

# **I Was Kidnapped by the Taliban: Safi Rauf on Rescuing Afghan Allies**

## **Episode 215 Final Transcript**

Jon: Hey everybody, it's Jon Stewart. Today in the pod we are gonna be talking about the midterms. The midterms are over. They went exactly as everyone would've predicted as they always do, because the media never gets it wrong. Also we're gonna be talking to a gentleman by the name of Safi Rauf. He himself, his story is ridiculous. Kidnapped by the Taliban. Joined the US Navy Reserves, worked with Special Operations Command for four years. By the way, not in that order. I'm not even gonna tell you the order, the order will surprise you.

[INTRO MUSIC]

Jon: Hello everybody. Welcome once again to the podcast. "The Problem." I am Jon Stewart and I am part of the problem. The show is on Apple TV+ we're doing season two there. We got a brand new episode. I think it's out— what day is it today? it's out today. It's about the midterms and it is, of course, Veterans Day. And who do we talk to on Veterans Day? Rob Christensen—

Rob: Yeah.

Jon: -and Tocarra Mallard, our writers.

Tocarra: Hello.

Jon: What's up guys?

Rob: Yes.

Jon: Welcome.

Rob: I got my Veterans Tree up, you know. [TOCARRA LAUGHS]

Jon: That would be a lovely thing. What would you decorate that with?

Rob: You gotta put your DD214 out for Uncle Sam.

Jon: Nice.

Rob: And if you were a good veteran, he breaches your door and makes a payment on your Dodge Ram. [JON LAUGHS]

Tocarra: Wow.

Rob: Is that a car? I don't know, trucks. [TOCARRA LAUGHS]

Jon: The Dodge Ram is a truck.

Rob: Yeah, if you're a bad veteran, you get a lump.

Jon: A lump?

Rob: You gotta get that thing checked out. It's — [LAUGHTER]

Tocarra: Oh no.

Jon: Rob. Do you guys, is there, like, on Veteran's Day, do you check in with like the other guys in your, in your platoon, in your like —

Rob: I have a list, not necessarily guys I served with, but you know, I run into veterans along the way in college and stuff like that. So I'm kind of tight with other veterans and I do have a list. I send them all a text, Happy Veterans Day and if we're in the same city, maybe we'll get a drink.

Jon: Oh, that's really nice. And is that a day like where everybody kind of checks up on each other and is like, “Hey man, how you doing? How's this year been? You know, uh, you hangin’ tough. Everything's good.” All that s\*\*\*?

Rob: yeah. For me it is. Yeah. That's the day that we'll catch up. Yeah.

Jon: Uh, that's, that's really nice. And Tocarra, I know your family all, all veterans. Is this the day where they go to the VA and they go, “All right guys, this year is the year we're getting it together.” [LAUGHTER]

Tocarra: You know, everyone I get, I got a nice group chat going. I say Happy Veterans Day. Some people tell me to f\*\*\* off cuz they don't, you know, they don't care which is really nice.

Jon: That's so not right. And these are family members.

Tocarra: Absolutely. They, of course not. They think I'm being facetious, but I really do mean it.

Jon: Tocarra how? Why would anyone ever think you're being facetious? That doesn't make any sense to me.

Rob: It makes sense to me.

Tocarra: Rob, be quiet.

Jon: Be quiet, Rob. We're not doing that. Did you guys, do you feel any lighter now that the midterms are over?

Rob: Well, I mean today I'm feeling a little bit of schadenfreude and I'm just gonna do it guilt-free and enjoy it that some of the slimiest people are having a bad weekend this weekend.

Tocarra: That's right.

Jon: It's never a bad thing when the slimy people have a bad weekend.

Rob: Yeah. Some of the slimiest you know, Dr. Oz he has to go back to writing self-help books and selling skinny fit teas or whatever he does. [Tocarra Laughs]

Jon: Very tough to have to retreat back to a giant mansion in New Jersey. [ROB LAUGHS]

Tocarra: It's wild. You know, he lost that election. He put \$27 million of his own money into that election, and it is GONE.

Jon: Did he really?

Rob: Yeah, but I don't trust that I have a conspiracy.

Tocarra: What do mean?

Rob: Yeah. I think cuz you know how they're allowed to lend their, uh, money to the campaign and charge interest?

Jon: Yeah.

Rob: I don't think a guy like Dr. Oz-a-seezeball's losing money. I think that he probably lent it to his campaign.

Tocarra: Oh

Tocarra: So he's going to collect it back with interest.

Rob: Yes.

Jon: So he might have a pot of money in his PAC or in his other thing, and he'll just take that back. Uh, then he'll write him a coupon for whatever supplements or smoothies he's selling. I don't worry about his finance opportunities at this point, but I thought it was really interesting man, cuz in Pennsylvania it is a big deal to not be from Pennsylvania. [LAUGHTER] And I don't mean like, I don't think they gave a s\*\*\*, you know, the Turkish thing, you know, people tried to play that up.

Tocarra: No

Jon: I really think the big thing in Pennsylvania, from what I know of Pennsylvania, was New Jersey is a non-starter.

Rob & Tocarra: Yeah.

Jon: "You could've been a carpetbagger from Oregon and we would've accepted it, but if you had to drive over the Trenton Makes Bridge to come over here, Fuck you."

Tocarra: True story.

Jon: "We're not voting for you."

Rob: And then Fetterman, he looks like a guy from Pennsylvania and no one looks more Pennsylvania than he does.

Jon: No, that's a guy that looks like there's a few cheese steaks in that hoodie. [ROB LAUGHS] You know, he's always got his hands in the hoodie pocket, and I always assume that there's just a little cheese steak from Pat's. That he's cradling,

Tocarra: I love on election night, all of his kids coming up on stage and they're all also in hoodies and shorts.[JON LAUGHS]

Jon: The family, that cargoes together.

Tocarra: I was like they're happy.

Jon: Yeah. I don't know what's gonna happen. I think Boebert is still in an incredibly tight race.

Rob & Tocarra: Yeah.

Jon: In Colorado. It would be wild to see somebody that confidently loony —

Rob: Yeah.

Tocarra: Mm-hmm.

Jon: —go down. Because that's the thing sometimes about the loonies in Congress is the confidence by which they portray their asininity and to see her go down would be, you know, that would be a treat.

Rob: Well, dumb people think they're smart, you know, And so she, she's one of 'em. [ROB LAUGHS]

Jon: Maybe that's the thing. Maybe it's the confidence of, what do they call that, the Dunning Kruger effect or something along those lines.

Tocarra: Yeah that's it.

