

IMMIGRATION

R.I. refugee advocates decry National Guard shooting and Trump immigration crackdown

“We do not agree with Trump taking these drastic and erratic actions because of a single incident that does not represent the refugee and immigrant community,” said Omar Bah

By [Edward Fitzpatrick](#) Globe Staff, Updated December 3, 2025, 5:55 a.m.



Teddi Jallow, executive director of the Refugee Dream Center, chats with women at a meeting at the center in Providence, R.I. JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

PROVIDENCE — Refugee advocates in Rhode Island are condemning both the [shooting of two National Guard members](#) by an Afghan national and the “drastic and erratic” immigration changes that [the Trump administration is pursuing](#) in response.

The [Refugee Dream Center](#), a nonprofit that helps support immigrants, will hold a news conference at 10 a.m. Wednesday to declare its support for the victims of the shooting, as well as the more than 500 [Afghans who have settled in Rhode Island](#) since the United States withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021.

“As a refugee organization, we condemn violence in any form or manner,” said Omar Bah, founder of the Refugee Dream Center. “But we do not agree with Trump taking these drastic and erratic actions because of a single incident that does not represent the refugee and immigrant community.”

[Rahmanullah Lakanwal](#), 29, is charged with first-degree murder in the Washington, D.C., shooting of National Guard Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, 20, who was killed, and Staff Sergeant Andrew Wolfe, 24, who was critically wounded. Lakanwal had worked with the CIA during the Afghanistan War. He applied for asylum during the Biden administration and was granted it this year under the Trump administration.

Since the Nov. 26 shooting, the Trump administration [has announced new restrictions](#) targeting tens of thousands of Afghans resettled in the US and those seeking to come, many of whom served alongside American soldiers. It also has paused all asylum decisions for migrants now in the US and is reviewing green cards that let people from 19 countries live and work in the US.

Bah said the Trump administration should not base such sweeping changes in policy on the actions of one person. He said he suspects the administration is using the incident as an excuse to crack down on immigrants, including those who have already settled here.

“This is not the America that was built by the Founding Fathers,” Bah said. “This is not true to the ideals of the United States as a country of immigrants. I think it’s an attack on

the people that they feel do not belong or do not look like them.”

The result is that Afghans and other immigrants in Rhode Island are beginning to feel like “prey,” as if they’re being “hunted,” Bah said. “They are living in fear and uncertainty,” he said.

On Tuesday, [Trump called Somalis “garbage”](#) that he does not want in the US.

Bah called those comments “the newest signal of degeneration of Trump and his administration into infantile but dangerous rhetoric that is both racist and a threat to the safety of certain populations in this country.” He said, “Republicans should rise above this downward spiraling trajectory and reject racism, hatred, insults, and incitement against immigrant populations.”

Based on Broad Street in Providence, the [Refugee Dream Center](#) has a caseload of about 3,000 refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers. It provides English classes and a food pantry, and it helps people find housing, health care, and employment.

Teddi Jallow, executive director of the Refugee Dream Center, said Wednesday’s press conference aims to counter the message that the administration and some media are conveying about a broad population of immigrants based on Lakanwal’s actions.

“The people I work with are very good people,” Jallow said. “They are fathers, mothers, parents with children. They work every day. They learn English. They do something every day to make their lives better in the United States. They cannot believe they are here and they have a second chance.”

Many of the Afghan refugees worked with American soldiers during the war in Afghanistan, serving as interpreters, flying airplanes, and providing other vital support to US efforts, she said. They went through extensive vetting processes before beginning new lives here in the US, she said.

“Now, these people have to face all these investigations again as if they are all criminals,” Jallow said. “It’s not fair.”

And, she said, it’s not fair for the administration to review the green cards that allow people from 19 countries, mostly from the Middle East or Africa, to live and work permanently in the United States.

“It is just a way of demonizing people — framing them as criminals or terrorists as a group of people,” Jallow said. “It is unfortunate to see so much hate from Washington, D.C., affecting everyone now.”

The shooting and the Trump administration actions also are disturbing to [Aminullah Faqiry](#), a front-line Afghan interpreter who worked with the US military and State Department for nearly 12 years before coming to Rhode Island with his family after US troops withdrew from Afghanistan.



Aminullah Faqiry at his home in Cranston, R.I. Faqiry was a front-line Afghan interpreter who worked with the US military and State Department for nearly 12 years before coming to Rhode Island. BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

In an interview Tuesday, Faqiry condemned the shooting.

“The Afghan community in New England is deeply saddened by this heinous crime,” he said. “I want to give this message to the people of America: We are with you, we are deeply saddened by this, and we will come together with you to avoid such incidents in the future.”

But, Faqiry said, the crimes of one man should not be blamed on thousands of others who persevered through years of war and found new homes in America.

“Anybody from any religion, any community, any country could commit a crime and that person does not represent the thoughts and morals and the culture and people of the country he is from,” he said. “They should not blame it on ordinary people that are just seeking a better life.”

Faqiry said he and other Afghans “fought shoulder to shoulder” with American soldiers. Once the US pulled out in August 2021, those Afghans would have been killed by the Taliban if they had remained behind, he said, but the US made a promise to bring those Afghans to safety in America.

“Keep your word,” Faqiry said. “Because when we came here, the American military treated us like their own families.”

Faqiry, 35, now lives in Cranston with his wife and six children, including two who were born in the United States. He said he has a green card, and he is confident that any review would reveal his sacrifices and commitment to the US.

But, he said, “We are anxious. I am very anxious. Anything could happen to me and my family and so many others.”

Faqiry emphasized his devotion to his new home.

“Donald Trump and the political people of his government have to understand that Afghan people love America,” he said. “I love this country, and so many of us from Afghanistan would jeopardize our own lives for the national security of America.”

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