

# Human Rights First

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

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/trump-administration-should-immediately-restart-refugee-admissions>

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**Washington, D.C.** Human Rights First today urged the Trump Administration to immediately begin admitting refugees into the United States in light of a U.S. district court ruling that strikes down the administration's narrow definition of family relationships, and its denial of assured refugees, even those who have a relationship with resettlement agencies.

This is the right ruling and we look forward to continuing to welcome refugees through the U.S. resettlement program, said Human Rights First's **Jennifer Quigley**. We urge the administration to immediately implement and issue guidance adhering to this ruling, and encourage members of Congress to urge the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security to swiftly issue guidance and implement the refugee program accordingly.

Yesterday U.S. District Court Judge Derrick Watson struck down the administration's guidance of the implementation of President Trump's executive order pertaining to individuals with bona fide relationships from six Muslim-majority countries and refugees from all countries. Prior to this decision, the administration refused to recognize many family relationships or refugees' relationships with U.S.-based resettlement agencies as bona fide for purposes of being exempt from the executive order, prohibiting many from entering the country.

Due to this ruling, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins of persons in the United States will now count as bona fide relationships in order to enter the United States, as will a refugee resettlement agency's formal assurance to a refugee. Currently, there are approximately 26,000 refugees who have been assured and allocated by U.S.-based resettlement agencies. Religious minorities from Iran and the former Soviet Union with close ties to the United States will also be allowed to arrive.

It is time for the chaos surrounding the life-saving refugee resettlement program to end. The administration can and should conduct a security review while simultaneously allowing all refugees to continue coming to the United States, noted Quigley. Banning refugees in this arbitrary way is bad policy, and it does nothing to make our nation safer.

Human Rights First notes that despite yesterday's ruling, refugees currently in the resettlement pipeline who have not yet reached the final step in their long screening process will be left in legal limbo, potentially delaying their admission. This includes 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 the 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, many of whom are in dangerous situations.

Certain groups of refugees also 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.

The U.N. Refugee Agency reports that in 2016 there were over 65 million people displaced from their homes. Nearly half of them are children. On average, a person somewhere in the world is forced to flee their home every three seconds. And yet, refugees and asylum seekers are facing heightened threats under the Trump Administration, from executive orders to an emboldened detention and deportation force.

Published on July 14, 2017

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