Jon: But yeah it's gonna be very interesting. How, how did you follow the midterms? Just watching the cable nets?

Rob: Well, you know, we do do it for work. I don't know if you know that.

Tocarra: Yeah.

Rob: But we have to follow them.

Tocarra: It's in our contract. I had to watch Fox News all night.

Jon: What kind of an ogre, what kind of a man would force good people to subject themselves to that kind of torture?

Rob: I requested Fox News. I was in there all night. [LAUGHTER]

Jon: Can I tell you what happened? This is a true story. So we had some people assigned to CNN and about halfway through they were like, “This is so f\*\*\*ing boring. I cannot stand this.”

Tocarra: They were wrecked.

Jon: They were so mad. They actually had a worse night than the people who were assigned to Fox. Cause at least Fox was, they keep it horrifyingly interesting.

Tocarra: Absolutely.

Rob: Fox was at a party, because you get to let it out, you get to put the middle finger up at the TV and scream, “you're a liar” and all that stuff.

Tocarra: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jon: Fox is like watching it at Hooters. You get to sit there, it's raucous. You're throwing things around. CNN you were just like, “Am I in math class?” [ROB LAUGHS]

Tocarra: Yeah, one of my favorite things toward the end of the night, and then the days following is the blame that came about. Like, they're like, “Oh, it's Gen Z's fault. We gotta raise the voting age to 21 they're destroying our country at the ballot.”

Jon: Oh my God.

Tocarra: They're in it. And I have to say Gen Z has ruined nothing except jean's sizes [LAUGHTER]. They're too big. They're way too big.

Jon: Old lady Tocarra. “Let me tell you something, in my day, we wore jeans that fit correctly.”

Tocarra: With belts! Made by hand. [LAUGHTER]

Jon: “You know, when I was a young man.” I really think it's interesting that Fox's answer to it, and the conservative answer to it is, “we have not restricted the vote properly.”

Tocarra: Yeah. Total fascist stuff.

Jon: “We've gotta stop letting single women vote. We've gotta stop letting people who are under 21 who voted for us? 50 year olds? Maybe that should be the cutoff.”

Rob: Fox is going after anyone who dresses sexy and goes to the club. [TOCARRA LAUGHS]  
Gen Z, single ladies, Don Lemon. We gotta stop them.

Tocarra: All the single ladies [JON LAUGHS]

Jon: But if Fox went after those people, they'd have no B roll to run on their network because there is no raunchier network than Fox News. How many spring break stories do they run that is just an excuse to see people in swimwear, guzzling alcohol.

Tocarra: No. That's just a cautionary tale.

Jon: Oh.

Tocarra: They're trying to save souls, Jon ...and the country.

Jon: I didn't realize it was instructional, that I had no idea about.

Tocarra: I'll send you some links.

Jon: Well, I appreciate that. That's very kind. But I thought it, I found it interesting that there was no reflection on, you know, women who aren't married, they have concerns about bodily autonomy, maybe, that are valid or young people have valid concerns about the future, monetarily, the future, climate wise, all these other things, their first response is "you don't get to vote anymore."

Tocarra: Exactly.

Jon: It's a wild choice.

Rob: And I think a lot of the young people came out because there was actually a chance to change the status quo. So many times we don't want to go out cuz it's the same thing, but now it's like, "Oh, we can fight for abortion or we could legalize drugs and get people outta jail." These things will change the status quo, which is what a younger vote is looking for.

Jon: That's right. And I guess what Fox is saying is "we're looking for people that have already been broken by the system who are, who are voting, uh, along those lines." Well, it was certainly a fascinating night and it, judging by the New York Post headlines, it's going to be an interesting I mean, "Trumpty Dumpty."

Rob: Love it. I love it.

Tocarra: “Refuse to build the wall.”

Jon: By the way, for those of who haven't seen the newspaper, it's a giant drawing of Trump as Humpty Dumpty. Which by the way, uh, the only thing they had to change about the actual Trump is the shoes he was wearing. It's really actually quite—

Tocarra: Oh.

[JON SNAPPING FINGERS]

Tocarra: That hurt *my* feelings. [LAUGHTER]

Tocarra: Damn.

Jon: Damn. I don't know that there's anything that would be more infuriating to a megalomaniac like Trump.

Rob: And he's, he's seeing this while he is hiding from a hurricane in, in Mar-a-Lago, and it was supposed to be Tiffany Trump's wedding this week. They had guests there. The the hurricane canceled it and he's seeing this newspaper, Oh, it feels so good!

Jon: Listen, I make no pronouncements. They, they come out, “Trump is done”. No, he’s not. He, he's an antibiotic resistant strain of human. If Atlantic City couldn't do this guy in like nothing can, so I don't buy any of that. “He's done, he's this, he's that.” But rough night.

Rob: And we can enjoy it.

Jon: And we can enjoy it. Uh, alright guys, I'm gonna talk to Safi Rauf. He's got a fascinating story, but ultimately it comes down to this: he's trying to find a path for Afghans who helped the United States military, uh, during our, our War find their way to the United States cuz we abandoned them. Rob, did you have any experience with Afghan, uh, interpreters, contractors, any of those folks?

Rob: No. The Air Force is kind of a cushy deal. I did not have to go over there. I was very far from war and, uh, I did dance on, uh, some bar tops when I was [JON LAUGHS].

Jon: Oh, so you, you had more of a 'Top Gun' experience?

Rob: I did, yes.

Jon: Understood. Do you have folks that you know are invested in this issue at all, or, uh, have, have expressed feelings to you about the topic of abandoning those folks?

Rob: Uh, yeah. I mean, people. Like there are allies, these guys, they worked with them around the ground. They want these interpreters out. Like they would want an American citizen out of there. It's just the same thing.

Jon: Oh, it's it's it's that deep.

Rob: Yeah, absolutely.

Jon: Right. Well, uh, Safi's been working on it tirelessly and maybe that's the next little fight we can poke our noses into. So, uh, we'll talk to him and then we'll grab you guys on the way out.

Tocarra: Sounds good.

Rob: Yeah.

Jon: Thank you. Thank you.

### **Interview with Safi Rauf Begins**

Jon: Listen man, we're very excited today to be talking to Safi Rauf. He is the president and founder of Human First Coalition. First of all, Safi welcome, welcome to the show. Great to see you.

Safi: Thank you so much for having me. Thank you.

