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## **Interfaith Leaders Look Forward to Congressional Hearing on Refugee Resettlement**

WASHINGTON, DC - The Interfaith Immigration Coalition welcomes Thursday's [hearing](#) in the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration and Citizenship about "The Current State of the U.S. Refugee Program."

"God calls us to welcome the stranger through concrete actions that provide safety and security to the world's persecuted. The Trump administration's asylum and refugee policies are denying and dismantling basic protections for uprooted and vulnerable people," said **Reverend Amy Reumann, Director for Advocacy, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**. "We must restore U.S. leadership in refugee protection and resettlement, and strengthen opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers to find safety, by passing the Refugee Protection Act."

"Without our consent, this administration turned our nation's back on the world's most vulnerable. Americans of all ideologies, faiths, and creeds believe we need to increase the number of refugees we welcome," said **Katie Adams, Domestic Policy Advocate for the United Church of Christ and Co-Chair of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition**.

"We strongly support the Refugee Protection Act's clarification of the 'firm resettlement' concept in U.S. law, among its many other provisions," said **Rachel Gore Freed, Vice President and Chief Program Officer, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee**. "This change could not be more timely or urgent, as the Trump administration begins implementing its so-called 'safe third country' agreement with Guatemala, deporting people to a country they barely know and that has no capacity to safely resettle them. No government should have the power to send people to places that are not their home and where their lives will be at risk."

"We are called by our faith to welcome the stranger and care for the most vulnerable, and we are challenged by our national values to offer protection to those fleeing violence and persecution. The Trump administration's asylum and refugee policies violate that faith and threaten those values," said **Carol Zinn, SSJ, Executive Director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious**. "Congress has a duty to stop the administration's attacks on those forced to flee their homes and to provide protection for refugees and asylum seekers. The passage of the

Refugee Protection Act would reverse the dangerous, cruel, and immoral asylum and refugee policy changes made by the Trump administration.”

“America is not accepting this,” said **Faith Williams, Associate Director of Government Relations & Advocacy with National Council of Jewish Women and Co-Chair of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition.** “Trump, Miller, and their co-conspirators at the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security use ugly rhetoric and policies to dehumanize migrants, thinking that the public will be less likely to object to their inhumane treatment. This tactic has failed. A groundswell of Americans of all walks of life are donating time and money to assist refugees and asylum seekers—in ways that our government refuses to do. Congress must hold this administration accountable for the treatment and resettlement of refugees and return the number of refugees the United States commits to resettling to at least its historic average of 95,000.”

**Margaret Conley, Director of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team** said, “The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, committed to stand in solidarity with migrants and refugees seeking fullness of life, call on Congress to pass the Refugee Protection Act without delay. Like millions across the country and around the world, we are shocked and saddened by the cruel and inhumane treatment migrants have received at the hands of the Trump administration. These vulnerable women, men and especially children have experienced severe trauma as they flee violence and repression in their home countries. Migrants are our sisters and brothers who must be welcomed with love and respect. Passing the Refugee Protection Act will go a long way in reversing the egregious abuses of the Trump administration. Congress must act now.”

**Stephen Schneck, Executive Director of Franciscan Action Network** said: “Our diverse faith traditions have always called on us to welcome the stranger and do what we can to offer a safe haven for the world’s most vulnerable people. By decimating the U.S. resettlement program and breaking the asylum system, the United States has turned away thousands of persecuted people and refused to provide a safe, fresh start for so many refugees. The Trump administration is not only violating man’s law--U.S. and international laws and commitments--but God’s law as well. This legislation would fix that.”

“As a Jewish organization, HIAS is all too familiar with what can happen when the United States turns its back on refugees,” said **Naomi Steinberg, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy, HIAS.** “In 1939, the United States refused to let the S.S. St. Louis dock in our country, sending over 900 Jewish refugees back to Europe, where many died in concentration camps. We must learn from our mistakes and make sure that we do not allow history to repeat itself. Our community, which owes its very existence to the American tradition of welcoming refugees, will continue to stand in support of the U.S. refugee resettlement program and will continue to honor the Torah’s mandate to “welcome the stranger.”

“A ‘wall’ has been erected in the sense that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are facing barriers impossible to cross. Trump administration policies, such as cutting refugee admissions numbers to the lowest level in history; using detention as a strategy to demoralize asylum

seekers; and forcing asylum seekers to live in dangerous conditions, put lives in danger. These inhumane and harmful changes to our asylum system were made to circumvent U.S. humanitarian protections and our moral and legal obligations. The Refugee Protection Act reflects the values we hold as faithful Americans, and passing this bill would begin the process of righting these wrongs," said **Trinidad Ariztia, Program Director for Development and Migration Policy, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**.

