

# 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.<sup>1</sup> We must keep our promises to people who have fled unthinkable 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

<sup>2</sup> <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 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 Mark DeSaulnier  
Representative Debbie Dingell  
Representative Adriano Espaillat  
Representative Dwight Evans  
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 Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Representative Jennifer Wexton