Jon: Uh, it's our pleasure. So we were down in DC and we were talking to Dick Durban about the Afghan Adjustment Act and how in this country we had a lot of Afghan interpreters and a lot of other contractors who are Afghan, who worked with the United States through that 20 year period of the war. And at the end of it, as the Taliban took over the country, we abandoned our allies. And I run into this gentleman by the name of Safi Rauf, who is parked outside of the capital with a group. And I run into you down in DC and you're lobbying to get this Afghan Adjustment Act. And you and I start to talk and you start telling me your story. And it is, I mean, honestly, you're James Bond, I think you may be. I know they're looking for another James

Bond, and I think you may be him. Uh tell me a little bit about, just your story. You are Afghan American. Yes?

Safi: So Jon, I was born in a refugee camp

Jon: Where?

Safi: In Pakistan. That's where I was raised for years 17 years. At 17 I came to the US. My parents came to the US four years ahead of me, so I was separated from my family at 12 until I was 17, for four years before I joined —

Jon: In a refugee camp in Pakistan.

Safi: In a refugee camp. So when Kabul fell, and then all of these refugees are scrambling and some are, you know, falling from planes and trying to stick onto those planes trying to get out. And I see myself all over again like I'm like that kid who was —

Jon: Right.

Safi: — in a refugee camp trying to survive. And you know, a lot of people saw that and they couldn't understand. They were like, “why would somebody stick on to a moving plane and not realize that they're going to fall from the sky to their death?” And I was like, “I understand this” because it's either a chance to live or actually, you know, die trying. And a lot of refugees do that.

Jon: Right. It's desperation and an escape from chaos.

Safi: It's the desperation for survival. Actually there is a better chance of survival versus staying in a war torn country.

Jon: That's right. And so you go, you're living in Pakistan and you're there for 17 years and I don't know if people understand the uncertainty of a life in limbo when you are, when you are stateless, when you are a refugee. And I imagine it's very difficult to maintain a hopeful future for yourself.

Safi: You are sort of living in—in hiding. You don't tell people you are a refugee. You outside you kind of pretend like you're from there I'm fluent in six languages and that's because everywhere you go you wanna learn the language because if you don't know the language, people are gonna know that you're a refugee, you're not from there. And then you'll be persecuted, you'll be

targeted. And you know, cuz as it happens in every country like the United States people don't like uh refugees.

Jon: Is that, is that how things are? [SAFI LAUGHS] You sure in the United States too? I can't, I can't believe that.

Safi: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know. I just you know if we go to the Staten Island or something, maybe I don't know [JON LAUGHS]

Jon: But you did you come to the United States and I thought what was fascinating about this is you join the military of the United States.

Safi: Yes. So when I came to the US I became a US citizen in 2012. And the first time that's the first time I actually held a passport. And that's the first time I could uh you know, feel a sense of belonging to a country being a citizen. And, you know, of all places, my family moved to Nebraska, so [JON LAUGHS]--

Jon: Cornhuskers, man.

Safi: Yeah so as bad as it was, as in, you know, there's still a lot of racism and you know when they see a brown kid especially at a time —

Jon: It's post 9/11 and —

Safi: Yes.

Jon: We're, and people know, we're at war with the countries you're from, yeah.

Safi: Exactly. So even though you are still dealing with a lot of that, but at the same time you have a home, you have a family, you have a way of to provide for your family. You have a way of participating in the civil discourse if we can call it that. You know it's—

Jon: we used to be able to call it that [SAFI LAUGHS]

Safi: Yeah so, uh, it, it was incredibly exciting.

Jon: So you joined the United States military in, in what year?

Safi: In 2012 as an American, I actually went back to Afghanistan from 1012-2016 and served as a cultural advisor with the Special Operations. So I was with the task force from 2012-2016, and served all across Afghanistan. Uh North, South Central, and did a lot of work and did a lot of sensitive work and we, you know we had a lot of local interpreters and when a time came for their SIVs,

Jon: SIVs are Special Immigration Visas that are given to people who've been allies to the United States or helped or those things.

Safi: Yeah, exactly. So I was working with them and when a time came and we needed to give those recommendation letters to those local people, what happened was this was one of the most secretive organizations in the United States military.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Safi: So working with locals, they're like, "Well, sorry man, I can't put my name on this sheet of paper because we don't exist." So how —

Jon: So people that they're working for are so high up on the security level that they can't even acknowledge that these local Afghans are helping the United States effort?

Safi: Absolutely.

Jon: And obviously people will see what predicament that puts those individuals in when it comes later. So you're really spending four years in Afghanistan as a part of the United States military, working with Special Operations Command and you are, I'm assuming, interpreting, working with, doing all these different things for four years till 2016.

Safi: Yeah. I'm training these women, I'm training these guides, these Afghan women who are doing incredibly important work. Like Jon - I can tell you this, that we didn't have another 9/11 because of those people. We literally stopped a guy as he was getting on a plane to the United States from Kabul Airport. With the help of these people that we trained, these were incredibly courageous people who were going, you know, inside the Taliban, going inside Al-Qaeda, going inside of these terrorist organizations and—

Jon: Incredibly dangerous work.

Safi: Incredibly dangerous work.

Jon: Not just for themselves, but I think if we know anything about the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and the way they operate, they will go after your family.

Safi: Absolutely.

Jon: I mean, they are, you're putting your lineage at risk when you take the step to start working with the United States in this environment.

Safi: Yeah and that's exactly what I tell people. It's like those people who served alongside our troops, they did not serve Afghanistan as much as they served the United States. For 20 years They kept those terrorists at bay.

Jon: So in 2016, you come back?

Safi: Yes.

Jon: And you come back to the United States and you start school.

Safi: Yeah, I start school and I also joined the US Navy Reserve as a corpsman.

Jon: Wow. Okay.

Jon: So now you've worked for the United States Army for four years. Now you're US Navy Reserve. You're keeping an eye on what's going on in Afghanistan, but at that moment, you don't have any idea that there's about to be a withdrawal, a collapse, or any of those things. When did that come up on your radar that made you go back to Afghanistan?

Safi: So when Kabul fell I just couldn't sit around and watch. I was like, "I am not going to watch this while I know I can help them, I know I can do something there." So I got right on it and started evacuating people. And before I knew it, I was running a team of over a hundred in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the United States.

Jon: And when is this? Give, gimme the timeframe on that.

Safi: This is by August 19 we had a full on operation center right outside the White House. We were across the street.

Jon: You put together this team. It's a hundred people. You've got this incredible organization. I think someone told me you were responsible for getting out almost 10,000, Afghans, as the US was exiting the country.

Safi: Yeah. Not only that, Jon, but also 1,400 US citizens after August 31st.

Jon: Oh wow.

Safi: So this is when the US pulled out. So you can imagine how important and crucial that work- my organization was actually the first one who got a flight out after the withdrawal. It was 117 US citizens.

