

March 11, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As 42 heads of office and high level religious leaders across traditions, we write to commend your commitment to restoring the refugee resettlement program and your Administration's recent proposal to issue an Emergency Fiscal Year 2021 Presidential Determination (PD) on Refugee Admissions of 62,500. While we are encouraged by your Administration's recent consultations with Congress regarding this proposal, **we are deeply concerned that the FY21 PD has not yet been signed and urge you to immediately sign a new, revised FY21 Presidential Determination and restore regional allocations based on vulnerability and need.**

We are deeply concerned about the more than 700 canceled refugee resettlement flights and the plan to cancel even more flights this month. It is important to note that not only are refugee families anxious to be reunified, but also a lot of resettlement sites have already secured housing and set up welcome teams for arrivals that have been assured and booked for travel. Urgently signing the new refugee admissions goal will prevent the cancellation of travel for hundreds of refugees scheduled to arrive over the coming weeks, honor your promise to protect refugee families, and reverse much of the damage done to the resettlement program under the previous administration.

We are called by our sacred texts and faith principles to love our neighbor, accompany the vulnerable, and welcome the sojourner. Our congregations, synagogues, and mosques have historically played key roles in assisting refugees with housing, language, employment, and social support necessary for rapid and effective resettlement into U.S. communities. Yet, our commitment to offer refuge from violence and persecution requires our government to demonstrate the moral leadership upon which our nation was founded. Each day that passes without this signed executive action is another day that hundreds of particularly vulnerable refugees are forced to wait to be resettled.

At no other time has our moral responsibility to uphold these principles been greater. War, conflict, and persecution have forced millions to leave their homes, creating more refugees than at any other time in history. There are [79.5 million displaced persons worldwide](#), including more than 29 million refugees, over half of whom are children. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [reports](#) that global resettlement needs have doubled in recent years reaching over 1.44 million refugees in 2020. We grieve for the refugees who now face increasingly dismal chances at finding safety and who are affected by COVID-19, as well as refugee families still waiting to be reunited. The reduction in national partners translates to a loss of capacity, expertise, and opportunity, and it prevents Americans of faith from fulfilling part of their spiritual practice.

Faith communities in particular remain ready and eager to welcome refugees and decry the policies that are preventing refugees from receiving protection at this time. For decades, people of faith have welcomed refugees into our homes, houses of worship, and communities. We know our nation has strong systems in place to process asylum claims at and within our borders, and a strong refugee resettlement program, both of which have existed and operated in tandem for decades. Refugees are powerful ambassadors of our founding principles of equal opportunity, religious freedom, and liberty and justice for all. Our experiences working alongside refugees mirror the statistics that demonstrate that refugees bring tangible benefits to U.S. communities by starting businesses, becoming homeowners, revitalizing local economies, and becoming civic leaders.

Refugee resettlement is the last resort for those who cannot return to their home country due to ongoing violence or for reasons of personal safety, and who cannot stay in the country into which they have fled. Since its inception in 1980, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has been an international model, providing refugees protection with bipartisan support through our public-private partnership. The

USRAP has successfully provided more than three million refugees tools for integration and self-sufficiency to start over in safety and our communities have in turn benefitted from these individuals. As a pillar of U.S. foreign policy, our nation's resettlement program represents a standard of excellence that other countries look to as a touchstone for their own policies. Refugees further contribute greatly to the United States in ordinary times, and have continued to show up for their new communities during the COVID-19 crisis, with many working on the frontlines of the pandemic, including 176,000 refugees serving in the healthcare field and 175,000 working as part of the food supply chain. We can – and should – continue the safe resettlement of refugees in the United States.

We urge your Administration to swiftly honor its commitment to restoring and strengthening the refugee resettlement program by immediately signing a new, revised FY21 Presidential Determination of 62,500. Our collective scriptural mandate and our nation's history and capabilities as a world leader demand no less.

Sincerely,

Executive Minister Paul Robinson, Love Mercy Do Justice, Evangelical Covenant Church
Ms. Susan Gunn, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Rev. Greg Yee, Pacific Northwest Conference for the Evangelical Covenant Church
Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, American Baptist Churches, USA
Rev. Ron Stief, National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Paula Clayton Dempsey, Director of Partnership Relations, Alliance of Baptists
Rev. Dr. David Vásquez-Levy, Pacific School of Religion
Rev. Phil Tom, International Council of Community Churches
Bishop W. Darin Moore, AME Zion Church
Mark Hetfield, President and CEO, HIAS
Mr. Johnny Zokovitch, Pax Christi USA
Bishop Grant Hagiya, United Methodist Church
Sister Carol Zinn, SSJ, Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Rev. David Steele, Church of the Brethren
Pablo DeJesus, Executive Director, Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Lawrence Couch, Director, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Sr. Brigid Lawlor, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Rev. Dr. Betsy Miller, Moravian Church Northern Province
Rev. Gabriel Salguero, National Latino Evangelical Coalition
Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief
Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church
Sheila Katz, CEO, National Council of Jewish Women
Rev. Eugene Cho, President/CEO, Bread for the World
Walter Kim, President, National Association of Evangelicals
Galen Carey, Vice President for Government Relations Galen Carey, National Association of Evangelicals
Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Director for Advocacy, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, United Methodist
Chris Palusky, President & CEO, Bethany Christian Services
Rabbi Jill Jacobs, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Dr. Kim Lamberty, JPIC Office at the Stuart Center
Margaret Conley, Director of Institute Justice Team, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Institute Justice Team
James Winkler, President, National Council of Churches
Jeffrey Haggray, Executive Director, American Baptist Home Mission Societies
Rev. Jennifer Butler, CEO, Faith in Public Life Action
Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, United Church of Christ/Global Ministries
Rev. General Minister and President Teresa (Terri) Hord Owens, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States & Canada

Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director, Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries Sharon Stanley-Rea,
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
The Rev. Canon C.K. Robertson, The Episcopal Church
Bishop Minerva Carcaño, United Methodist Immigration Task Force
Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Orthodox Church