

“Escape from Kabul,” *American College of Trial Lawyers*

Publications

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In an article for the American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL) Summer 2026 Journal, Partner Terri Mascherin tells the story of an extraordinary rescue operation carried out by seven women judges to save their Afghan counterparts from the Taliban following the fall of Kabul in August 2021.

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Terri traces the history of the role of women in Afghanistan's judiciary and vividly depicts the many dangers these judges faced when fleeing the Taliban. The article puts into historic context what was suddenly at stake after two decades of hard-won progress in courts and Afghan society.

“The first woman judge was appointed in 1965. Under subsequent constitutions, women were guaranteed equal rights under law. Then the Taliban came to power for the first time and erased it all.”

Despite overwhelming obstacles, the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) and its partners were able to directly assist in evacuating 160 women judges, a number that now stands at 209. However, as Terri notes, the successful evacuation of these judges is only part of the story, as the fight for their safety and resettlement is far from over.

“The world’s attention has moved on from Afghanistan. Pakistan has begun forcibly returning Afghan refugees. Countries that once seemed open to resettlement have pulled back. The thirty-five judges still inside Afghanistan remain in danger with no clear options before them.”

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