

December 1, 2015

Dear Senator/Representative:

As refugee and immigration law experts, humanitarian aid organizations, faith, labor and civil and human rights groups, we write to express our support for the U.S. refugee resettlement program and opposition to any policy riders that would stop, pause or defund the resettlement of Syrian refugees. The world is witnessing the largest refugee crisis since World War II. More than 4 million Syrians have fled from their home country fleeing conflict and violence, and 6.5 million are displaced internally.

At a time when the world needs humanitarian leadership, some are now calling for the suspension of the U.S. refugee resettlement program or the imposition of restrictions on funding for Syrians and other groups of refugees. We oppose these proposals and believe they would jeopardize the United States' moral leadership in the world.

Syrian refugees are fleeing exactly the kind of terror that unfolded on the streets of Paris. They have suffered violence just like this for almost five years. Most have lost loved ones to persecution and violence, in addition to having had their country, their community, and everything they own brutally taken from them.

Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted group of people who come to the United States. Security screenings are rigorous and involve the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies. Department of Homeland Security officials interview each refugee to determine whether they meet the refugee definition and whether they are admissible to the United States. Refugees undergo a series of biometric and investigatory background checks, including collection and analysis of personal data, fingerprints, photographs, and other background information, all of which is checked against government databases. The entire process typically takes more than two years and often much more before the refugee would arrive in the U.S. In addition the Administration is already taking steps, with its existing authority, to increase the capacity of its security and screening procedures for refugees. There is no need for Congress to impose additional restrictions or security measures.

The United States decides which refugees to resettle. Because so few refugees in the world are resettled, the U.S. often chooses the most vulnerable, including refugees who cannot remain safely where they are and families with children who cannot receive the medical care they need to survive.

To turn our back on refugees would be to betray our nation's core values. It would send a demoralizing and dangerous message to the world that the United States makes judgments about people based on the country they come from and their religion. This feeds into extremist propaganda and makes us all less safe. We call upon Congress to demonstrate leadership by speaking out against the scapegoating of any group during this time of crisis and to ensure that our nation's humanitarian efforts are robust.

The United States is a welcoming country with a diverse society and our resettlement program must continue to reflect this.

We can welcome refugees while ensuring our own security. Refugees have enriched communities across our country and have been part of the American fabric for generations. Historically our nation has responded to every major war or conflict and has resettled refugees from Africa, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe as well as the Middle East. Closing the door to refugees would be disastrous for not only the refugees themselves, but their family members in the United States who are waiting for them to arrive, and our reputation in the world.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Adrian Dominican Sisters
The Advocates for Human Rights
Alliance for a Just Society
Alliance for Citizenship
Alliance of Baptists
Ameinu (Our People)
America's Voice Education Fund
American Civil Liberties Union
American Immigration Lawyers Association
American Jewish Committee (AJC)
American Refugee Committee
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
America's Voice Education Fund
Anti-Defamation League
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies
Asylum Access
Auburn Theological Seminary
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
Bethany Christian Services
CARE USA
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
Center for Justice and Accountability
Center for New Community
Center for Victims of Torture
Centro de los Derechos de Inmigrante, Inc.
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries
The Christian Reformed Church in North America
Church of the Brethren
Church World Service
CODEPINK: Women for Peace
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic
Community of St. Egidio USA
Concern Worldwide (US) Inc.
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Congregation of St. Joseph
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Courage Campaign
The Episcopal Church
Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding

Faiths for Safe Water
Farmworker Justice
Food for the Hungry
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Federation of the Third Order Regular Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis
Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Habonim Dror North America
Handicap International
HealthRight International
HIAS
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, JPIC - USA
Human Rights First
Ignatian Solidarity Network
InterAction
International Catholic Migration Commission
International Refugee Assistance Project
International Rescue Committee
Iraqi Christians Advocacy and Empowerment Institute (ICAE)
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, National Advocacy Office
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Jesuits Midwest
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Labor Committee
Justice for Our Neighbors
Jewish Women International
Khmer Health Advocates
Kids In Need of Defense (KIND)
Ladies of Charity of the United States of America
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
Little Sisters of the Assumption
Little Sisters of the Assumption Family in Mission
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Mercy-USA for Aid and Development
Mi Familia Vota
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Churches, USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Employment Law Project
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum

