

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

Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice-President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Ambassador Susan Rice
Director of the Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Jake Sullivan
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,
NWWashington, DC 20500

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dr. Rochelle Walensky
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30328

The United States Must Welcome All Refugees Without Discrimination

Dear President Biden, Vice-President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas, Amb. Rice, Advisor Sullivan, Secretary Blinken, and Dr. Walensky:

In the days and weeks that have followed since Russia first invaded Ukraine, forcing millions of Ukrainians to flee, Europe and the United States have responded quickly and in important ways to meet the needs of this moment. We want to say thank you to the administration for granting TPS for Ukrainians, championing billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine, and announcing the intention to welcome 100,000 Ukrainian refugees.

However, the domestic response to Ukraine has stood in stark contrast to ongoing crises in Yemen, Tigray, Syria, and in other regions and countries around the world. From world leaders, to journalists, community members, and business leaders, stories of [racial bias](#) faced at the borders of Ukraine and groups of Black and Brown Ukrainians, immigrants, and students being [denied safety](#) are rampant. And communities previously considered anti-immigrant are [welcoming](#) (*white) Ukrainians with open arms.

In the United States, TPS was [immediately granted for Ukraine](#), while communities from Bahamas, Cameroon, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Mauritania, Nepal, Nicaragua, and Sierra Leone still wait for TPS amid their country's respective civil wars, crises of violence, and other extraordinary conditions. To be clear, we are celebrating TPS for Ukrainians, it is evident that TPS is necessary due to mounting evidence of clear and present dangers to Ukrainians returning home. Yet, we fail to see how individuals from

other countries who have been meeting with the administration for months, demonstrating clear and present danger to return, are not also being granted TPS at this time.

Furthermore, many of the [76,000 Afghans](#) who were evacuated to the United States are now in limbo while Congress fails to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act to allow those with humanitarian parole to be granted a pathway to long-term status. And while we are grateful that [Afghans were finally granted TPS](#), thousands remain left behind with no option for a designated parole program.

Along our southern border, Ukrainians now join the **1,200,000** Black and Brown migrant and asylum-seeking individuals and families arriving at the United States border only to be expelled under Title 42, a COVID measure that has outlived its plausibility and uses public health as a justification to be racist. Until the announcement last week, Title 42 expulsion was a policy that this administration seemed keen to protect. [Ukrainians are also subject to Title 42](#) until its final termination May 23rd, with case by case exceptions.

These points highlight the growing disparity in our response - or lack thereof - to the needs of individuals and families that the United States has confirmed commitments and legal obligations to aid and protect. In addition to extending TPS to the aforementioned countries, upholding refugee law without discrimination, and robustly implementing [Executive Order #13985](#) that was signed during this Administration's first day in office, we also recommend the following 6 steps the administration should immediately take to rebuild and strengthen the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program to meet the ongoing and present need of the growing refugee population.

1. Expedite Family Reunifications: Refugee families face [extreme backlogs](#) in both the follow-to-join (FTJ, I-730) and Priority 3 (P-3) processes, and families continue to face protracted separation. [Reforms](#) to the refugee family reunification process should include immediately prioritizing staffing and resources to identify and remove bottlenecks to expedite existing FTJ and P-3 cases, removing the two-year filing deadline for FTJ petitions, and reducing lengthy delays in USCIS's Refugee Access Verification Unit (RAVU) initial paper review of claimed relationships between the anchor relative and overseas family member listed on the Affidavit Of Relationship (AOR).

2. Expand Overseas Refugee Adjudication Capacity: To meet urgent protection needs and to resettle as many refugees as possible in FY 2022 and FY 2023, the administration must strengthen [adjudication capacity](#) to increase the number of refugees we can process to the United States. This should include hiring and training additional USCIS refugee officers, increasing the number and duration of circuit rides with trained staff, scheduling robust circuit rides as soon as possible for FY 2023, expanding Resettlement Support Center (RSC) capacity, (re)opening international offices, and expanding the USRAP pipeline to include additional NGO and DOS Embassy referrals. For example, the administration should expand all potential processing locations for refugees whose RSC is not operational due to emergencies or where processing has stopped, such as by creating pop-up RSCs.

3. Improve Refugee Vetting Efficiencies: Tens of thousands of refugees referred to the USRAP have languished in dangerous conditions for years, while they wait with little information about the status of their case. The administration should enable more [efficient and equitable screening](#) and adjudication processes, such as by expanding the use of video technology, reversing harmful and ineffective vetting practices, and establishing oversight mechanisms and high-level coordination of all aspects of USRAP. Particular attention should be paid to backlogs, such as applicants who had been previously interviewed before 2020, [Afghan](#) and Iraqi Special

Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants, [Iraqi](#) and [Afghan P-2](#) applicants, and family reunification cases, such as P-2 Iraqi and Syrian I-130 beneficiaries.

4. Strengthen Domestic Resettlement Capacity: Attention to domestic capacity is urgently needed to ensure that the administration can scale resettlement in FY22 and FY23. PRM and ORR should take steps to increase capacity across the network of resettlement agencies. Reforms could include providing additional funding for staffing, housing, and integration services for refugees and reforming the funding structure to ensure guaranteed funding for resettlement agencies at the beginning of the fiscal year. The administration should include creative capacity expansion, such as through new and existing [community sponsorship](#) programs.

5. Ensure Due Process and Transparency: Transparency and public reporting are critical to holding the administration accountable for operating USRAP in good faith and providing refugee applicants with more equitable treatment. The administration should reduce the opacity with which USRAP operates, such as by providing more regular case updates for applicants, continuing to [publish](#) reviews, reports, and policies relevant to refugee processing, and allowing access to counsel for key aspects of refugee processing. The administration should further ensure that it conducts timely and meaningful consultations with Congress around the FY 2023 refugee admissions goal in summer 2022 and sign the FY 2023 Presidential Determination before September 30th.

6. Appoint Senior-Level White House Coordinator: The White House should appoint a senior-level coordinator with a high level security clearance to coordinate federal agencies and other stakeholders around U.S. refugee resettlement and establish specific benchmarks to meet admissions goals. The President should establish an advisory body on refugee protection, led by the White House coordinator and composed of leaders and experts, including a significant number of refugees, former refugees, asylees, stateless people, and other vulnerable migrants. Continuing to rebuild this life-saving program will take time, resources, coordination, and leadership.

Thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Voice For Refuge Action Fund
Access Living/ Cambiando Vidas
African American Ministers In Action
Americans for Immigrant Justice
Arizona Justice For Our Neighbors
Ascentria Care Alliance
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture
Border Network for Human Rights
Bridges Faith Initiative
Center for Disability Rights
Chris Palusky, President and CEO, Bethany Christian Services

Church World Service
Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS)
Comunidad Maya Pixan Ixim
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship West
Disciples Refugee & Immigration Ministries
El Calvario UMC-IAC
Ethiopian Community Development Council
Faiths for Safe Water
Fellowship Southwest
Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
Freedom Network USA
Haitian Bridge Alliance
HIAS
IRIS - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services
Islamic Relief USA
Journey's End Refugee Services
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Miami Valley Immigration Coalition
Mississippi Center for Justice
Motivation Motivates
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Partnership for New Americans
OneAmerica
Presbyterian Church (USA)
RAICES
Refuge America
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Social Eco Education (SEE)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Union for Reform Judaism
We Are All America
Welcoming America
Westchester Jewish Coalition for Immigration
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
Witness At The Border
Women's Campaign International
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
World Education Services, Inc.
Hispanic Federation