



International Refugee
Assistance Project

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MAJOR SETTLEMENT SECURES RELIEF FOR REFUGEES LEFT BEHIND BY REFUGEE BAN

(Seattle, WA) – Today, the government entered into a major settlement with plaintiffs in *Jewish Family Service v. Trump*, which challenged the Trump administration’s [refugee ban](#) issued on October 24, 2017. The executive order had imposed new restrictions on refugees, including suspending admission of refugees from 11 countries and family members of refugees who are already resettled in the United States (known as “follow-to-join refugees”). The ban set back the refugees who were on the brink of resettlement to the United States in 2017, miring their cases in mounting delays for the past two years.

This settlement requires the government to expedite the refugee resettlement applications of over 300 refugees affected by the ban, including all individual plaintiffs and any other refugees who had reached the final stages of processing in October 2017, but still have pending applications.

Among the plaintiffs are an Iraqi man hiding in Egypt who had worked as a translator for the U.S. military, a Somali refugee trying to be reunited with his wife and young son, and refugee resettlement agencies that had assured clients who never arrived. All of them have been waiting for refugee processing to resume and move forward since the issuance of the executive order.

Importantly, any refugee benefitting from the settlement who will travel to the United States will be included in the total count of refugees admitted in fiscal year 2018, when the order was first issued and when the refugee should have arrived if processing had not been suspended. This ensures that they will not be taking any slots away from the 18,000 refugees that the Administration plans to resettle for fiscal year 2020, which is the lowest



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admissions goal that any President has ever set since the establishment of the Refugee Act in 1980. In fiscal year 2018, the admissions goal was 45,000 refugees but only 22,491 refugees were resettled.

Jewish Family Service v. Trump was brought on behalf of Jewish Family Service of Seattle, Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley, and nine individual plaintiffs by attorneys at the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP); the National Immigration Law Center (NILC); Perkins Coie LLP; HIAS, the global Jewish nonprofit that protects refugees; and individual attorneys Lauren Aguiar, Mollie M. Kornreich, and Abigail Shaheen Davis. The case has been consolidated with *Doe v. Trump*.

In response to the historic settlement, the counsel and plaintiffs issued the following statements:

Afkab Mohamed Hussein, a resettled refugee from Somalia awaiting the arrival of his wife and son: “I believe this settlement is a great success for all refugees around the world, especially families who are separated. I am feeling very happy and hope to welcome my family in the best country in the world. I would like to ask the government to bring more people and reunite separated families and give a second chance to those in need, so they can find a better life.”

John Doe 1, an Iraqi refugee in Egypt and former interpreter for the U.S. military in Iraq: “I can't wait for the moment to meet [my military friends] once again! I have hope that this settlement can make that moment reality! I also hope to save my wife and two daughters in Iraq, and to start a new and safe life in a new homeland that will respect their rights as women and respect their father for his service with the U.S. Army, and where they will have the right to express their opinions and feelings without fear.”

Rabbi Will Berkovitz, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Family Service of Seattle: “We are grateful justice prevailed and our clients have the possibility of reuniting with their parents and children. Despite this small victory, millions of refugees around the world continue to experience unimaginable danger at a time when the United States is admitting the fewest number of refugees in history. We look forward to a time when, once again, our country can reliably represent hope for refugees and the Statue of Liberty's flame is not diminished.”

Mindy Berkowitz, Executive Director, Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley: “We appreciate the hope and real results that this settlement brings to our refugee clients who have lived with unimaginable worry about their relatives who haven't been able to join them. Reuniting these families is a beautiful way to bring joy to these families!”

Mark Hetfield, President and CEO, HIAS: “We at HIAS are pleased that we and our partners-in-welcome have reached a settlement with the Trump Administration which will reunite some of the refugee families who were kept apart by the refugee ban. At the same time, we are deeply saddened to have to sue the United States government, which was once a leader in refugee resettlement, just to get it to live up to basic legal commitments to those refugees who have played by the rules to come here legally.”



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Mariko Hirose, Litigation Director, IRAP: “We are thrilled that this settlement provides some relief to our clients, who had been stuck in an administrative nightmare for far too long, often while separated from their families and navigating dangerous daily situations. This is one step towards rebuilding the U.S. commitment to a refugee program that provides a fair and reliable pathway to safety for those who are fleeing violence.”

Marielena Hincapié, Executive Director, NILC: “This settlement is a victory for refugees who have been kept from their families and unfairly targeted by Trump’s racist refugee ban. While expediting refugee resettlement applications is encouraging, there are still far too many people who remain separated because of the drastic reduction in refugee admissions goals. We must uphold our country’s values and fight for a strong refugee resettlement program.”

To view the press release, click [here](#).

The text of the settlement can be viewed [here](#).

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