

Refugee Order Closes Door to Vulnerable Refugees

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SILVER SPRING, Maryland—President Trump signed an executive order Jan. 27 that erodes the United States' commitment to the protection of refugees, weakens our country's security, and harms our standing in the international community. "At a time when war and persecution have driven more people to flee in search of safety than any other time in modern history, we need to protect refugees rather than reject them out of misplaced fear," said Jeanne Atkinson, executive director of CLINIC. Among other effects, the order would halt the refugee resettlement program for 120 days, reduce by more than half the number of refugees resettled in 2017 to 50,000, suspend the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and suspend immigration from several Muslim majority countries. "We call for the administration to protect refugees of all faiths and reject the idea of limiting resettlement of our Muslim brothers and sisters. We must continue our policy of protecting the most vulnerable refugees," Atkinson said. "Operating out of fear does not serve the nation's interests. In fact, refugee resettlement serves the nation's security interests. In addition to intellect, ambition, and an ethic of hard work, refugees often bring language and cultural skills needed by our national security agencies." The refugee resettlement process includes extensive security checks performed by the Department of Defense, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State. "Refugees have enriched our society in countless ways. These newcomers seek protection and the promise of equality, opportunity and liberty that has made our country thrive. When we reject refugees, we negate the welcome that was given to so many of our ancestors," said Bishop Kevin W. Vann, chairman of CLINIC's board of directors and head of the Diocese of Orange in California. Today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we should reflect on the lessons of the past. We stand with the international community who will now bear greater responsibility for protecting the world's most vulnerable people. We pray that they will honor their commitment to give a home to those who flee unspeakable atrocities. Many of CLINIC's 300 affiliates doing immigration legal services work also help resettle refugees and assist them with integration into the United States, such as by offering naturalization programs.

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