National Immigration Law Center
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National People's Action
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Niswa Association, Incorporated
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates
Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
OneAmerica
ORAM – Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration
Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
Oxfam America
Partnership for Global Justice
Partnerships for Trauma Recovery
Peace Action West
People for the American Way
Positive American-Islamic Relations
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Refugee Solidarity Network
Refugees International
RefugePoint
Relief International
Religious of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ)
Save the Children
Scalabrini International Migration Network - SIMN
School Sisters of Notre Dame
School Sisters of Notre Dame AM Province JPIC Office
School Sisters of Notre Dame Central Pacific Province
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Leadership Team
Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross
Sisters of Mercy, New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Leadership Team Sisters of the Holy Family
Society of the Sacred Heart, United States-Canada Province
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Border Communities Coalition
Southern Poverty Law Center
Spanish Education for Women
St. Mary di Rosa Academies
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities
SustainUS: U.S. Youth for Justice
Swasia Charity Foundation
Syria Relief Development
Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Tahirih Justice Center
UNANIMA International
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
United Farm Workers
United for a Free Syria (UFS)
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
United to End Genocide
United We Dream
Universal Muslim Association of America
USA Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus
USAction
UU College of Social Justice
UURISE – Unitarian Universalist Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education, Inc.
Voices for Progress
Voto Latino
We Belong Together
Welcoming America
William M. & Miriam F. Meehan Foundation
Win Without War
Women’s Refugee Commission
Workmen’s Circle
World Relief
YWCA USA

Alaska

Catholic Social Services

Arizona

International Rescue Committee - Glendale
International Rescue Committee - Tucson
Refugee Focus- A Division of Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest

Arkansas

Arkansas Interfaith Alliance

California

Alliance for African Assistance
Armenian Relief Society of Western USA, Social Services
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Americans for Community Involvement
Asian Law Alliance
Behavioral Health Board of Santa Clara County
Catholic Charities / First 5 Family Resource Center
Catholic Charities of Los Angeles
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County - Refugee Foster Care
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa
Catholic Diocese of San Jose

Center for Employment Training Immigration and Citizenship Program
CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST)
Community Lawyers Inc
Community Health for Asian Americans
Congregation of Notre Dame USA Peace and Justice Office
Diversity in Health Training Institute
Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles
Family Alliance for Counseling Tools & Resolution
First Congregational Church of Palo Alto, UCC
Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service
International Institute of L.A.
International Institute of the Bay Area
International Rescue Committee - San Diego
Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Karen Organization of San Diego
Korean Resource Center
La Maestra Community Health Centers
Northwest Forest Worker Center
Oakland Unified School District Refugee & Asylee Program
Opening Doors, Inc.
Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans
Program for Torture Victims
Refugee Forum of Orange County
Refugee Transitions
SDS Hope House
Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN)
Somali Family Service of San Diego
Somos Mayfair
Survivors of Torture, International
UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee & Immigrant Services & Education
World Relief Garden Grove

Colorado

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
ECDC/African Community Center

Connecticut

International Institute of Connecticut
Iris - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services
Jewish Community Relations Council of New Haven
Noank Baptist Church
Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford

Florida

Catholic Charities of Central Florida
Catholic Charities Bureau Inc.

Catholic Charities Diocese of Palm Beach
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami
Coptic Orthodox Charities, Inc.
Church World Service - Palm Beach
Church World Service - South Florida
Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services
Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida, Inc.
World Relief Jacksonville
Youth Co-Op, Inc.

Georgia

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Atlanta
Catholic Charities of South Georgia

Idaho

Agency for New Americans
Global Community Partners
Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Oasis SDA Church
United Vision for Idaho

Illinois

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
Heartland Alliance Marjorie Kovler Center
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
Syrian Community Network
Women in Search of Peace

Indiana

Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.

Iowa

Catholic Charities - Des Moines
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Davenport
Central Plains Mennonite Conference
Crossing Borders - Dubuque
EMBARC
Franciscan Peace Center
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Kentucky

Americana Community Center
Catholic Charities of Louisville
International Center of Kentucky
Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Lexington
Sarah's Place Women's Resource Center, Inc.

