

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/administration-unveils-discriminatory-unnecessary-refugee-vetting>

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Current Initiatives

Washington, D.C. Human Rights First said today that new onerous, unnecessary additions to already stringent refugee vetting procedures unveiled by the Trump Administration are an attempt to dismantle the country's resettlement program. These new procedures go into effect immediately, including for refugees who have already been approved. These refugees thought they were finally being welcomed to safety in the United States and will instead wait many additional months or years. Many of the new procedures will be extremely difficult for the thousands of vulnerable refugees who have fled war-torn countries, will divert staff resources, and do nothing to enhance U.S. national security. Human Rights First notes that refugees are already the most closely-vetted group of any to enter the United States.

The new vetting procedures have nothing to do with making America more secure, and have everything to do with this administration's campaign to dismantle the refugee resettlement program, the last line of protection for vulnerable men, women, and children who want nothing more than to live in freedom and safety, said Human Rights First's Jennifer Quigley. While we support efforts to increase security, refugees already undergo the strictest vetting of any individual entering the United States, and to add onerous and unnecessary new procedures is a solution in search of a problem.

The vetting procedures announced yesterday will impose a new 90-day ban on the resettlement of refugees from a list of 11 mainly Muslim-majority countries, as well as stateless Palestinians who already undergo enhanced security screening measures. In many cases, these refugees are being made to suffer for the United States' poor relations with their own governments—the same governments that many of these refugees are fleeing. These refugees, some of whom were already approved for travel, make up nearly 60 percent of cases in the current resettlement pipeline. In practical terms, absent an immediate and significant increase in capacity on the part of the Department of Homeland Security, this discriminatory ban will make it impossible for DHS to come close to resettling even the historically low annual number of 45,000 that the administration had previously set for this year.

New data collection requirements announced here demand from refugees—typically victims of trauma and repeated displacement—information that most Americans living under peaceful circumstances would struggle to provide. The administration has also added an indefinite ban on the follow-to-join program, which allows refugees to be reunited with a spouse and/or children from whom they were separated in the course of flight. This is yet another attempt, following the initial travel ban, to bar from the United States the family members of vulnerable individuals. These onerous bureaucratic restrictions, coupled with a draining of resources for processing refugee resettlement, indicate that the true purpose of the vetting procedures is to halt refugee admissions.

The United States refugee vetting procedures—which include [extensive and comprehensive interviews](#) as well as multiple rounds of [security vetting](#) with a wide array of U.S. and international intelligence and law enforcement agencies—are [widely recognized](#) as the most stringent in the world by former U.S. military leaders and former U.S. national security officials, who have served both Democratic and Republican administrations. Former CIA directors, national security advisors, and secretaries of defense, state, and homeland security [have explained](#) that resettling refugees advances U.S. national security interests, and that halting refugee resettlement harms U.S. national security.

This is a refugee ban by a different name, added Quigley. The Trump Administration is playing politics with the most vulnerable people in the world.

For more information or to speak with Quigley, please contact Corinne Duffy at [\[emailprotected\]](#) or 202-370-3319

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