



CWS Statement to the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, pertaining to its markup of the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act (NO BAN Act) (H.R. 2214) on Wednesday, February 12, 2020

As a 74-year old humanitarian organization representing 37 Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox communions and 24 refugee resettlement offices across 17 states, Church World Service (CWS) urges the Committee to pass the *National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants Act (NO BAN Act)* ([H.R.2214](#)), introduced by Representative Judy Chu (D-CA-27). In light of the discriminatory [expansion of the Muslim ban](#) issued on January 31, 2020, continued [attacks on asylum seekers](#), and the dismantling of the [bipartisan refugee resettlement](#) program, we must affirm our moral and legal obligations to reject discrimination based on faith or nationality. [More than 300 faith leaders and groups](#) have already called on Congress to see this legislation become law.

Our capacity as a nation to welcome refugees - a core tenet of our American values - is being destroyed. Nearly 40 years ago, Congress enacted the *Refugee Act of 1980*, landmark legislation that created the refugee resettlement program and instituted how the United States provides protection and a new life to some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Refugee resettlement is a longstanding, life-saving American tradition that welcomes refugees who bring their innovative skills, diverse cultures, and dedicated work ethic to their new communities, improving quality of life for all. Refugee resettlement is the last option 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. As a pillar of our national foreign policy, our nation's resettlement program represents a standard of excellence that other countries around the world look to as a touchstone for their own policies.

Over the last three years, the administration has undertaken a [series of attacks](#) against our refugee, asylum seeking, and Muslim neighbors. On January 27, 2017, the Trump administration released an executive order banning individuals from seven (later changed to six) Muslim-majority countries and halted all refugee resettlement for 120 days. In addition to multiple bans on people from Muslim-majority countries, the administration issued a separate refugee ban executive order on [October 24, 2017](#), banning refugees from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and stateless Palestinians for 90 days. The EO was implemented through an [accompanying memorandum](#), which indefinitely suspended the "following to join" process for refugees who have been separated from their spouse and children. In addition, on November 9, 2018, administration attempted to deny the right to asylum to those who cross the border between ports of entry, in violation of both U.S. and international law. While this provision was struck down in court, the administration's many anti-asylum policies remain in place and are devastating people seeking safety.

Refugees are still impacted by the January 2017 refugee and Muslim ban. For example, [Afkab Hussein](#) is a Somali refugee separated from his family due to the multiple Muslim and refugee bans. In 2015 he was resettled to the United States with the promise that his wife and newborn son would be able to join him shortly after. Though they were approved for resettlement in January 2017, Afkab is still waiting for his wife and son due to the bans and reduced arrivals. He currently lives in Columbus, Ohio and works as a truck driver. He recently had to return to Kenya in order to meet his 4-year old son for the first time.

The NO BAN Act upholds principles of religious freedom and our moral obligation to welcome. It would end the harmful refugee, Muslim, and asylum bans put in place by this administration and ensure that no one is banned from our country based on religious or nationality-based discrimination. The bill seeks important changes to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) by outlawing discrimination in the entry of immigrants or nonimmigrants based on religion, in addition to the protections against discrimination based on race, sex, nationality, place of birth, and place of residence already in place. The *NO BAN Act* also amends the provision of the INA that has granted presidents the authority to suspend or restrict the entry of non-citizens by limiting this authority to align with responsible uses of the power by prior Democratic and Republican administrations, and by establishing vital protections against future discriminatory bans and abuses of this authority.

CWS urges all Members of Congress to pass the *NO BAN Act* (H.R.2214) and be bold in choosing moral, just policies that welcome, regardless of faith or national origin, and provide refuge for vulnerable individuals seeking protection in accordance with our nation's highest ideals.