

September 9, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Azar:

We are programs that provide rehabilitative care to refugees and asylum seekers who have survived torture and are now residing in the United States, writing to urge the Trump Administration to set the Fiscal Year 2020 refugee admissions goal no lower than 95,000. The United States has long been a beacon of hope for torture victims—and for others fleeing displacement and persecution—and it must continue to be.

The current refugee crisis, the worst in history, is a torture crisis. According to research from the Center for Victims of Torture, which the Office of Refugee Resettlement recognizes, *an astonishing 44% of refugees now living in the United States are torture survivors*. This is a miniscule fraction of those in need; there are currently over 70 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 25 million of whom are refugees. Especially given this context, we are alarmed by reports that some Administration officials are pressing to zero-out the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program entirely, or if not then again to reduce admissions from their already historic low.

Our clients, like the refugee population more broadly, leave their countries because they have no choice. They speak of what it was like to make the excruciating decision to flee from home—sometimes on foot, and often with only the meager possessions they can carry—and of the perilous journey that followed.

Many torture survivors were leaders in their home countries. They are educators, lawyers, journalists, doctors, nurses, engineers and others who worked for democratic change. Those who come to the U.S. are motivated to learn English, create businesses, and integrate into and contribute to their communities. They are driven to succeed, but need a safe haven where they can recover and thrive. Historically, the United States has provided that safe haven, and our country is better for it.

The United States has the capacity, and, we believe, a moral obligation, to resettle at least 95,000 refugees next year. We ask that you do everything in your power to make that happen.¹

Sincerely,

ACCESS Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center for Torture Survivors
Dearborn, Michigan

Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture
New York, New York

¹ Please contact Scott Roehm, Director of the Washington, D.C. office for the Center for Victims of Torture, with any questions: (202) 822-0188; sroehm@cvt.org.

Bilingual International Assistant Services
St. Louis, Missouri

Boston Center for Refugee Health & Human Rights
Boston, Massachusetts

Center for Survivors of Torture (CST)
Asian Americans for Community Involvement
San Jose, California

Center for Survivors of Torture
Austin, Texas

Center for Victims of Torture
Saint Paul, Minnesota
Clarkston, Georgia

De Novo
Center for Justice and Healing
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Florida Center for Survivors of Torture
Clearwater, Florida
Doral, Florida

HealthRight International
New York, New York

Highland Hospital Human Rights Clinic
Oakland, California

International Rescue Committee
Phoenix, Arizona
Denver, Colorado

Libertas Center for Human Rights
Elmhurst, New York

Partnerships for Trauma Recovery
Berkeley, California

Philadelphia Partnership for Resilience (PPR)
Nationalities Service Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Program for Torture Victims
Los Angeles, California

Torture Abolition And Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC)
Washington, D.C.

Torture Treatment Center of Oregon
Portland, Oregon

Survivors of Torture, International
San Diego, California

Utah Health and Human Rights
Murray, Utah