



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2020

PRESS CONTACTS

Amnesty International USA: Mariya Parodi, Press Officer, mparodi@aiusa.org, 212-633-4211

IRAP: Mackenzie Sheldon, Digital Campaigns Manager, media@refugeerights.org, 516-838-1269

IRC: Charlie Ozuturk, charlie.ozuturk@rescue.org, 732-552-5080

LIRS: Timothy Young, tyoung@lirs.org, 443-257-6310

540 BIPARTISAN ELECTED OFFICIALS FROM ALL 50 STATES URGE PRESIDENT TRUMP TO WELCOME REFUGEES

(New York, NY) Today, 540 local and state elected officials from all 50 states and the District of Columbia expressed their strong support for resettling refugees in their communities in a bipartisan letter sent to President Trump. The [letter](#), supported by Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), urges the President to raise refugee admissions for Fiscal Year 2021.

Last year, President Trump dealt a devastating blow to communities across the United States and vulnerable people abroad when he slashed the refugee admissions goal to 18,000, the lowest in the history of the resettlement program. In stark contrast to the low number of refugees being resettled to the United States, there are nearly 80 million forcibly displaced people worldwide searching for a safe place to call home, about 26 million of whom are refugees.

The letter was signed by Governor Jay Inslee of Washington, as well as 63 Mayors, including Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City, Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, Mayor Jim Kenney of Philadelphia, Mayor Lori Lightfoot of Chicago, Mayor Sylvester Turner of Houston, and Mayor Martin J. Walsh of Boston. These leaders acknowledged the moral imperative of protecting the persecuted, and the profound impact refugees have on the communities that welcome them.

Governor Jay Inslee (WA) shared, "We are honored to remain a place of safety and security for those fleeing persecution and violence. Refugees contribute to all sectors of our economy – as teachers, service members, doctors and more – while adding to our cultural landscape. They are an integral part of Washington's past, present and future."

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan (NY) noted, "As the Mayor of a City where more than one in ten residents is born in a country other than the United States, we have seen first-hand the positive impact refugees and immigrants have on our community." **St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson (MO)** pointed to the city's storied history of welcoming tens of thousands of refugees from across the globe since 1979, adding: "Today, these former refugees are entrepreneurs, homeowners, neighbors and taxpayers. They are also a valuable part of the cultural fiber of our community."

Among the signatories were also city council members, state legislators, and other state and local elected leaders from all levels of government. They include elected officials from every state in the country, and from across party lines. **State Representative Raymond Ward (UT)** stated, "Accepting and integrating refugees makes our community a more vibrant and interesting and wholesome place to be. It makes things better for us and better for them." Further evidence of resettled refugees' deep commitment to the communities that welcome them were the former refugees turned elected officials that signed on to the letter, including New Hampshire State Representative Safiya Wazir, Massachusetts State Representative Tram T. Nguyen, and Virginia Delegate Kathy Tran.



Signatories acknowledged the ongoing challenge COVID-19 poses to our country and the world, and affirmed that refugees have been, and will continue to be, vital in the fight to keep our communities fed, healthy, and safe. **Ada County Commissioner Diana Lachiondo** (ID) shared, “Refugees are on the front lines as doctors, nurses, hospital janitors, grocery store workers and food producers. They are literally keeping our community running while we get through this time.” The signatories’ support demonstrates that welcoming refugees and protecting public health during this pandemic are not mutually exclusive.

By signing this letter, these elected officials have joined together to voice their commitment to welcoming refugees in their communities and reviving the United States’ legacy as a leader in refugee resettlement.

To view the letter and signatories, [click here](#).

###