



**CWS Statement to the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration & Citizenship,
pertaining to its hearing entitled "The Current State of the U.S. Refugee Program"
on Thursday, February 27, 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 subcommittee to affirm our nation's commitment to refugee protection and resettlement. Amidst the worst refugee crisis in world history and the Trump administration's [80% cut](#) to the [bipartisan resettlement program](#), it is imperative to restore U.S. leadership in refugee protection and resettlement.

The U.S. resettlement program represents a standard of excellence that other countries around the world look to as a touchstone for their own policies. Nearly 40 years ago, the U.S. 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. As a pillar of our national foreign policy, the United States has been an international model providing refugees protection through public-private partnerships made up of federal, state, and local governments, national and local resettlement agencies, faith communities, civic groups, businesses, former refugees, and volunteers.

Our capacity to welcome refugees - a core tenet of American values - is being destroyed. The administration set a record-low refugee admissions cap of 18,000 in FY 2020. Last year, the administration set a then-historically low cap of 30,000. For nearly four decades, the annual cap has averaged 95,000 refugees. The administration's systemic decimation of the program - by the slashing of admissions caps, Muslim and refugee bans, and the most recent executive order, currently blocked by a preliminary injunction, allowing states and localities to veto resettlement - is shaping the United States as a nation rapidly closing its doors to the very people we have an obligation to protect.

CWS urges Congress to hold the administration accountable to restoring the U.S. resettlement program to historic norms. 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. Resettlement is an option only 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 to which they have fled. Communities across the United States have also long recognized that refugees are vital to the continuing [prosperity of our communities](#) - they pay taxes, help grow our economy, and bring unique skill sets, experiences, and insights. Refugees have high rates of entrepreneurship, creating jobs and [boosting local economies](#).

Refugees are families torn apart, children who have witnessed profound violence, and people seeking a chance to rebuild their lives and raise their families in safety. For example, in 2016, new parents [Demam and Mohammed](#) made a heart-wrenching choice to accept resettlement to the U.S. without their three-month-old daughter, Nimco, in order to seek life-saving medical treatment for Mohammed. To add their newborn to the case would have meant an indefinite delay in their departure and Mohammed most likely would not have survived. Immediately upon their arrival in Columbus, OH, Columbus Refugee and Immigration Services helped them complete the application to have Nimco join them in the U.S. Nimco is now three years old and being cared for in Ethiopia by her grandmother. Demam and Mohammed continue to miss their daughter's earliest milestones because their daughter's departure has been delayed by this administration's drastic cuts to refugee resettlement.

At a time when there are more than 25 million refugees worldwide - more than half of whom are children - now is a critical time to build and restore the U.S. resettlement program to historic norms. Let us reflect the best of our nation by extending hospitality so that the United States can once again be a beacon of hope for refugees.