

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 1, 2017

**PRESS CONTACT**

Henrike Dessaules

646.459.3081

[hdessaules@refugeerights.org](mailto:hdessaules@refugeerights.org)**IRAP STANDS WITH IRAQI ALLIES OF THE UNITED STATES AFFECTED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER**

**(NEW YORK, NY)** – [The International Refugee Assistance Project \(IRAP\)](#) at the Urban Justice Center stands in strong support of those affected by the recent executive order signed by President Trump. IRAP notes the [Pentagon's efforts](#) to exempt certain Iraqi allies from the order, which bans refugees and visa holders from seven countries, including Iraq.

“Efforts to exempt Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants from the order provide welcome relief to individuals, though thousands of Iraqis who served the United States will continue to be excluded,” said **Betsy Fisher, Policy Director of the International Refugee Assistance Project at the Urban Justice Center**. “Effects of the executive order on Iraqis were swift and devastating, with families being detained for hours and torn apart without warning.”

Employees of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan face extensive threats because of their work for the United States. As a result, Congress created the Afghan SIV program, Iraqi SIV program, and the Iraqi Direct Access Program. Applicants in each of these programs must submit extensive verification of their work, including recommendations from U.S. supervisors, and extensive security vetting.

Iraqi allies, including SIV holders, were initially subject to the executive order's 90-day ban. Among the [first detained](#) at airports after the executive order was signed were two individuals who had faced significant threats because of their service.

“Thousands of Iraqi allies who worked for the United States are also applying for a path to safety through the Direct Access Program as part of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. This program is essential because the Iraqi SIV program closed to new applications as of Sept. 30, 2014. These individuals are subject to a ban of at least 120 days that applies to all refugee resettlement,” said Fisher.

“This list of Iraqis to be exempt from the ban is a necessary step, but a drop in the ocean. Firstly, it will be difficult for the Department of Defense to identify all of the Iraqis in need as

Safe Passage. New Beginnings.

40 Rector St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10006

T 646.602.5600 • [refugeerights.org](http://refugeerights.org) • [twitter.com/RefugeeAssist](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAssist) • [facebook.com/RefugeeAssist](https://facebook.com/RefugeeAssist)



U.S.-affiliated Iraqis have worked with many U.S. agencies, as well as a variety of outside contractors,” said Fisher.

“An exemption list should be unnecessary, given that the SIV and Direct Access refugee programs already verify people’s service and background. These applicants, like others seeking safety in the United States through refugee resettlement, will be turned away and left in danger because of this ban. Beyond a list of specific individuals to be exempted from an overall damaging policy, we need this ban to be rescinded,” Fisher concluded.

###

International Refugee Assistance Project at the Urban Justice Center

[www.refugeerights.org](http://www.refugeerights.org)

[www.twitter.com/RefugeeAssist](https://www.twitter.com/RefugeeAssist)

[www.facebook.com/RefugeeAssist/](https://www.facebook.com/RefugeeAssist/)

Safe Passage. New Beginnings.

40 Rector St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10006

T 646.602.5600 • [refugeerights.org](http://refugeerights.org) • [twitter.com/RefugeeAssist](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAssist) • [facebook.com/RefugeeAssist](https://facebook.com/RefugeeAssist)