Maine

Maine Sister of Mercy Justice Committee

Maryland

American Hindu World Service
Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus
St Camillus Catholic Church

Massachusetts

Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston
Catholic Charities Diocese of Springfield
Community Legal Services and Counseling Center
The First Baptist Church in Jamaica Plain
International Institute of New England
Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Jewish Family Service of Metrowest
Jewish Family Service of Western Massachusetts
JVS, Greater Boston
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)

Michigan

American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (Michigan Regional Office)
Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services (ACCESS)
Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan
Christ Community Church
Dominican Sisters - Grand Rapids
Foundation for Justice and Development (FJD)
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project, Inc.
Michigan Muslim Community Council
The Muslim Unity Center
Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary
Syrian American Rescue Network (SARN)
University of Michigan International Policy Student Association
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – Detroit

Minnesota

Faith Mennonite Church
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
Jewish Community Action

Missouri

Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma
City of St. Louis Mental Health Board
International Institute of St. Louis
Jewish Vocational Service
Mercy Professional Services
Saint Louis Mental Health Board

Nebraska

Justice for Our Neighbors – Nebraska
Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc.
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest
Notre Dame Sisters Omaha Leadership
Schlegel Center for Service and Justice at Creighton University
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community

Nevada

Life, Peace & Justice Commission, Diocese of Reno
Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

New Jersey

SMILE for Charity

New Mexico

New Mexico Immigrant Law Center

New York

African Services Committee, Inc.
American Baptist Rochester Genesee Region
Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Buffalo Diocese Care for Creation Committee
Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany
Catholic Family Center
Citizen Action of New York
Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Greater Rochester Coalition for Immigration Justice
International Institute of Buffalo
Jewish Family Service of Buffalo and Erie County
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Journey's End Refugee Services, Inc.
Kids for College
Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service
Long Island Wins
Make the Road New York
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Social Service of Buffalo
St. Raphael PSM
The Interfaith Center of New York
Wayne Action for Racial Equality

North Carolina

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc.
Church World Service - Durham
Church World Service - Greensboro, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Program
Interfaith Refugee Ministry
Interfaith Refugee Ministry - Wilmington
NC African Services Coalition
The Art Therapy Institute
US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants - North Carolina

Northern Mariana Islands

Karidat

Ohio

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio
Catholic Social Services - Columbus
Community Refugee & Immigration Services
Congregation of St. Joseph
Congregation of St. Joseph Peace and Justice Team
International Services Center of Cleveland
ProgressOhio
SC Ministry Foundation

Oregon

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Sponsors Organized To Assist Refugees
Oregon Action
Oregon Center for Christian Voices
SEIU Local 49
SEIU Local 503
Unidos Bridging Community

Pennsylvania

Advocacy for Justice and Peace Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
AJAPO
Casa de la Cultura
Casa San Jose
Catholic Charities Counseling and Adoption Services
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Greensburg
Church World Service - Lancaster
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
HIAS Pennsylvania
Immigration Taskforce, Southwestern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
Justice and Peace Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Keystone Progress
Nationalities Service Center
Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Rhode Island

Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence Immigration & Refugee Service

Tennessee

Bridge Refugee Services, Inc. - Chattanooga
Bridge Refugee Services, Inc. - Knoxville
Catholic Charities of Tennessee
Nashville International Center for Empowerment
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Texas

Amistad Houston
Caritas of Austin
Catholic Charities of Dallas
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
International Rescue Committee - Dallas
Migration and Refugee Services, Houston
Refugee Services of Texas - Amarillo
Refugee Services of Texas - Dallas
Texas Impact

Utah

Catholic Community Services of Utah
Utah Health & Human Rights

Virginia

Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington
Church World Service – Harrisonburg, Immigration & Refugee Program
International Neighbors, Inc.

Vermont

New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma
Vermont Ecumenical Council and Bible Society

Virginia

Charlottesville Social Services
Northern Virginia Family Service
Virginia Council of Churches

Washington

Faith Action Network
Jewish Family Service - Seattle
OneAmerica
Tacoma Community House
Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Wisconsin

Catholic Charities Diocese of La Crosse
Marquette University Center for Peacemaking
Wisconsin Council of Churches

West Virginia

West Virginia Citizen Action Group

Wyoming

Wyoming Association of Churches