



International Refugee
Assistance Project

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EMERGENCY CHANGES TO U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS ARE WELCOME, DON'T LIVE UP TO PROMISE OR NEED

(Washington, D.C.) – Today, after a two months delay causing travel cancelations for hundreds of refugees, President Biden finally issued an emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions (PD), lifting Trump-era restrictions on refugee resettlement, but leaving the Trump Administration's all-time low admissions goal of 15,000 refugees for Fiscal Year 2021 in place.

The [International Refugee Assistance Project \(IRAP\)](#) welcomes the changes that will provide immediate relief for vulnerable refugees banned from resettlement under the previous refugee policy. At the same time, by not increasing the total number of refugees that can be resettled in the U.S., the Biden Administration maintains an unprecedented restrictive Trump policy that has hampered the U.S. resettlement program and falls short of the urgent global need for refugee protection and the Administration's own promises and ambitions.

In February, the Biden Administration submitted a [Report to Congress](#) on the Proposed Emergency Presidential Determination, followed by consultations with Congress on the proposal. At the time, the Biden Administration proposed to admit 62,500 refugees this year, reflecting a prorated number in line with the 125,000 target President Biden had repeatedly promised to set for Fiscal Year 2022. This proposal was generally applauded and did not meet widespread opposition from Republicans or Democrats. It is simply a tragic misstep for President Biden to negotiate against himself and keep President Trump's refugee goal.

"We appreciate the Administration's renewed focus on the vulnerability of refugees and the rescission of policies that perpetuated discrimination of refugees based on why they were persecuted or where they are from. That said, it is disappointing and highly unusual to see the Administration backtrack on its proposal to increase refugee admissions overall," **said IRAP's Policy Director, Sunil Varghese.**

"The goal of admitting 62,500 refugees, as the president initially proposed, was welcomed because it was ambitious; it mirrored the aspirations of a new Administration wanting to reassert the primacy of human rights and America's role as a place of refuge. Even if the United States was unable to meet this target, the signal would help restore hope to long-suffering, long-separated refugee

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families and encourage other countries to do more. Symbolism matters, especially in global leadership and refugee protection, because the need for safe haven far outstrips anything one country can provide. President Biden came into office promising to be an 'ally of the light, not the darkness.' But to many refugees today, that light became a flicker."

IRAP calls on the Administration to swiftly restore robust processing and admissions, quickly meet the goal of resettling 15,000 refugees, and reinstate the process to increase the refugee target later this year. At the same time, the Administration must ensure that all refugees who had their flights canceled will be able to enter the United States without further delays, including promptly expediting any checks or documentation that may have expired due to the president's delay.

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