

# Human Rights First

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/extreme-vetting-executive-order-targets-vulnerable-refugees>

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Current Initiatives

**New York City** Human Rights First today condemned an executive order on the entry of refugees that will block and derail resettlement of thoroughly screened refugees, warning that such measures will damage U.S. national security and global leadership. The order calls for the suspension of visas, immigrant and nonimmigrant entry from some Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Sudan), a suspension of the refugee resettlement program, an indefinite suspension to U.S. resettlement of Syrian refugees, and directs the State Department to prioritize religious minorities for entry into the United States over other vulnerable groups, thus restricting resettlement of Muslim refugees from Muslim-majority countries.

Refugees are already extremely vetted by multiple security agencies. This order is a clear attempt to block vulnerable Muslim refugees fleeing terrorism and persecution from securing safety in the United States, said Human Rights First's **Eleanor Acer**. Not only does this order trample upon U.S. commitments to religious freedom, non-discrimination, and refugee protection, it will make our nation less safe. National security leaders agree that the refugee resettlement program is a critical tool for advancing national security interests by supporting our allies and combating the narrative of our enemies who would claim that the West is at war with the entire Muslim faith.

Turning our back on vulnerable refugees doesn't protect the United States; in fact, it plays into ISIS's false narrative that we are at war with all Muslims, instead of terrorist organizations, said Matthew G. Olsen, former director of the National Counterterrorism Center. Our refugee screening system is rigorous and thorough, and attempts to end or derail resettlement are simply contrary to our national interest.

The United States refugee vetting procedures 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.

The order also appears to suspend priority resettlement and special visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who risked their lives to work with the American military, government or other American entities as translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, and cultural advisors, and could also if Afghanistan is added to the list derail the protection of Afghan SIV recipients who worked with the U.S. military. These men and women and their families now face grave threats for working to advance U.S. interests.

Banning the admission of Syrian refugees contradicts American values, undermines American leadership and threatens American security by making the ISIS case that we are at war with Islam. The provisions included in the order also threaten the lives of Iraqis who risked their safety to help the United States and our servicemembers by exacerbating the backlogs they face, said Ryan Crocker, former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Iraq.

The world is facing the largest refugee crisis since World War II, with over 60 million people displaced. Over 4.8 million Syrians have fled their country due to conflict and persecution, and 7.6 million are displaced within Syria in need of humanitarian assistance. Human Rights First's report [The Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Need for U.S. Leadership](#) details how many of these refugees have been stranded for years in neighboring countries where they cannot work or support their families, have little access to education, and lack the level of humanitarian assistance they need. Frontline states and key U.S. allies including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan continue to host the majority of the nearly 5 million refugees who have fled Syria, struggling under the strain of hosting so many refugees.

The United States has a long bipartisan history of providing refuge to the persecuted. This order sends a bad signal to the rest of the world and will put the United States on the wrong side of history, added Acer.

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