



EVANGELICAL IMMIGRATION table.



September 23, 2022

Dear President Biden and Members of Congress,



We are writing to encourage you to do all that is within your authority and influence to restore and rebuild the U.S. refugee resettlement program. As evangelical Christians whose ultimate authority is the Bible, we believe that refugees are human beings made in God's image with inherent dignity, are neighbors whom our Lord commands us to love and are vulnerable individuals who merit special protections. The U.S. refugee resettlement program has been a vital tool to protect vulnerable refugees, and we urge you to ensure it is rebuilt after several years of historically low refugee admissions levels.



One key step in restoring the refugee program is for President Biden to once again set the ceiling for refugee admissions at 125,000 – as the State Department has recently proposed – or higher. Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush each set refugee admissions levels at this level or higher in times when there were fewer refugees globally than there are today. At the beginning of 2022, UNHCR estimated that there were 27.1 million refugees in the world, before the Russian invasion of Ukraine displaced several million more. At this time of unique global crisis, the U.S. should lead the world in refugee resettlement.



That said, setting a relatively high refugee ceiling is not enough. Though the refugee ceiling was set at 125,000 for Fiscal Year 2022, we are likely to end this fiscal year more than 100,000 short of that maximum. We recognize that there were unique dynamics in FY 2022, including circumstances that led many Afghans and Ukrainians fleeing persecution to arrive through legal mechanisms other than the refugee admissions process. But in FY 2023, we urge the Biden administration to utilize the legal authority of the Refugee Act of 1980 to bring in and resettle as many refugees as possible, ensuring that these individuals have the resettlement support that they need to fully thrive. This includes affording them immediate eligibility for employment authorization and a clear path to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status and eventual citizenship.



Setting a ceiling for 125,000 refugees and reaching that goal will require ramping up overseas processing and eliminating inefficiencies. We appreciate the thorough vetting process that is a part of the refugee admissions process; without sacrificing these high standards, we also need processes nimble enough to respond to emerging crises as well as protracted refugee situations, which have led some refugees to wait literally decades in refugee camps and other inadequate conditions. We urge you to continue to welcome Afghans and Ukrainians who are at risk, but also to ensure the U.S. offers similar protections to those fleeing persecution in other contexts that have received less media attention.

Among others who should qualify for refugee resettlement, we urge you to consider the plight of those persecuted for their faith, including, among others, Christians from countries such as Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan; Yezidis from Syria and Iraq; and Uyghurs from China and Rohingya from Burma.

Mindful of the humanitarian challenges that a large number of asylum seekers arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border presents, we also urge you to utilize the refugee program to increase resettlement for Venezuelans, Cubans and others fleeing authoritarian regimes within our own hemisphere. Strengthening our resettlement program—including, where feasible, through in-country processing programs—would also reduce pressure on our overstretched asylum system, as fewer individuals would feel the need to make such a long and dangerous trip in search of refuge. We affirm the importance of both resettlement and asylum as two prongs of our nation's strong commitment to humanitarian protection.

The churches, denominations, and organizations that we represent have long been an integral part of the public-private partnership model of the U.S. refugee admissions process. As the U.S. government does its part, we will continue to do our part, mobilizing volunteers and resources to welcome refugees.

Sincerely,

Evangelical Immigration Table Organizations:

Bethany Christian Services
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
National Association of Evangelicals
National Latino Evangelical Coalition
The Wesleyan Church
World Relief
World Vision