"Welcoming refugees is profoundly American. We are a nation that is made stronger and more secure through a robust refugee resettlement program and asylum system. The world's vulnerable seek refuge to rebuild lives free from fear. Resettling refugees and welcoming asylum seekers is the right thing to do, not only for the sake of these families but also for the American communities that will be revitalized and strengthened by their new neighbors," said the **Reverend John L. McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service**. "As the administration sadly abdicates its responsibility on refugee protection and resettlement, Congress must hold the administration accountable to at least meet this year's record-low admissions goal of 18,000 and restore the resettlement program to historic norms."

**Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director of Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries**, said: "Refugee Resettlement has provided perhaps the most successful model of public-private partnership and bi-partisan cooperation since World War II; allowing communities in both cities and small towns, and in congregations small and large, to touch and know and offer shalom to the world by welcoming the most vulnerable who have been forced to flee their homelands. The Refugee Protection Act is a visionary blueprint which will help reverse dangerous, cruel, and family-separating changes made in recent years to U.S. refugee and asylum policies; and instead will allow us to live into God's calling to offer leaves of hope for the healing of the nations. As our history has taught us, showing such hospitality has likewise strengthened our economy, grown our congregations, and inspired our families through powerful relationships."

"Tragically, there are nearly 26 million refugees worldwide and fewer than 1% of them will ever be resettled to a third country. Let us not forget, refugees are more than just a global figure; they are families torn apart, children who have witnessed profound violence, and people seeking a chance to rebuild their lives and raise a family in safety. We can and should protect refugees and others fleeing violence or persecution. And for this reason, we are happy to support the Refugee Protection Act to reverse the current refugee policy by restoring the resettlement program to historic norms, making it easier for families to reunify and helping refugees integrate into their new communities," said **Lawrence E. Couch, Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd**.

"As Quakers, we believe that our government and the people of the United States have a responsibility and an opportunity to welcome those most in need, offer refuge, and uplift our shared humanity in policies and actions," stated **Diane Randall, General Secretary of the Friends Committee on National Legislation**. "In these times, with a record number of refugees around the world, welcoming the stranger is no longer just an ideal -- it must be the reality we practice. Congress can act by passing the Refugee Protection Act."

“More than 25 million refugees worldwide are in need of safety, and 1.4 million are in need of immediate resettlement. It would be morally wrong to turn our backs on these vulnerable people. Yet, that is what the Trump administration has done,” said **Sr. Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice**. “By consistently attacking refugees, the President undermines our own national security interests. Our nation’s longstanding commitment to refugee and asylum seekers suffers under the President’s divisive and dehumanizing rhetoric. Our policy should not be based on this Administration’s prejudice and bias. The time to tell the President NO is now.”

**The Rev. Dr. Laurie Ann Kraus, Director, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Church (USA)** said: “The welcome of refugees, and the humanitarian protection of asylum seekers, is an essential commitment of the global community and a core mandate of faith leaders and the communities we serve. In the face of this administration's deepening dismissal of the humanity of migrants and the systemization of human rights abuse against migrants and their children, countless communities of faith are stepping into the breach to enact our deep faith commitment to treat each person as a beloved child of God, deserving of protection and welcome. Throughout the United States, our years of support of migration have created strong, diverse communities, with churches, synagogues and mosques including fully in their community immigrants who once sought safety and welcome in our country. In solidarity with those immigrant neighbors who are part of us, we feel the pain of exclusion and the hope of a more humane nation. Congress must pass the Refugee Protection Act and end the dehumanization of our American identity.”

### **Fast Facts on Refugees**

- According to the UNHCR, in 2018 there were 70.8 million displaced people in the world, including 25.9 million refugees. Fewer than 1% of refugees will ever be resettled to a third country.
- Since the program’s inception, the United States has set an average refugee admissions goal of 95,000 refugees and has resettled up to 200,000 refugees in certain years. In fiscal year 2019, the United States welcomed only 30,000 refugees; this year the U.S. committed to resettling only 18,000.
- Refugees give back to their new communities. They start working as soon as possible, pay taxes, start businesses, and become active members of society. They are even running for elected office--and winning.
- Communities across the country support refugees. Faith leaders, educators, business leaders, and local, state, and national elected officials, as well as thousands of community members have demonstrated welcome for refugees in every state.

*The Interfaith Immigration Coalition is made up of 55 national, faith-based organizations brought together across many theological traditions with a common call to seek just policies that lift up the God-given dignity of every individual. In partnership, we work to protect the rights, dignity, and safety of all refugees and migrants.*

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