



Dear Respected Senators and Representatives:

We are law students who volunteer with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) and supervising attorneys to provide pro bono legal services to refugees and displaced people who are in desperate need of legal pathways to safety. We are writing to commemorate World Refugee Day 2017, and to urge you to support refugee protection.

You are, no doubt, familiar with the vast scope of forced displacement today—more than 20 million refugees and 65 million people forced to flee their homes throughout the world. We represent, and have come to personally know, some of the most vulnerable of these individuals. As a few examples, we have represented:

- An Iraqi Christian family who faced targeted violence, amounting to genocide, in their home country. They escaped to neighboring Jordan, but are not allowed to work there and fear that, if they are caught working, they will be sent back to Iraq where they face certain danger. Their family members in the United States are willing to welcome them into their homes, but the family must wait through years-long processing before receiving approval for travel.
- A child with urgent medical needs. Medical experts in the United States confirmed that the child would die without surgical intervention, which is readily available in European and North American hospitals.
- An Afghan man who worked as a translator with U.S. forces. He has received threats and narrowly escaped kidnapping attempts from the Taliban. He applied to the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program in 2013, but is still waiting for approval. He does not leave his house during the daytime, and he switches apartments regularly to avoid detection.
- A transgender woman who has been attacked and harassed because of her gender identity, in both her home country and the location where she is living in hiding.
- A Somali mother whose husband was murdered; they both come from a minority ethnic group that has been targeted and largely eliminated by the terrorist group Al-Shabab. She has waited for many years in the Middle East, facing daily harassment because of her dark skin. She is not authorized to work, but she knows she cannot return to Somalia, where there is danger and famine.

Safe Passage. New Beginnings.

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- An Iraqi family who is at dire risk because the father worked as a security guard for U.S. Government officials in Iraq. After the Special Immigrant Visa program closed to Iraqis in 2014, he was unable to pursue that program. He now is waiting in the U.S. refugee program pipeline, but he worries that the United States will end or drastically slow down its resettlement program. He has already been waiting for five years with his family, living in hiding.

The people we assist have this in common: they fear for their lives because of who they are or what they believe. They remain at risk despite having left their homes: risks from terrorists, despots, and a lack of medical care. As these cases show, refugees have not chosen their plight. They have chosen to pursue survival and a safe future for their children.

The United States can stand with these refugees by offering them legal pathways to safety, including refugee resettlement, and by supporting humanitarian relief in host countries. In doing so, the United States counters propaganda from the so-called Islamic State and other terrorist groups that the United States is at war with Islam and hates Islam and its adherents.

We urge you to:

- Support resettlement of at least 75,000 refugees in fiscal year 2018, with funding to support the short-term services that allow refugees to become quickly self-sufficient and to contribute to their new communities;
- Fund humanitarian relief and development in refugee host countries; and
- Demonstrate your support for those fleeing serious harm, regardless of their race, nationality, ethnicity, or religion.

Sincerely,

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