

# EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.

Assemblies of God  
Bethany Christian Services  
Council for Christian  
Colleges and Universities  
Ethics and Religious  
Liberty Commission of the  
Southern Baptist  
Convention  
Faith and Community  
Empowerment  
National Association of  
Evangelicals  
National Hispanic  
Christian Leadership  
Conference  
The Wesleyan Church  
World Relief

July 23, 2019

Dear President Trump:

Thank you for recently convening world leaders to build support for ending religious persecution and promoting religious freedom throughout the world. As you consider how many refugees will be invited to resettle in the United States during Fiscal Year 2020, please ensure that the United States once again leads the world in offering safety and religious freedom to some of the world's most vulnerable and courageous heroes, including those persecuted for their Christian faith.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) has identified that many of the nations that most regularly violate religious freedom also produce some of the largest refugee populations. This is not a coincidence – religious persecution causes people to flee for their lives.

The Refugee Act of 1980 gives you the responsibility to determine the maximum number of refugees admitted annually into the U.S. Under your administration, that ceiling declined to a historically low 30,000 this year, down dramatically from the average refugee ceiling of roughly 95,000 in years past. Recent media reports indicate that you are now being advised to consider a ceiling of zero – effectively shutting down the U.S. refugee resettlement program – for FY 2020. We're writing to implore you to reject that recommendation, and instead to set the ceiling at 75,000 or higher.

Recognizing God's love for the vulnerable and the persecuted, we are concerned for all who have fled persecution and who urgently need protection. And we are particularly concerned about the potential impact of your decision on fellow believers who are being persecuted for their faith. Over the past decade, more Christian refugees have resettled to the U.S. than those of any other religious tradition, including many whose persecution was directly tied to their faith in Christ.

In your first week in office, you pledged to welcome Syrian Christians to the U.S. as resettled refugees, a commitment we cheered. But in fact, the number of Syrian Christians admitted to the U.S. this fiscal year is on track to be fewer than 40, even fewer than were admitted in FY 2016.

The decline among other persecuted Christians has been even more stark. Compared to FY 2016, the number of Pakistani Christians resettled as refugees is on track to end the fiscal year down by 67 percent, the number of Iraqi Christians down by 94 percent and the number of Iranian Christians down by 95 percent. If the refugee ceiling is set at zero for the coming year, these brothers and sisters in Christ will be shut out altogether.

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Other vulnerable refugees would also be shut out by this proposal, including other persecuted religious minorities such as Jewish refugees from Iran, Yezidis from Iraq and Syria, and Muslim Rohingya from Burma. Individuals targeted by terrorists because of their service to the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan will be kept out as well, along with many other people who have been forced to flee persecution.

We appreciate your administration's efforts to advance religious freedom in the countries that so many Christians and other religious minorities have been forced to flee. But, as our government acknowledges, the situation remains perilous at this moment for Christians in many parts of the world. We urge you to reinvigorate the U.S. refugee resettlement program, not dismantle it. It is a lifeline for those fleeing persecution – whether because of their faith, their political opinion, their ethnicity or any other reason outlined in U.S. law. We pray you will reject any advice to shut the refugee resettlement program down, and that your administration will not merely continue the program at its current, vastly reduced level. Instead, we ask that you allow our country to continue to be a beacon of safety and freedom for those fleeing persecution.

Sincerely,

Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals

Scott Arbeiter, President, World Relief

Doug Clay, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God USA

Shirley V. Hoogstra, President, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

Hyepin Im, President & CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment

Jo Anne Lyon, Ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church

Russell Moore, President, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

Chris Palusky, President & CEO, Bethany Christian Services

Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

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CC: Vice President Mike Pence,  
Secretary of State Mike Pompeo,  
Members of Congress