Jon: Safi, how are you— how are you doing that? I mean, the United States had trouble getting flights out at that point. How are you doing it and how are you getting these folks out? How are you coordinating it? Are you doing it through a land route into Pakistan and then, you know, getting that, what they call the lily pad, finding another country? Or are you actually getting flights out from Kandahar or Kabul or any of those places?

Safi: Yeah, so I actually went to Afghanistan. I went back to Kabul. I sat down with the Taliban leadership and I was like, “Hey, look guys”

Jon: What?

Safi: “this is in your best interest, these flights this is how you start looking like a legitimate government when a flight goes out of Kabul to another international airport that tells the international community that, ‘Hey, look at the Taliban. They can actually do this.’” So I go there, I sat down with them, I convince them, and then you know, there were a lot of hiccups in that, but by the end we were able to get the flight directly out of Kabul to Abu Dhabi and the US.

Jon: Amazing. Hey, listen, man, I see the hiccups that go on when you're trying to fly United from like Newark to Tampa. Like I can't— I can't even imagine sort of the intrigue of that. So you start putting these flights together and you're getting out 10,000, people, and do you have to stay on the ground in Afghanistan to ensure that each one of these flights and all of these passengers are given safe passage? Are you working directly with the Taliban at that time to get that done?

Safi: Yes. So I was working directly with the Minister of Civil Aviation. The Minister of Interior. You know, I'm working directly with the Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs and —

Jon: The bureaucracy of the Taliban.

Safi: Yeah, exactly. You know, they all sort of know too that I'm kind of, you know, working with, with State department and, you know, I'm not just some — cuz I do run an NGO. You know, my NGO is registered in the Afghanistan and it's registered here. And I'm doing this.

Jon: But you gotta be concerned for your safety. I mean, the it's the Taliban and I assume they know who you are.

Safi: Yeah. You know what's ironic? Taliban gave me eight bodyguards. To make sure I was, I was safe [SAFI LAUGHS]

Jon: The Taliban were protecting you. So they saw you as an asset in maybe reestablishing their credibility.

Safi: Yes, exactly. They —

Jon: Wow.

Safi: All of them are on board with this and we are doing phenomenal. And then on December 18th of last year I was taken by the Taliban. Taken a hostage by a rogue element within the Taliban, their General Directorate of Intelligence.

Jon: Wait—wait, so you're, you were captured by an offshoot of the Taliban. Was this something that you think was planned with your bodyguards? Like was this, were you—did someone turn on you?

Safi: No, it wasn't the Taliban that I was working with. Taliban are fragmented. It's not a monolith. And this General Directorate of Intelligence actually operates outside the system.

Jon: And they're not communicating to each other. And there is no central authority necessarily that's—that's keeping track of it.

Safi: No, no. There is no accountability on these part. And they are the ones that are actually taking a lot of foreigners hostage. You know, Jon of what I'm tracking. I'm tracking at least five US citizens who are held by them since August of this year.

Jon: Right now. Now, do these folks understand who they've captured? Do they know you are this high value target that's been working to evacuate Afghans and Americans outta the country? Does this minister of intelligence, does he understand who you are?

Safi: So they have an idea but it gets more interesting. [JON LAUGHS] So —

Jon: Wait, what? No, Safi! it can't get more interesting. This is the most interesting story I've heard.

Safi: It's a good party trick. Like when I go to parties, somebody's like, "Oh yeah, you know, I, in college I played football." And then I'm like, "well, I was taken a hostage." So then the conversation kind of [JON LAUGHS] from there is.

Jon: You can one up almost anybody that you come in with alright.

Safi: Yeah. And if somebody is mad at me, I was like, "Well, you can't be mad at me cuz I was a hostage."

Jon: I was a hostage with the Taliban.

Safi: You know what's funny is I'm not the only one who uses that. My girlfriend uses it too.

Jon: Come on! Your girlfriend was taken hostage by the Taliban as well?

Safi: No, she was — but she went through it. She has a huge part in my release actually. She went to —

Jon: Okay.

Safi: She went to war with the Biden administration. You know she has this 45 minute phone call with Assistant Secretary of State Wendy Sherman. And this call is just absolutely you know, amazing, she's a Broadway director, and, you know, she has no idea of the nuances of bureaucracy and foreign relations, but she's smart. So she gives Wendy Sherman a run for her money.

Jon: Safi, you're, you're gonna turn this into a musical, aren't you? Is Lin Manuel Miranda already on board to play Safi Rauf in The Hostage? This is incred— How long were you held by the Taliban?

Safi: 105 days. Three and a half months.

Jon: Holy s\*\*\*.

Safi: Yeah.

Jon: Safi. And when they hold you, is it, you know, Americans I think have a stereotypical view of a dank dungeon tied to a chair, bread and water. Is that generally how this goes down?

Safi: Partially actually, some of that. So I was taken to a basement. This room was eight foot by eight foot. you know we got two meals a day and it was rice and bread and —

Jon: Were you held with others or were you in solitary?

Safi: Yeah, so that's Jon. So my brother is with me as well. Uh, I was also [JON LAUGHS]

Jon: Safi, you're killing me. This is crazy.

Safi: So my entire family is running this operation you know, all of them voluntarily.

Jon: Did your brother ever turn to you and say, “You couldn't have run a Wendy's, you couldn't have gone into business doing something else? You had to drag us all back to Afghanistan to get captured by the Taliban?” [SAFI LAUGHS]

Safi: Jon, the most difficult part of being a hostage was being with, stuck with your brother [JON LAUGHS] for 105 days in a eight by eight foot room [SAFI LAUGHS]. And you know, you're not taking showers either.

Jon: Oh, my.

Safi: You can only Jon can, can you, even in normal circumstances be with —

Jon: No, listen, I shared a room with mine for a while. Yeah, you're right. It's not pleasant. And I didn't even have to deal with the Taliban at that point, but damn. So you guys are, you're together for this 105 days. Are you in communication with anybody other than your captors? Are you getting any messages in and any messages out?

Safi: Well, that's where my, the work I had done before, when that's when it comes into use, I start turning the guards. And some of the guards starts working for me. And you know, at this point, my family, nobody has any idea where we are who is holding us.

Jon: Oh. This is terrible.

Safi: And if we are alive. Actually, some people were telling my family that we were executed, you know, we were just quietly executed and, you know, thrown somewhere. And cuz they had no idea. But I was able to, on day 17, I was able to uh turn one of the guards and used his phone.

Jon: He let you use his phone?

