

Petition Name: All Refugees Must Be Welcomed

Why is this important:

In the days and weeks that have followed since Russia first invaded Ukraine, forcing millions of Ukrainians to flee, Europe has welcomed 3 million refugees, the United States has granted TPS to Ukraine, and the U.S. Congress has approved billions of dollars to assist Ukraine, including more than \$4.5 billion for humanitarian aid.

We welcome and applaud the outpouring of support for Ukrainian refugee families. At the same time we cannot ignore the double standard that is on display. The domestic response to Ukraine has stood in stark contrast to ongoing crises in Yemen, Tigray, Syria, Afghanistan, and in other regions and countries around the world -- including third country nationals who had been previously displaced in Ukraine. From world leaders, to journalists, community members, places of worship, 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. Communities previously considered anti-immigrant are now welcoming (*white) Ukrainians with open arms.

We must stand together with all refugees and migrants fleeing conflict, violence, and persecution. All refugees—regardless of where they come from or how they worship—deserve safety and protection.

We are celebrating TPS for Ukrainians, as it is evident that TPS is necessary due to mounting evidence of clear and present dangers to Ukrainians returning home. However, 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. The administration must immediately grant TPS or DED for Cameroonians, Ethiopians, Lebanese, Hondurans, and so many others awaiting TPS amid their country's respective civil wars, crises of violence, and other extraordinary conditions.

Along our southern border, Ukrainians now join the 1.2 million other asylum seekers who are being expelled from the United States and forced to remain in Mexico. Millions of Black and Brown asylum seekers have been battling the odds to reach our border only to be expelled due to a discriminatory "Title 42" policy that Biden has chosen to continue using.

Join the petition to say loud and clear to the Biden administration that 1. **ALL REFUGEES ARE WELCOME HERE**, 2. We cannot discriminate in our response to humanitarian crises and wars, and 3. We must respond swiftly and comprehensively to meet the needs of refugees, displaced peoples, stateless peoples, asylum seekers, and SIVs—all of whom we have confirmed commitments to help.

What text are we sending to POTUS:

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 responding actively and urgently to the war.

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, [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 individuals and families who have sought asylum in the United States 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. Title 42 expulsions are a policy that this current administration seems keen to protect. [Ukrainians are now being expelled through the use of Title 42](#), with case by case exceptions, and still, the administration is unwilling to take the necessary step of ending Title 42 outright and allowing individuals and families to seek asylum and safety in the United States once more.

These points each 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 and ending Title 42 once-and-for-all, we also recommend the following 5 steps the administration should immediately take to rebuild and strengthen the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and 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 theUSRAP 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 theUSRAP 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 ofUSRAP. 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 operatingUSRAP in good faith and providing refugee applicants with more equitable treatment. The administration should reduce the opacity with whichUSRAP 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.