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This fall, the Bolch Judicial Institute hosted a remarkable discussion about efforts to evacuate Afghan women judges from the ruins of their country's 20-year democratic experiment. As Western military forces abandoned Kabul airport in August, they left behind thousands of Afghan citizens who feared reprisal from the Taliban for their work to build democratic institutions. Perhaps no one had more to fear than the country's more than 200 women judges — women who had dared not only to go to university and to law school and to join the work force but who had sat in judgment of men who appeared before them in court. Because they had been judges, they and their families are now targets for assassination.



FROM THE PUBLISHER

Our discussion, featured in this edition of *Judicature*, included two Afghan women judges who were able to flee with their families. They recount harrowing escapes, made possible by their own determination and persistence, connections to a global judicial network forged during international conferences and educational programs, and the tireless work of judges, lawyers, and others who came to their aid when governments did not. Their stories are heartbreaking. They and their country have lost so much.

It is also disappointing to hear how Western governments have failed to help the very people who worked so hard to build democracy in Afghanistan.

A bright spot in this story is that civil society is attempting to fill the breach. Though there are many more judges, lawyers, activists, scholars, and others who remain desperate to escape Afghanistan, it is worth marking this small victory: Lawyers and judges — from New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, Poland, Greece, Brazil, and more — have successfully evacuated hundreds of their colleagues and their family members. The work has been time consuming and costly and is not done. Many more of Afghanistan's women judges and civil servants still need to be evacuated, and those who have reached safety need our help as they work to create new lives worthy of their accomplishments and fortitude. It is our hope that our article will raise awareness of these efforts and inspire others to help.

This edition of *Judicature* also commemorates the 75th anniversary of the end of the Nuremberg Trials, which marked the first time nations came together to try crimes against humanity. We feature an interview with Benjamin Ferencz, the last living Nuremberg Trial prosecutor and the first person to use the term "genocide" in a court of law. At nearly 102 years old, Mr. Ferencz recalls with clarity the horrors he saw while investigating Nazi crimes.

It is a sad truth that so many years after Nuremberg we still see efforts by autocratic governments to destroy the rule of law and democratic institutions. Their tactics vary, but from Afghanistan to Hungary to Turkey to Venezuela, autocrats know they must destroy the independence of the judiciary in order to seize absolute power. This is why judges are under such attack all over the world. But it is also true that, all over the world, lawyers and judges and civil servants follow in Mr. Ferencz's footsteps — safeguarding the rule of law, bolstering institutions that protect democracy, and working daily to improve our systems of justice.

Now is a time for Americans to defend our constitutional framework and to protect our judges and courts. Our courts are not perfect, but even as we help them to do better, we should acknowledge that our courts and judges do much to maintain the rule of law in this country. They must have our support if they are to carry on. Our future depends on it.

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Stay in touch!

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