Safi: Well, it's a longer story than that. It's— [JON LAUGHS]

Jon: First, let me just get to the real stuff. What kind of data plan did he have [SAFI LAUGHS] and what were the international charges on the call? You were able to actually then get, you got a message out on day 17. Who did you send the message to?

Safi: So initially I sent the message to my team that was in Kabul.

Jon: That you were alive and that you were captured?

Safi: Yeah. And I mean, you know, just that part where how we turned that guard could be turned into a movie itself. And you know how I got out is a story of, you know, love and dedication and family as well.

Jon: Right?

Safi: You know day 45, my family including my dad, my mom, my brother, that my other brother, one is stuck with me, the other is in the US and my parents are in the US and my sister-in-law, they all come to Kabul.

Jon: Now are they under protection of the Taliban? Are they under — how do they come there without thinking, “Oh, we're just going to get thrown into the same room.”

Safi: Yeah, so—so Jon, my dad, He's a very humble guy, he's a veterinarian, but he wields the kind of power in the community that no one is going to, you know, mess with him. So he comes to Kabul—

Jon: He's respected. He commands respect. He demands respect, and

Safi: Yes.

Jon: Is the US government, in any way involved in this at this point, or is it just your family?

Safi: Yes. So the US government is involved in this and they are doing everything, but the Taliban are not talking to them. The Taliban are not giving them any information. So the information they're getting — and you see like I evacuated 1,400 US citizens, and I also evacuated President Biden's interpreter. So at this point President Biden knows me by my first name. So I am on President's daily brief, every day.

Jon: This is bananas. And are the negotiations based on “we’ll give you a certain amount of money” or are they saying, “Look for a guy who is on the President's daily brief, I'm gonna need two bomb makers and somebody else to get released for you to even have a shot at this.” Like you're a valuable target at that point.

Safi: Yeah. And Jon that's where my dad comes into the picture. So my dad comes to Kabul with my mom. He goes directly to the director of, uh, General Directorate of Intelligence. He sits across the table from him and he tells him this. He's, “I have 11 children. I have 28 grandchildren. I have four great-grandchildren. I have two brothers and three sisters, and all of them have that many children and grandchildren, and I have hundreds of cousins. And then my extended family goes beyond thousands, and my tribe is the largest tribe in all of Afghanistan. You are holding my son. I come to you as a father who has limitless love for his children. I am asking you humbly to release my sons ”

Jon: Oh my God. You're gonna make me cry. This is unbelievable.

Safi: And he also tells him that “the chair you're sitting in my friend used to sit in that chair and we fought together against the Russians.” And this director knows him. He's like, “Oh, he was your friend.” and says, “I will release your son as long as the US sends a plane to pick him up.” And this man, his name is Abdel Haq Wasiq, and he was held in Guantanamo for 12 years. He was-

Jon: Holy s\*\*\*. Ok.

Safi: He was released in exchange for a hostage exchange. He was released in, in, in exchange for Bowe Bergdahl. So he knows the game.

Jon: Oh my God.

Safi: But when my dad tells him this story, He is one, he's moved, but also at the same time he doesn't want any issues. Um, so this is a month before I got released.

Jon: Wait a minute, A month before, and I know you're about to tell me something.

Safi: Yeah.

Jon: It took them a month to send you a plane?

Safi: Exactly, So there were several things at play here. One, you know, hostages historically are have been, like Bowe Bergdoll was released in exchange for five top Taliban commander, including this guy who's holding me, uh, you know, Nazanin Ratcliffe was recently released for 393 million uh, pounds, which again, Is not worth a lot because of Liz Truss And you know, [JON LAUGHS] the pound is is is not much.

Jon: I did not expect you to take a swing at the six week British Prime Minister, but alright.

Safi: Yeah.

Jon: Now, here where we are. This is, first of all, let me just clarify. Earlier I had said you were James Bond. Uh, I have now, uh, I'm gonna amend that you're Batman, you're not James Bond, you're Batman. And, uh, continue with the story. You've got a month to get a plane from the United States.

Safi: Yes. So, um, initially the US is like, "Okay, we're gonna send a plane, we're gonna do this and we're gonna get him out." Everything is happening. And on March 23rd, uh, of last year, Taliban basically didn't allow girls to go to school. So that's when the administration sort of started walking back on their promise of sending a plane, they didn't explicitly say it, but it probably looked bad for the administration to go to a country where girls are not allowed to go to school.

Jon: But they're not going for a, you know, a stroll or a visit or a diplomatic thing. They're sending you a way home.

Safi: Yeah but this is bureaucracy. You know, This is, they think about everything. Um –

Jon: And they forget that maybe it's individual humans on the ground. I mean, I think that's largely sometimes, you know, people become pieces on a, on a risk board. As opposed to the human beings that they are. And, uh– And that gets forgotten. It's tough.

Safi: Yeah. And this is where my girlfriend is the champion in the story is when she went to Assistant Secretary of State, Wendy Sherman, and basically told her "I needed to speak with the secretary Blinken, or I need to speak with the president." And That's when, you know, the day before I was released it, the next day was April Fool. It was April 1st. Uh, so the guard comes,

comes up to me, he's like, Oh, you are getting, so this guard at this point, I have like good relationship with him

Jon: Right. Right.

Safi: And you know, sort of turned him and he tells me, "You're getting released tomorrow." And I'm like, "I'm not falling for your, your tricks. [JON LAUGHS] Tomorrow is April 1st."

Jon: You, you think do the Taliban abide by the April 1st prank rule?

Safi: I was like, "Oh, funny. Haha, you are, you're, you're, you know, you're pulling my leg." And I didn't really believe it, but that night, I had that smuggled phone and I call my girlfriend. I'm like "Hey, uh, so I think I'm getting released tomorrow." And you know what she says?

Jon: "April fool."

Safi: She's, "I'm not ready." And I'm like, "What the hell? What do you mean you're not ready?" but what she meant was that she has to do like this press release, she has to talk to, like, cuz Jake Tapper was like very much involved in this as well he broke the story and he knew about it the whole time. And we were trying to keep it, uh, keep it away from press because then it would become much, bigger and—

Jon: Much more fraught and much more dangerous. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Safi: Yes. So, you know, she's like, "I have to tell Jake Tapper, I have to prepare this, uh, you know, uh, press release." So—

Jon: So you're in an eight by eight dungeon with your brother. You haven't showered in three months. You're being held hostage. You're about to come home and the answer is "you can't come home yet. I have to tell Jake Tapper."

