot Program**

Pilot Program approved by ABA Board of Governors

Task Force working for some time, but still relatively early in **Pilot Program** development

Background of Pilot Program

Since Taliban takeover, Afghan judges, prosecutors, and lawyers endangered, forced to flee.

Women judges at particular risk, some assassinated

Many Afghan lawyers in danger because collaborated with U.S. government or military or worked with international or U.S. NGOs

Purpose of Pilot Program

Aid Afghan legal professionals, especially women, seeking to rebuild legal careers

Seek to help qualify as lawyers or in law-related employment in U.S. at manageable cost

Access Legal Ed thru LLM (one-year program rather than three-year JD)

- Afghanistan: Civil/sharia law system, undergraduate law degree
 - LLM to qualify to sit for U.S. bar exam in a few states (e.g., NY, CA)
 - If pass bar exam, opportunities to serve
 - As lawyers, or
 - In other law-related employment in U.S. legal system
- [Difficult for foreign LLM graduates to find first jobs as lawyers]

Pilot Program approved for one year

First year: Small number Afghan judges/lawyers (10 or less, not > 20), especially women

Concentrate on

- Afghan women judges in U.S. (contact with > 20)
- Other Afghan legal professionals already in U.S. (slow pace U.S. immigration)
- Afghans with LLM degrees already in U.S. – many studied specialized areas and went back after completed LLM so didn't take some or all of required courses needed to sit for NY bar and in some other states

Proof of concept

- Broad Scholarship/Mentoring Program
- Many more Afghan legal professionals
- Potential for similar programs for other refugee groups

What some law schools already doing and other law schools can do to help

Task Force preliminary conversations with a number of law schools

Seven law schools have committed full-tuition scholarships to Afghan legal professionals deem qualified for LLM program Fall 2023 semester

- Fordham University School of Law (NY, NY)
- The George Washington University School of Law (DC)
- Loyola Law School, Los Angeles (CA)
- Mitchell Hamline School of Law (St. Paul, MN)
- St. Louis University School of Law (MO)
- St. John's University School of Law (Queens, NY)
- University of Connecticut School of Law (Hartford, CT)

Total of 11-13 full-tuition scholarships

Initial conversations: Potential for many more at other law schools

Financial Assistance

ABA BOG approval contingent on third-party funding

Currently in early stages of trying to raise funds for Pilot Program

Law Schools: Assistance would be greatly appreciated

- Full-tuition scholarships: Commitment to one or more
- Welcome any support law schools could provide for housing, living expenses and books
- Grateful if limited to full-tuition scholarship

Other Sources

Task Force to raise money where law schools providing full-tuition scholarship(s) but not able to provide housing or other expenses

Funds raised go to ABA Fund for Justice and Education (FJE)

501(c)(3) so contributions tax deductible

Fundraising Support Is Integral

Tax-deductible donations can be made at ambar.org/donateITL

Individuals: Have contributed \$33,000 to date toward \$100,000 target

Law Firms

- Some 60 law firms considering contribution and/or employment
- Two law firms – Fox Rothschild and Fragomen Del Rey -- have already pledged generous support

Corporations and Foundations

- Identifying synergistic prospects for cultivation and solicitation

High level donor recognition benefits are available, go to:

[http://www.wlrk.com/docs/ABA Afghan Legal Professionals Pilot Program Recognition Levels.pdf](http://www.wlrk.com/docs/ABA_Afghan_Legal_Professionals_Pilot_Program_Recognition_Levels.pdf)

Please contact me with fundraising suggestions: mhbyowitz@wlrk.com

Mentorship

Pilot Program to include two-part mentoring program (being developed)

Scholarship and Mentoring (SAM)

- For students ready for LLM program: Stipend for housing and living expenses, if needed, funded through contributions to Pilot Program
- Help Afghan legal professionals apply for admission to LLM programs, answer questions during LLM programs (work in conjunction with law school advisors), address issues during bar review preparation
- Seeking agreement for free bar review free courses for Pilot Program participants

Preparatory Assistance Mentoring (PAM)

- Mentoring individuals not ready to prepare to pursue LLM; help to pursue other law-related programs and in employment searches
- Enrollees not eligible for financial assistance unless/until join SAM

Training and Candidate Solicitation

English proficiency assistance and testing

- English Now!
 - Small (not > four students), remote classes for 30 Afghan women judges in U.S.
 - Test all candidates for LLM programs
- Discussion with other English proficiency training providers
- Suggestions appreciated

Candidates

- Not yet soliciting candidates; waiting to have funding in place
- Some Afghan woman judges and a few lawyers, both men and women, have approached (some might be candidates)
- When solicit, focus on individuals already in US (slow pace immigration system)

Upcoming Efforts

Fundraising: Raised enough for one student, need much more

Identify candidates & help gain admission to LLM programs Fall 2023

Help candidates not ready for LLM programs find jobs & study English

Seek volunteers for Task Force and to serve as Mentors (not mutually exclusive)

Candidates – initial focus on those in U.S.

- Afghan women judges
- Other Afghan legal professionals
- Afghan legal professionals with U.S. LLM – help to secure 12 additional credit hours to qualify for NY bar exam

Assistance Task Force Seeks From Law Schools

Financial Aid

- Full-tuition scholarship(s)
- (Perhaps) stipend for housing, living expenses, books
- Suggestions for potential funding sources appreciated

Volunteers

- Refer participants to entities that provide *pro bono* immigration legal services (such legal services outside Pilot Program scope);
- Serve as mentors to help Afghan legal professionals
 - Apply to LLM programs and guide participants throughout programs,
 - Answer questions regarding bar exam,
 - Help with search for employment within U.S. legal system; and
- Raise funds for housing/living expenses for Pilot Program participants