

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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PRESS CONTACT

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FISHER: "Private sponsorship of refugees is about expanding bridges between local communities and refugees in need."

QUIGLEY: "At a time when there are more refugees fleeing violence and persecution than at any time since World War II, private sponsorship would allow for a greater number of refugees to rebuild their lives in safety in the United States"

New York, NY, OCTOBER 17, 2016 – Today, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) at the Urban Justice Center and Human Rights First published a white paper on private sponsorship of refugee resettlement. The white paper outlines the key principles for designing and implementing a pilot program in the United States.

Modeled after the already existing program in Canada, such a program could be a critical opportunity for the United States to increase its refugee resettlement numbers and further refugee integration in its communities. Moreover, a private sponsorship option would take advantage of the growing desire among communities and individuals to be directly involved in helping refugee families, as well as open up new avenues for private-public partnerships in refugee resettlement.

As suggested in the paper, key principles for implementing private sponsorship include:

- Any private sponsorship program in the United States should maintain the principle of "additionality"; any refugees who are resettled using private sponsorship should be in addition to refugees who are resettled using government funds.
- Refugees admitted through the private sponsorship program would undergo identical processing and screening as other refugees.
- Models for pairing sponsors and refugees in a private sponsorship program could accommodate the motivations of sponsors to assist their family or community members. Any sponsorship system should ensure that resettlement remains focused on assisting the world's most vulnerable refugees.



- Private sponsors would provide a range of resources, financial and otherwise, to the sponsored refugee and would be partnered with a resettlement agency or other organization.

IRAP's Policy Director, Betsy Fisher, said: "Private sponsorship of refugees is about expanding bridges between local communities and refugees in need. Sponsorship has the potential to increase the number of refugees who can be resettled, while also allowing American sponsors to build direct and personal relationships with refugees."

"Americans have long supported the ideal of providing refuge for the persecuted. At a time when there are more refugees fleeing violence and persecution than at any time since World War II, private sponsorship would allow for a greater number of refugees to rebuild their lives in safety in the United States," said **Human Rights First's Jennifer Quigley**.

After several months of advocacy from IRAP, Human Rights First, and other refugee advocacy organizations, the U.S. State Department announced on September 20, 2016, that a pilot program may be launched before the end of the current administration. IRAP and Human Rights First urge the government to pursue this plan that would increase U.S. refugee resettlement numbers in the coming years in order to alleviate the ever growing humanitarian crisis.

IRAP and Human Rights First will hold a joined press call to discuss the findings of the report today, October 17th, at 1:00 pm EDT. To receive dial-in instructions, RSVP to media@refugeerights.org.