**U.S. Statement at the Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan,**

**32nd Session, January 21, 2019**

The United States welcomes the Afghan delegation.

We recommend that Afghanistan:

1. Implement safeguards to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys, known as *bacha baazi*, including by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and hold those responsible accountable, including through prosecution.
2. Hold accountable individuals responsible, including government officials, for threats and violence against journalists.
3. Ensure the full implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law and the 2018 Penal Code’s provisions related to violence against women and girls.

We applaud Afghanistan’s efforts to improve human rights. The 2018 penal code reflects international human rights law and best practices in criminal justice. The next step is to ensure all government authorities implement the criminal code provisions intended to protect human rights. We encourage implementation of the 2018 Afghan Conference on Disabilities recommendations.

We remain concerned by ongoing allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual abuse by the ANSF. Women’s access to justice is severely inadequate. Widespread use of mediation in cases of violence against women and girls, as well as early and forced child marriage, has led to impunity and undermined the criminal justice system. Violence against journalists is increasing, including threats by government officials.