

September 18, 2015

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you today with urgent recommendations for how the United States should respond to the spiraling refugee crisis in the Middle East that is now overflowing to Europe and beyond.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. In light of the continuing escalation of the dire refugee crises in the Middle East, contributing to the largest number of refugees since World War II, we urge the United States to increase the number of refugees that we resettle to 200,000 for FY 16, with 100,000 of them being Syrian. This would not be the first time that the United States proudly carries out our historic tradition of welcoming refugees in large numbers. After the end of the wars in Southeast Asia, the United States resettled 111,000 Vietnamese refugees in 1979 and then essentially doubled that number to 207,000 in 1980. The United States' rising to the occasion now would both encourage European nations to live up to their refugee protection obligations, and help to prevent further deterioration in the protection climate in the countries bordering on Syria that are currently hosting millions of Syrian refugees.
2. We believe that the vast majority of European countries have the capacity to welcome and provide protection for the refugees who are now risking their lives to find safety in Europe. However, the United States must show solidarity with its close allies in Europe and resettle a small number of refugees from Europe, including U.S. family reunification cases, unaccompanied refugee minors, and refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan who have close ties to the United States (NGO workers, interpreters, people affiliate with US business and other interests).
3. The United States has provided \$4 billion in funding to address the Syrian humanitarian crisis. We commend this tremendous generosity, but given that only 37% of the U.N's funding appeal in response to the crisis has been funded, we encourage the United States to continue to urge other countries to increase their funding of the humanitarian response while at the same time continuing to increase the amount that the United States gives.

4. It is abundantly clear that the Syrian crisis is nowhere close to ending, and even when it does, the needs of those displaced by the crisis will take years, if not generations, to resolve. It is therefore imperative that refugee hosting countries in the region allow refugees to start to legally work. Allowing them to do so will provide them with the opportunity to support their families, and in doing so, will help to alleviate the crushing poverty and desperation that are forcing so many to make the treacherous journeys to Europe. It is also imperative that the United States engage with major development actors to encourage the expansion of development plans to include refugee and refugee host communities in a further effort to address the extremely dire conditions in which millions are now living throughout the region. This effort could be supported by the convening of a major international conference where the United States could announce its plans to lead the response.

We look forward to working with government partners to ensure that no refugee in need of protection is left behind.

Thank you for your committed leadership on behalf of the world's most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

African Community Center
Alliance for Citizenship
American Baptist Churches USA
American Immigration Council
American Immigration Lawyers Association
The America Team for Displaced Eritreans
Anti-Defamation League
Arab American Institute
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-AAJC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)
Center for Applied Linguistics
Center for Victims of Torture
Church World Service
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Conventual Franciscan Friars - Province of Our Lady of Consolation
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Disciples Justice Action Network
The Episcopal Church
Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Handicap International
HIAS
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters -USA, Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC)
Human Rights First
International Catholic Migration Commission
International Rescue Committee
IRAP (International Refugee Assistance Project)
Islamic Relief USA
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Commission of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, US Province
Karam Foundation, NFP
Kids in Need of Defense
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Law Center
National Justice for Our Neighbors
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Notre Dame de Namur
Office of Peace, Justice and Ecological Integrity, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
The Office of Social Justice, Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)
OneAmerica
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
Plan International USA
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
Refugee Congress (USA)
Relief International
Save the Children USA
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province, JPIC Office
Shaam Relief Foundation
Silk Road Leadership
Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Sojourners
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Syrian Solidarity Movement
Syrian American Council
Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)
Syria Relief and Development
Turkish Heritage Organization
Turkish Policy Center
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Methodist Church
United We Dream
Watan USA

Women for Humanity
Women's Refugee Commission
Zakat Foundation of America

Local Organizations

Arizona

Arizona Immigrant and Refugee Service (AIRS)
Southwest Conference United Church of Christ

Arkansas

Arkansas Interfaith Alliance

California

Alliance for African Assistance
Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship
CARECEN San Francisco
International Institute of Los Angeles (IILA)
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service
Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Contra Costa and Alameda Counties, and Marin and Sonoma Counties
Korean Resource Center
Religious Sisters of Charity
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Colorado

Asian Pacific Development Center
CREED Connections
ECDC African Community Center
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation-Sisters of Saint Francis
Lutheran Family Services Refugee and Asylee Program
Together Colorado Immigration Committee

Connecticut

IRIS-Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services

Florida

Coptic Orthodox Charities
Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance for Immigrant Justice, Gainesville, Florida
North Georgia Immigrant Justice

Illinois

Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center
Project IRENE
Syrian Community Network
Wheaton Franciscans

Indiana

Exodus Refugee Immigration Inc.

Iowa

Crossing Borders – Dubuque

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM)

Kentucky

Centro Cristo Compañero

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)

Refugee Immigrant Assistance Center

Maryland

Jewish Community Services

Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity

Michigan

American Syrian Arab Cultural Association

Bethany Christian Services

Promoter of Justice: Dominican Sisters - Grand Rapids

Missouri

Della Lamb Community Services (Kansas City)

International Institute of St Louis

Nebraska

Lutheran Family Services

Nevada

ECDC African Community Center

New York

African Services Committee

Catholic Family Center

Justice Committee of Sisters of St. Joseph (Brentwood)

Sisters of Charity of New York

Sisters of Saint Joseph (Brentwood)

The Syria Campaign

New Jersey

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth Leadership Team

New Mexico

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains

North Carolina

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc.

NC African Services Coalition

Ohio

Community Refugee & Immigration Services
Episcopal Network for Economic Justice

Oregon

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon / Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR)
Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (IMIJ)

Pennsylvania

Acculturation for Justice, Access & Peace Outreach (AJAPO)
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters Medical Mission Sisters
Immigration Taskforce, Southwestern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Jewish Family & Children's Service
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Sisters of St. Francis Justice Committee

Rhode Island

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island

Texas

Alliance for Multicultural Community Services
Dominican Sisters of Houston
Hope for Peace & Justice
Human Right Initiative of North Texas
Refugee Services of Texas

Virginia

Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) – African Community Center (ACC) DC Metro
ECDC Enterprise Development Group

Washington

Casa Latina
Church Council of Greater Seattle
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
Tacoma Community House

Wisconsin

AILA Washington State Chapter
Seattle Human Rights Commission
Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of Saint Francis (TOSF)
Skagit Immigrant Rights Council

Cc: John Kerry, Secretary of State

Anne Richard, Assistant Secretary of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM),
Department of State