



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

June 5, 2018

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

According to the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, as many as 44% of refugees living in the United States are primary or secondary torture survivors. As an organization dedicated to helping these men, women, and children heal—so that they can reclaim their lives—the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) urges Congress to affirm the importance of refugee resettlement.

CVT is disheartened by recent attacks on the U.S. refugee resettlement program, especially as they have come during the worst global displacement crisis on record, which includes more than 22 million refugees worldwide. In September 2017, the Trump Administration set refugee admissions goals for FY18 at a historic low of 45,000. It has since layered a host of onerous vetting requirements on top of an already rigorous vetting system at the same time as it has reduced our government's refugee processing capacity. These actions are designed to limit the number of refugees our country welcomes, and they are working: currently, the United States is on track to resettle approximately 20,000 refugees, a historic low. This is simply unconscionable.

The United States has a history of welcoming refugees and immigrants, including having successfully resettled more than 3 million refugees since 1975. We urge Congress to hold the Administration accountable for its failure to date to live up to this noble history. Specifically, Congress should demand that the Administration at least meet its own goal of resettling 45,000 refugees during FY18, and increase that goal to 75,000 refugees in FY19. Congress must also allocate full funding for refugee accounts in order to accomplish these goals. Finally, we call on Members to speak up and speak out against derogatory, inflammatory, and fear-mongering rhetoric targeting refugees; it has no place in response to any humanitarian crisis.

People around the United States are ready and willing to welcome refugees into their homes, communities, and hearts. Higher walls will not make our communities safer or help them thrive; building stronger bridges will.

As we approach World Refugee Day on June 20th, Congress needs to send a strong message, both at home and abroad, that the United States will continue to serve as a safe haven to those fleeing violence and persecution.

Sincerely,

Yasmine Taeb
Senior Policy Counsel
The Center for Victims of Torture