Safi: Yes. Yes. [SAFI LAUGHS] So I'm like, "Okay, I guess I'll tell the Taliban, you know, to, to hold off for a couple days and, you know, uh, tell, tell the USG to hold off on that plane for, for a couple days." So in the end, on April 1st, uh, of all days, uh, the US did send a plane, they sent a C17. And you know, ironically—

Jon: Sure.

Safi: -Uh, ironically, uh, that plane could have fitted another 899 Afghans.

Jon: That's right.

Safi: But it came just for me. And I got to Doha that day.

Jon: And when you get home, the interesting - the fascinating story for me is that you have not just in the situation where you were at risk, you have been putting yourself at risk, not just for the United States, but for the Afghan people, for the refugees. And you've worked tirelessly and the only thing that seems to be standing in your way at almost every turn is bureaucracy and poor decision making.

Safi: Yeah. And that's exactly, you know, I got to Doha and I get to meet my girlfriend and the first question I asked her, I was like, "How is the refugee situation? How is our work?" And she's basically like, "Well, everybody's been 24/7 nonstop trying to get you out. So, uh, we haven't done much." And I was like, "Oh, no."

Jon: Mhmm.

Safi: And I got back to work right then and there.

Jon: Right.

Safi: And, uh, I flew to Washington, DC and like I said before, my family is from Nebraska. My entire family lives in Nebraska.

Jon: Mhmm.

Safi: Uh, I don't go to see my family. I go to DC and I start lobbying Congress again, to figure something out.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Jon: And when he says, "figure something out." There's, there's really kind of two methods for people, uh, who were translators or, or who worked for the American government during this time. There's humanitarian parole and then there's the SIV program.

Safi: Yes.

Jon: And the SIV program and humanitarian parole have some ridiculous absurdities to them. I think one of them to apply for it costs you \$500 or \$575. Something along those lines.

Safi: Yeah.

Jon: To even apply now, \$575 you may think to yourself, well, you know, you work a little bit, You could probably put that together, but this is in, uh, Afghanistan, the average annual salary is \$400. You're, you're saying to people just to apply, you need to give us more than a year's worth of your wages. Just to apply.

Safi: A lot of people did. You know, they, they—

Jon: I'm sure

Safi: About 40,000, people applied. And, you know, the USCIS got about \$23 million, of money just in fees from those people. But what's, what's, what's sad, Jon? Only 123 cases were adjudicated from the humanitarian parole program.

Jon: You're telling me. So, so they got \$23 million from, uh, Afghans who are applying, 123 of those cases received humanitarian parole.

Safi: Yes, Jon.

Jon: That's criminal.

Safi: You know what Jon? For, for the, uh, the same program for Ukrainian. They waived the fee and they processed a hundred thousand in five months, a hundred thousand people in five months and waived the fee. We work in Ukraine as well. And I'm not against —

Jon: Safi, and I'm just gonna throw this out there. It's purely conjecture on your point [SAFI LAUGHS] uh, what would the reason be for, uh, the difference in the way Afghans who had worked for the United States in service of protecting and assisting our war effort, why would they be treated so much, uh, less in a less welcoming fashion than Ukrainians? And, uh, I will take, uh, your answer off air first time, long time.

Safi: Yeah. So. Jon, I'm brown and for the last month I've been advocating for the Afghan Adjustment Act, and mostly I've been traveling to all the red states. And the first thing people see is my color. And based off of that is how the conversation is gonna go. A lot of the people who go on these, meetings with me are white, so, you know, I'm from Nebraska. I go to Nebraska, I go to the senator's office and I'm talking to the director there, and you know, I'm talking to her and I'm like, I'm your, uh, "I'm your constituent. I'm a veteran and I'm advocating for the Afghan Adjustment." And she's like, "Mhmm, Yes, Ok." That's, that's her answers to me. This white

male starts talking to her and says, "I'm a veteran." He's not even the constituent. She picks up a pen and paper. She starts writing everything he's telling her, and she's smiling, she's engaging. If it's not the my color, I don't know what else it is.

Jon: It must be for all that you've done and all that you've given and all that you've gone through. I can't imagine the frustration and quite frankly, the anger that you must have felt, especially given that, you know, you're talking about the Afghan Adjustment Act, the Afghan Adjustment Act would allow a, a path to a permanent citizenship for those who have been vetted and who have helped us. We have done this for almost every other war. There was a Vietnam, Adjustment Act there was a-

Safi: Yeah. 1975.

Jon: A Cuban Adjustment Act.

Safi: 1966. And, you know, all those, you know, the Endo China Migration Act of 1975-

Jon: Mhmm.

Safi: Brought 175,000, people and gave them permanent residency in the United States. The Cuban Adjustment Act in 1966 actually gave, permanent resident to 1.2 million people.

And most recently, uh, the Iraqi Adjustment Act,

Jon: That's right. We've, I think we've done two Iraqi Adjustment Acts.

Safi Exactly.

Safi: And then again, in the, in the two thousands. And then the Iraqi special immigrant visa was better than the Afghan SIV because the The Iraqi SIV, you could bring your extended family, like your parents and your, uh, siblings.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Safi: In the Afghan Adjustment Act. You could only bring your children and wife. So Afghanistan is getting the short end of the stick everywhere here.

Jon: Right.

Safi: And you know, when we left Iraq in 2011, that's when ISIS started ramping up. And in 2014, they were controlling 40% of Iraq. And that's when, we went right back.

Jon: That's right.

Safi: So three years. Three years. We went back to Iraq and you know, if we leave Afghanistan the way it's going right now, we'll be right back.

Jon: Yeah.

Safi: We've, we've left that country, in shambles.

Jon: I mean it also speaks to you know, this isn't the first time that United States has, uh, exercised its power throughout the world. And perhaps, you know, I'd like to believe, not malevolently, but certainly with a carelessness that you would hope that this country wouldn't have, that there'd be more consideration. But the fact that, you know, we've abandoned. Our, forget about just the Afghan people and the idea that, you know, we went over there and we spent trillions of dollars to execute a war, and then we walk away and you have a humanitarian crisis that has developed, uh, you know, when a group like the Taliban takes over and they're obviously being, uh, you know, isolated from the rest of the, you know, so-called civilized world. But more importantly, who are we as a country to turn our backs on the people that risk their lives for us? And the Afghan Adjustment Act, what all it would do is say "those that risk their lives for us, we owe you a debt of gratitude and that debt of gratitude is a safer, more prosperous life."

