

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Biden,

We are writing to express the urgent need for your Administration to immediately sign an Emergency Presidential Determination to formalize the proposed revised FY21 refugee admissions goal of 62,500, restore regional allocations, and resume resettlement based on vulnerability. Having fought for four years against the Trump Administration's full-scale assault on refugee resettlement in the United States, we were relieved to see you commit to increasing our refugee resettlement numbers so early in your Administration. But until the Emergency Presidential Determination is finalized, our refugee policy remains unacceptably draconian and discriminatory.

We have all been deeply distressed at the stories of hundreds of refugees who had been cleared for resettlement having their flights cancelled at the last minute, in some cases having already left their residences and sold their belongings.¹ We must keep our promises to people who have fled unthinkably brutal conditions in their home countries and live up to our ambition to provide them a safe haven to re-start their lives.

Further, finalizing the Emergency Presidential Determination is a critical step to raise the cap and restore geographic allocations to ensure diversity among admitted refugees. The prior administration's highly restrictive admission categories and bans on the resettlement of refugees from Somalia, Syria, and Yemen have a strong impact on the diversity of refugees, and disproportionately exclude Muslim refugees and those fleeing some of the world's worst crises in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Without this immediate action, the International Rescue Committee now reports that your Administration is currently on track to admit fewer refugees than any other President in U.S. history.² We know that this is not your intention, and not in accordance with your commitments as President or throughout your career in public service. Until you finalize your proposed changes to the program, however, it remains a fact.

There is immense and growing urgency on this issue, for the many who have already been approved for resettlement, and for the unimaginable number of people who continue to hold out hope that they can one day rebuild their lives destroyed by climate, conflict, and repression. There are more displaced people today than at any time in human history, and the growing crises of forced displacement in Ethiopia and the Central African Republic will only add to the millions of Rohingya, Syrians, Venezuelans, Eritreans, Somalis, and many others who have their lives indefinitely on hold. We have it within our power to help alleviate this suffering, to reduce the burdens on overstretched countries in the Global South, and to be a refuge for families who have been forced into unthinkable conditions through no fault of their own.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/12/us/refugees-biden.html>

² <https://www.rescue.org/report/more-same-biden-admit-fewer-refugees-any-president-us-history?edme=true>

We stress again the incredible urgency of finalizing the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for FY2021 immediately. Lives depend on it.


Sincerely,



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Additional signers

Representative Nanette Diaz Barragán
Representative Karen Bass
Representative Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Representative Earl Blumenauer
Representative Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Representative Julia Brownley
Representative Cori Bush
Representative André Carson
Representative Judy Chu
Representative David N. Cicilline
Representative Yvette D. Clarke
Representative Rosa L. DeLauro
Representative Mark DeSaulnier
Representative Debbie Dingell
Representative Adriano Espaillat
Representative Dwight Evans
Representative Ruben Gallego
Representative Sylvia R. Garcia
Representative Raúl M. Grijalva
Representative Brian Higgins
Representative Sara Jacobs
Representative Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.

Representative Mondaire Jones
Representative Barbara Lee
Representative Alan Lowenthal
Representative Carolyn B. Maloney
Representative James P. McGovern
Representative Seth Moulton
Representative Grace Napolitano
Representative Joe Neguse
Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton
Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Representative Mark Pocan
Representative Ayanna Pressley
Representative David E. Price
Representative Bobby L. Rush
Representative Linda T. Sánchez
Representative Adam Smith
Representative Mark Takano
Representative Rashida Tlaib
Representative Paul D. Tonko
Representative Ritchie Torres
Representative Nydia M. Velázquez
Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman
Representative Jennifer Wexton