

----- CATHOLIC PARTNER SIGN-ON LETTER TEXT -----

Dear Secretary Nielsen and Acting Secretary Sullivan,

As Catholic organizations and individuals, we are deeply concerned about the status of the U.S. refugee resettlement program and our current commitment as a country to welcome and integrate refugees in this time of extreme global need. Recently, the number of refugees resettled by the United States has plummeted. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, our country set an annual goal to admit 45,000 refugees, the lowest target in the history of the refugee program, which was formally begun in 1980. At the halfway point of FY18, the U.S. has resettled 9,616 refugeesⁱ, setting the program on pace to not even reach half of the year's low refugee admissions target. These low levels of refugee arrivals leave thousands of vulnerable people in harm's way. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program helps to resettle the most vulnerable of the world's refugees, the estimated 5% who cannot remain in refugee host countries that neighbor the home countries they fled and who cannot return to their homes. For personal safety, they need resettlement to a third country. These individuals are frequently women and children, and often targeted for violence due to their religion or political views.

For 37 years, the U.S. has been proud to be the world leader in welcoming and resettling these most vulnerable refugees, and we, as Catholic organizations, priests, brothers, and sisters, and lay professionals and volunteers, have been joyful partners to help accomplish this life-saving, humanitarian work. We know firsthand about the life-saving work that occurs on the ground in our communities to help welcome, accompany and integrate refugees in the United States. Refugees are more than just numbers and statistics, they are our neighbors, our friends, our fellow parishioners, and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

As Christians, our concern for refugees is integral to our life of faith. The Catholic Church believes that every person is created in God's image. In the Old Testament, God calls upon his people to care for the newcomers because of their own experience as newcomers: "So, you, too, must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:17-19). In the New Testament, the image of the refugee is seen in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. In his own life and work, Jesus identified himself with newcomers and with other marginalized persons in a special way: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35). Jesus himself was a refugee fleeing as an infant with his family to Egypt to avoid persecution and death (Mt. 2:15). Recently Pope Francis urges us all to welcome and protect refugees.

In this spirit, we urge the Administration and Congress to restore America's bipartisan commitment to life-saving resettlement, including for Christian and other religious minorities. We urge admitting at least 45,000 refugees this year and 75,000 next year. We strongly suggest that DHS work to process refugees in a more robust, efficient and transparent manner. We also urge the Administration to listen to our communities when we stand in solidarity to welcome refugees in this moment of global need.

Your truly,

Catholic Organizations

Catholic Priests, Brothers, and Sisters

Catholic Professional and Volunteer Lay People

ⁱ As of March 16, 2018. See <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>