

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear Mr. President,

We have worked for years, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, to protect America's national security. We are deeply concerned that the March 6, 2017 executive order halting refugee resettlement and suspending visa issuance and travel from six Muslim-majority countries will, like the prior version, weaken U.S. national security and undermine U.S. global leadership. The United States faces serious threats from terrorist networks and must take all prudent and effective steps to combat them, including the appropriate vetting of travelers to the United States. But the recent order suffers from the same core substantive defects as the previous version.

The revised executive order will jeopardize our relationships with allies and partners on whom we rely for vital counterterrorism cooperation and information-sharing. To Muslims— including those victimized by or fighting against ISIS—it will send a message that reinforces the propaganda of ISIS and other extremist groups, that falsely claim the United States is at war with Islam. Welcoming Muslim refugees and travelers, by contrast, exposes the lies of terrorists and counters their warped vision.

We must remain vigilant to keep our nation safe from terrorists, whether foreign or homegrown. At the same time, we must remain true to our ideals. These are not mutually exclusive goals. In fact, resettlement initiatives advance U.S. national security interests by protecting the stability of U.S. allies and partners struggling to host large numbers of refugees.

Following the 9/11 attacks, the United States developed a rigorous system of security vetting for travelers to our homeland, leveraging the full capabilities of the intelligence and law enforcement communities. Since then, the U.S. has added enhanced vetting procedures for travelers and has revised them continuously. Our government applies this process to travelers not once, but multiple times. Refugees are vetted more intensively than any other category of traveler. They are screened by national intelligence agencies and INTERPOL, their fingerprints and other biometric data are checked against terrorist and criminal databases, and they are interviewed several times. These processes undergo review on an ongoing basis to ensure that the most updated and rigorous measures are applied, and any additional enhancements can be added without halting refugee resettlement or banning people from certain countries.

We welcome the removal of Iraq from the 90-day travel ban, but we remain concerned that the Iraqis who risked their lives to work with the U.S. military, U.S. government and other U.S. organizations will be left in harm's way for even longer due to the order's 120-day suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and overall reduction in refugee admissions. These individuals were given priority access to U.S. resettlement under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, but their resettlement, like that of many

other vetted refugees, will now likely be delayed as security clearances and other approvals expire, adding many more months onto their processing. The United States has a moral obligation to protect these allies.

Bans like those included in this order are harmful to U.S. national security and beneath the dignity of our great nation. Further, the order's drastic reduction in the number of refugees to be resettled in this fiscal year after the 120-day moratorium weakens this country's ability to provide global leadership and jeopardizes our national security interests by failing to support the stability of our allies that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees. America's much-admired compassion and openness are sources not of weakness but strength. These qualities accord with the ideals on which our nation was founded, and on which our greatness rests.

The revised executive order is damaging to the strategic and national security interests of the United States. We urge that, in moving forward, the United States: ensure any vetting enhancements are necessary, non-discriminatory and otherwise consistent with the U.S. Constitution; implement any necessary enhancements without a counterproductive ban or suspension on entry of nationals of particular countries or religions; and immediately restart a strong non-discriminatory refugee resettlement initiative, which will in turn advance U.S. global leadership and national security interests.

We firmly believe that these steps will strengthen U.S. national security and appreciate your attention to the concerns we raise in this letter.

Sincerely,
(names in alphabetical order)

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The Honorable John F. Kelly, Secretary of Homeland Security
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