Safi: Absolutely, Jon. And you know, the humanitarian aid, uh, humanitarian crisis that you bring in, it's the worst we've ever seen. 1.1 million children will die if we don't intervene. Uh, they will die from starvation. It's one of the worst kinds of death you can have because it's slow, it's painful. The parents sit there and watch as their children wither away. There's nothing worse than that. And the only way to solve that is through grassroots organizations

Jon: Will the Taliban allow that? I mean, can the NGOs operate freely in a country controlled by, as you even said yourself, groups that are not necessarily in communication with each other in contact working for the same purposes?

Safi: Mm-hmm.

Jon: Is the Taliban not as in control of the operations as they they could be? How do you even execute something like that nationwide?

Safi: Yeah. So, uh, I, like I said, you know, Taliban are not a monolith and grassroots organizations are allowed to work and Taliban actually want humanitarian aid to go in because, you know, it stops a civil unrest. You know, when people don't have anything to eat, the first finger that they're gonna point towards is the Taliban, so that's why they're allowing that. But, We've been funding, uh, large aid organizations like World Food Program, like, UN agencies, Unicef, uh, many others, uh, you know, Save the Children, Red Cross, all of those. But they're not effective. The reason they're not effective, cuz they're too big. They, they, a lot of the aid that goes through them goes directly to the Taliban, and then the Taliban decide who the aide they're gonna give to. A lot of the times it's the families of their own soldiers and their own soldiers and people that are their supporters. So what needs to happen is smaller grassroot organization needs to get a small percentage of all of the aid and distribute it across Afghanistan, especially because you know, Afghanistan is, uh, a collection of, you know, many, many, many small, uh, ethnicities.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Safi: It's not one large ethnicity where you can send the aid to them and you make an effective change.

Jon: And it's not a monolith either. And different parts of the country are in different, you know, have an influence from Pakistan or they have an influence from other areas. And, uh, it's a, it's a really complex. And difficult, even terrain. I mean, you go to the north and it's humid and lush and down in the south it's dry. And I mean, it's a, you know, a universe unto itself.

Safi: Yeah, absolutely Jon. And, that's exactly what we need to do is, and, you know, the Afghan Adjustment Act, I'm gonna keep saying that because that's the most important piece of legislation.

Jon: Well where does that stand up? So if people want to help with that and you know. If they want to help and get involved and get this thing over the finish line, I find it hard to believe that this isn't something that has more universal support. And I don't know if it's, I think what you said about it's Brown, but it's also, to be honest, Muslim.

Safi: Yes.

Jon: You know, in a country like this where Christianity is obviously the dominant religion, uh, Islam is considered an enemy at some level.

Safi: Yeah, absolutely. Jon.

Jon: It's a difficult sell then only on that and not on its merits.

Safi: But you have to look at this, Jon Afghans are not just any, uh, population. They stood by us for 20 years, shoulder to shoulder.

Jon: Sure.

Safi: With, with our veterans. This is a veteran's issue. This is a national security issue.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Safi: You know the number one thing that Afghan Adjustment Act does is vet all those people that we've brought over last year. So if anybody's concerned about that, this is the exact, uh, bill that they should be asking for so that we can vet all those people. And in, in addition to—

Jon: I don't know that there's any, this is an important point to make for people. I don't know that there's any immigrant that comes to the shores of the United States, either through, uh, legal, bureaucratic methodologies or, uh, some methodologies that are less so, that are more vetted than Afghans.

Safi: Yes.

Jon: I honestly believe that the process that they are being put through and that they were put through to work side by side with the United States, uh, military, it's the most rigorous vetting of any immigrants that come anywhere near this country.

Safi: Yeah absolutely. and we are asking to do more, do more, uh, vetting and then you know let them, let them, uh, have a home here, because Jon, if these people don't get here or, or don't get a pathway to resettlement, they're gonna be hundred percent sent back. Because we saw the election, you know, the house is already, uh, flipped in, in, you know, 2024 What's gonna happen then if, if we have a Republican president in, in the White House, they will send all of these Afghans back to Afghanistan and they will be killed. All of them. Every one of them, you know, just one story of these 148 girls from, uh, Asian University for women in Afghanistan, they were, they, they were actually not supposed to be brought here, but they, but they came here and now they're, they're going to school here. Like of 14 them are going to Brown, nine at Cornell, 67 at Arizona State, and 15 of them at Delaware University. They're going to school. They're learning, they're in master's programs.

Jon: Well if, if they're going to Arizona State, I don't think they're learning. [SAFI LAUGHS] I think, I think the other ones you mentioned, I think at Arizona state, it may just be –

Safi: At least they're having a good time. [LAUGHTER]

Jon: Safi That's correct. You know, when you talk about this, what can people do to try and help get this thing, uh, over the finish line as, as quickly as possible? This Afghan Adjustment Act.

Safi: Call your senators. We just need seven more Republican senators to get this passed.

Jon: And understand this for people that are, that are listening. There's also another element to this that we haven't really discussed, and that's the moral injury to the soldiers.

Safi: Absolutely.

Jon: Because don't think for a second. You know, you've got American service men and women who fought for 20 years in Afghanistan. To what end? Nobody is really sure. They spent their lives, they sacrificed their families, they saw their friends get killed. And after 20 years, the Taliban is just back in power and no one really knows, uh, ultimately what the effort was for and what it's going to come to pass. But to add to that, the idea that those in Afghanistan who risk their lives to stand with us are not being helped, adds a moral injury to an already wounded population emotionally, which is our service men and women, and I think they're the ones that are working the hardest to get their allies. These are American service men and women working to make their service count.

Safi: There's not a single veteran that doesn't support the Afghan Adjustment Act. I've been all across America. We've, for the last two months, we've been to every Republican state in the US and we have talked to every VFW we've gone to, every VFW post, we've gone to every Legion Post, and they all overwhelmingly support it –

Jon: Because they understood what you did.

Safi: They're angry, they're hurt, especially the Vietnam veterans. They understand and they, they know that they have dealt with, uh, a moral injury, And now the Afghanistan veterans that have, uh, you know, are, are dealing with the moral injury, it's, absolutely, uh, horrific to see, and these veterans, uh, suffering for, for over a year now. And there's not a, anything that's done for the Afghans to actually give, give some relief to those veterans. It's a veteran's issue, so do it for the veterans.

Jon: Understood. Safi I can't thank you enough uh, for coming by and talking to us. We're gonna keep this on, uh, obviously you and I will be in contact in terms of other things that we at the show can do and that I can do to help, uh, put some pressure on and get these things over the line because, uh, if we continue to believe that we are in any way a moral country—

Safi: Absolutely.

Jon: -uh, this is very high up at the top of the list of things we would have to do to demonstrate that. Uh, so I really appreciate you uh being here, I look very much forward to seeing the Broadway show about your life. And no one, No One Left Behind is the organization that, uh, that we had been in contact with. And obviously Safi's organization, which is called.

