

September 23, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
U.S. Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As former leaders of the U.S. Refugee Admissions program, we write to you in support of the program, and to encourage a substantial increase in the admissions ceiling for Fiscal Year 2021. Each of the undersigned oversaw the program at the U.S. Department of State as an Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, or as the Director of the Bureau of Refugee Programs. We deeply appreciate the critical role of the U.S. Department of State in addressing displacement needs worldwide. With many decades of collective experience and public service under Republican and Democratic administrations, we all remain deeply committed to ensuring that the U.S. government retains this noble humanitarian objective.

For four decades since the Refugee Act of 1980, America's refugee resettlement program has enjoyed bipartisan support. Regardless of party, lawmakers and the American public have celebrated the program as a pillar of our nation's values. Throughout our tenure in public service, we have seen firsthand the benefits, domestically and internationally, of a robust refugee resettlement program.

We are concerned that the current U.S. admissions ceiling, for FY 2020, already represents an unprecedented and dramatic reduction from the historical average. And we are alarmed by reports that the administration may be considering a suspension of refugee admissions after September 30. We believe that any further reduction in refugee resettlement would represent the disregard of dire needs of displaced people around the world at a time when other governments are bearing substantial responsibilities to provide refuge. Moreover, a suspension would come in the context of enormous contributions of refugees already resettled in the United States, including refugees who are playing key roles as front-line workers in the current COVID-19 response. Finally, a suspension would walk away from a proud U.S. tradition of welcoming those individuals to our country who are seeking better lives for themselves and their children.

Thus, we hope you will do all within your power to ensure the issuance of a presidential determination that recommits the United States to a generous program of refugee admissions.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Frank Loy  
Former Director of the Bureau of Refugee Programs (1980–1981)  
Former Undersecretary of State for Global Affairs

James N. Purcell, Jr.

Former Director of the Bureau of Refugee Programs (1982–1986)

Former Director General of the International Organization for Migration

The Honorable Phyllis Oakley

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration (1994–1997)

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research

The Honorable Arthur Dewey

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration (2002–2005)

Former United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees

Samuel Witten

Former Acting Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration (2007–2009)

Former Deputy Legal Adviser for the U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Eric Schwartz

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration (2009–2011)

Former NSC Senior Director for Multilateral and Humanitarian Affairs

The Honorable Anne C. Richard

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration (2012–2017)

Former Director of the Secretary's Office of Resources, Plans, and Policy, Department of State