

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/executive-order-implementation-should-not-block-refugee-resettlement>

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New York City Human Rights First today urged the Trump Administration to make clear that refugees who are already being processed for U.S. resettlement have a bona fide relationship with U.S. entities and should not be blocked from admission under the partial implementation of President Trump's travel ban. On Monday the Supreme Court partially reinstated President Trump's executive order barring people from six Muslim-majority countries and halting refugee resettlement, making an exception for individuals determined to have a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States. The Department of Justice (DOJ) is set to issue guidance on implementation of the ban before it goes into effect tomorrow.

The Supreme Court's ruling paves the way for the refugee admissions to proceed ahead as normal, said Human Rights First's Eleanor Acer. All refugees who have been approved for resettlement to the United States have established relationships with U.S. resettlement agencies. Furthermore, refugees approved for resettlement have undergone extensive vetting ensuring that they do not pose a security threat.

Under the Supreme Court order, refugee applicants who qualify for a processing priority should continue to have access to U.S. refugee resettlement. All refugees in the resettlement pipeline who have been assigned case numbers by the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) have established a bona fide relationship with a USRAP Resettlement Support Center (RSC). Such relationship may be entered into only after the applicant has established that he or she has ties to the United States.

In addition, the majority of refugees referred for and approved for U.S. resettlement already have family in the United States and many also have ties to U.S.-based voluntary resettlement agencies, faith-based groups, and other communities that have committed to co-sponsor refugees, as well as U.S.-based attorneys or legal assistance organizations. Many Iraqis and their families who served the U.S. military, government, contractors, NGOs, and media, and are now in danger due to that service. Congress gave these Iraqis direct access to U.S. resettlement program through the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act because of their relationships with the U.S. military and other U.S. entities. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have been waiting for years already to be resettled, in dangerous situations.

Human Rights First notes that certain groups of refugees face increased risk of violence and persecution as they await resettlement, including LGBT refugees who often faced continued persecution in the country of first asylum. For these refugees, their connections to U.S. resettlement agencies serve as their only lifeline to escape danger.

If the Trump Administration mistakenly takes a restrictive approach to implementing the Supreme Court's ruling, it will surely lead to more lives lost and a further erosion of U.S. leadership globally, noted Acer. The bottom line is that refugees approved for U.S. resettlement have strong and bona fide relationships with U.S. resettlement agencies and in many cases with U.S. family members or other U.S. entities. They should not be blocked from U.S. resettlement.

Human Rights First also notes the implementation guidance must also safeguard access to asylum, ensuring that nationals of the six named countries are not denied access to protection at U.S. borders. Under U.S. laws and treaty commitments, border agents are required to process asylum claims, regardless of the asylum seekers' country of origin.

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