

April 7, 2022

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Continuing harms of the Muslim ban on refugees

Dear President Biden:

We, the undersigned organizations and the communities we represent, urge you to follow through on the promises you made to fully address the discriminatory effects of the Trump Administration's Muslim and African Bans. As you recognized when you took office, these bans were "a stain on our national conscience" and "undermined our national security": they were "just plain wrong."¹

More than a year after you repealed these racist bans, however, there are troubling signs that they continue to harm Muslim refugees. According to the International Refugee Assistance Project, over **50%** of the refugees in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program whose applications were approved and who were cleared for travel – i.e., had completed extensive background checks, cleared medical screening, and were ready to board a flight – at the time the refugee-specific ban came down in October 2017 have now been rejected from the program. Over **75%** of refugees who were in the final stages of family reunification at that point are still waiting to see their spouses and children.²

This is unconscionable. Behind these numbers are people like Anisa Mohamud, a naturalized U.S. citizen and a former refugee from Somalia who works as a caregiver for sick and elderly people in Madison, Wisconsin, while hoping for the day that she can take care of her own mother and brother in her home. She has been waiting for that day for 10 years – and that day would have been over four years ago if not for the ban.³

¹ Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to the United States, January 20, 2021; Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration, February 4, 2021 ("Refugee Executive Order").

² Int'l Refugee Assistance Project, How the Muslim Ban Lives on for Some Refugees, <https://refugeerights.org/news-resources/how-the-muslim-ban-lives-on-for-some-refugees>.

³ Maria Sacchetti, Lawyers Say the Biden Administration Is Still Rejecting Some Refugees Once Banned by Trump, Feb. 16, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/02/16/biden-trump-refugees/>; see also *Mohamud v. DHS*, No. 22-cv-00195 (filed W.D. Wis. Apr. 7, 2022).

In Section 2(c) of an Executive Order issued last February, your Administration committed to treat refugee applicants “with dignity and respect” and “without improper discrimination on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or other grounds.”⁴ You ordered the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security to review the actions that were taken by the prior Administration under the refugee-specific ban, with an eye towards ensuring that the changes made by the prior Administration are appropriate for the “fair, efficient, and secure administration” of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.⁵ We have yet to see the results of this review, however, and the state of the refugee program raises significant doubts that the review has been completed and achieved its goals.

With the increase in humanitarian needs from the crises in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and elsewhere, now is the time to ensure that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is operating fairly, efficiently, and securely. **We ask that you stand by your commitment to the refugee program by providing the public with:**

- The status of, and any outcomes of, the review ordered under the February 2021 Executive Order; and
- An explanation of the increase in denials and continued delays for those refugees impacted by the refugee-specific ban implemented by the prior Administration.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter.

Respectfully,

International Refugee Assistance Project

Afghan Network for Advocacy and Resources (Project ANAR)

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American Muslim Bar Association (AMBA)

American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)

Association of Wartime Allies

Ayada Leads

Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

Legal Services for Children

Libyan American Alliance

Migrant Center for Human Rights

Mississippi Center for Justice

Muslim Justice League

Muslims for Just Futures

National Immigration Law Center

⁴ Refugee Executive Order, Sec. 1(e).

⁵ *Id.* Sec. 2(c).

Bethany Christian Services	National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)	National Justice for Our Neighbors
Center for Gender & Refugee Studies	National Network for Arab American Communities
Center for Pluralism	National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Center for Victims of Torture	National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Central Valley Islamic Council	New York Annual Conference Board of Church and Society
Church World Service	No Muslim Ban Ever Coalition
Columbia Law School Immigrants' Rights Clinic	North Carolina Asian Americans Together
Defending Rights & Dissent	Oasis Legal Services
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries	Pangea Legal Services
Doctors for Camp Closure	Poligon Education Fund
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)	Refugee Advocacy Lab
Freedom Network USA	Refugee Congress
Georgia Muslim Voter Project	Refugee Projects
HIAS	Refugees International
Hispanic Federation	Riki Hawk Enterprises, LLC
Hope Border Institute	Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Human Rights First	Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network
Immigrant Justice Corps	Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project	Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice
International Mayan League	T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
International Rescue Committee	Tahirih Justice Center
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)	Talent Beyond Boundaries

Islamic Cultural Center of Fresno	UndocuBlack Network
Islamic Society of North America	Voice for Refuge Action Fund
Islamophobia Studies Center	Win Without War
JAMAAT - Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together	Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Just Neighbors	Women's Campaign International
Justice Action Center	Women Watch Afrika
Justice For Our Neighbors - North Central Texas	World Relief
La Raza Community Resource Center	Yemeni Alliance Committee

cc:

The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State
The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security
Ron Klain, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff
The Honorable Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor
The Honorable Ur M. Jaddou, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services