Safi: Human First Coalition. The Human First Coalition. Uh, you've already done so much Safi and uh, and I'm sure you will continue, and then we'll get that medical school back on track, and then you'll become my Gastroenterologist or something, something's gonna, This relationship will continue.

Safi: Yes. Yes, Jon. Absolutely. I wanna be a Navy surgeon and I wanna continue to serve my country.

Jon: Uh, you're a great man. Thank you so much for joining us Safi—

Safi: Thank you Jon.

### **Interview with Safi Rauf Ends**

Jon: Beautiful. Whew. Wow that dude blew my mind.

Tocarra: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah. Hell of a story.

Tocarra: Joy and a privilege to hear his story. And that wasn't even all of his story. That clearly there's more and more and more, and I wanna know all of it.

Jon: Well, each time, cuz it was funny, each time you'd get to it and he'd go, “Jon, there's a small part I'm not telling you.” [TOCARRA LAUGHS] And then he would go into, and it would be the most incredible, like, “the thing I never mentioned is this, it was my brother who was with you.”

Rob: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

Jon: Can I tell you the thing that I thought was most remarkable about it? his ability to maintain a sense of humor, you know, I almost think is actually the antidote. It's almost like a vaccine to being tortured in that way.

Tocarra: Yeah.

Jon: Because it's such a higher level of humanity. That if you can maintain, I almost feel like his ability to maintain that—

Rob: Yeah.

Jon: Is the key to having gotten through in some way.

Rob: Absolutely.

Tocarra: I agree. I was thinking, “wow. I think his, his humor may have saved his life”, especially with his talk with turn turning the guards and I'm like, okay, that took charisma-

Rob: Yes

Tocarra: and joy-

Jon: Right!

Tocarra: Charm and humor.

Jon: Right.

Rob: Yes.

Tocarra: I think it saved him.

Rob: And now afterwards to even tell the story, Right. You're trying to get the story out-

Tocarra: Mm-hmm.

Rob: And to make it interesting and funny. It helps the cause so much more.

Tocarra: Yeah. when he said the worst part about being held by the Taliban was being stuck with his brother? [TOCARRA LAUGHS] a hot line.

Jon: That was my favorite line. And you know, it's so interesting to me. Because in some ways you know, I've always viewed humor as a defense mechanism, right?

Tocarra: Mmm, yeah.

Jon: I think I've always viewed it as like it's a shield that I wore to hide something. To cover an insecurity or to protect myself. But when I see it from him, I viewed it in a very different light. I saw it as something essential to the human condition, and in some ways as an asset that he used to do all these incredible things.

Rob: It's almost the opposite of a shield. He's using humor to bring people closer.

Jon: Right!

Rob: Yep.

Jon: Rob Christiansen—

Tocarra: I know that was really nice.

Rob: Rob-

Jon: I got heat today. Have you been, have you been doing therapy? Is that it? [LAUGHTER]

Rob: Oh, man.

Tocarra: Retail therapy maybe.

Rob: You know, it's a lot of affirmations in the mirror in the morning.

Jon: Do you think, what would be the best way you think Rob and Tocarra in terms of getting veterans more involved in this aspect of it? Because it's so personal to so many veterans about, you know, viewing them as allies and having left behind. I don't know the way to galvanize 'em

in the same way, or maybe it is the same way sort of that we did with the PACT Act, which is let's go through VFW and IAVA and all those other organizations and get them together as a, as a team again, which I know they are. I mean, I know they're all working on it. Uh, maybe it's a question of just consolidating it.

Rob: Right there is legislation that needs to be passed, right?

Jon: Afghan Adjustment Act, that's right. Yeah.

Rob: You just gotta get the force behind it. Again, it's a slam dunk and the hardest thing to do.

Tocarra: Yeah. I was gonna, you know, combating misinformation. I think when speaking with veterans, helping 'em understand that it's really the same story. You have a government that promised you all something,

Jon: Right.

Tocarra: You know, services when you came home from war and they reneged and it's the same thing that's. These Afghan translators and their families. It's the same thing.

Jon: That, I think that's, that's a great point. And I think also that, uh, I don't know if you guys know this, but in America we tend to be somewhat myopic

Tocarra: Hmm.

Rob: A bit.

Jon: And we view everything through the lens of, "well, it doesn't affect me now because I live here." But, uh, I do think whenever this country fails to live up to its most basic moral precepts, it does affect us. And it does corrode, whatever it is, whatever that little magic is that we think we were spreading around the world. And Lord knows, not sure it's magic. It certainly was instability at times. Uh, you know, we weaken ourselves when we don't live up to that obligation around the world. That's—

Rob: Yeah, let's actually be this gold standard that we keep saying we are.

Jon: Right. Yeah, no, no question there. So that's, I mean, that's the next thing for us is just figuring out, okay, what's a way that we can, uh, maybe assist, uh, Safi and the groups like No One Left Behind and, uh, I'm sure IVA and VFW and American Legion and all those other

groups that are working towards this. Uh, that'll be the next thing. And by the way, anybody listening who has some ideas on that, man, throw 'em in. I don't know where they throw 'em. The chat? Maybe just tell Elon Musk and he'll put 'em on Twitter? I don't know, uh, how they can get that through. But, uh, all ideas on the table, man. And let us know.

Tocarra: Yeah best idea will be our Veterans Day Wish

Jon: Best idea wins. Uh, Tocarra Mallard Rob Christiansen. Thank you guys. Always a pleasure to see you cats. It's been almost seven hours since I last saw you. [TOCARRA LAUGHS]

Rob: Longest Seven hours of my life.

Jon: Right?!

Tocarra: It hurt.

Jon: We miss each other, it's so beautiful. Uh, that is our show. Thank you very much to Safi Raouf, for joining us on the program. and, make sure to check out The Problem it's airing right now on Apple TV+ we'll be back next week. Oh, we got, we got a hell of a podcast next week. I'm not even gonna blow who's on it, but it's uh it's gonna be a hopefully a-

Tocarra: Is it me again?

Jon: [ROB LAUGHS] It's Tocarra and Rob.

Rob: So that's how you get on. All right. No, no, it's actually me again.

Jon: Sure. [LAUGHTER] Both of you and Safi. It's just a repeat of everything that we've been talking there. All right guys. Good seeing ya. We'll talk to you soon.

Rob: Peace.

Tocarra: Bye Bye.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Jon: "The Problem with Jon Stewart Podcast" is an Apple TV+ podcast and a joint Busboy Production.