

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 26, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our concern at the slow pace of refugee resettlement and to request details about current and future plans to rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) are projecting 25,000 refugee arrivals to the United States this fiscal year. This is drastically lower than the Presidential Determination of 125,000 and less than half of the 65,000 operational capacity planned for this year. This results in very real impacts on the lives of refugees around the world awaiting resettlement, and on their loved ones already resettled in the United States.

The need for robust refugee resettlement is high. If current conflict trends continue, the twenty-first century will be defined by an ever-rising population of people forced to flee their homes and by increasingly limited options for them to turn to. This spring, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declared a grim milestone: there are currently 100 million forcibly displaced people globally. Based on new global trends, more than 26 million of those people are refugees. More than two million refugees are in need of resettlement. At this critical moment for refugees around the world, the U.S.'s moral and legal obligation to our longstanding, bipartisan refugee resettlement program has never been more important.

We welcomed Executive Order (EO14013) on rebuilding and enhancing programs to resettle refugees in February 2021, which was desperately needed to address the harm inflicted on the program by the previous administration. This Administration has faced significant challenges in this work, including the numerous discriminatory policies enacted by the previous Administration, the implications of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to evacuate over 70,000 Afghans through Operation Allies Welcome. However, we note that the number of refugees in the USRAP pipeline has declined from 90,000 in September 2021 to only 77,931 as of June 7, 2022.

Through your leadership of this interagency effort, we urge you to rapidly adjudicate refugee cases, in particular family reunification cases; to prioritize the implementation of reforms outlined in Executive Order 14013; and to collaborate substantively with Congress and with the refugee resettlement agencies to increase the pace of this work. In this context, we respectfully request your responses to the following questions.

1. What is the average processing time for USRAP cases currently in the pipeline?
2. Please provide data on refugee cases referred to the Department of Homeland Security from the Department of State for interview.
 - How many cases have been interviewed?

- How many interviewed cases are pending, disaggregated by stage?
3. Please provide the total number of family reunification petitioners, separated into Follow-to-Join and Priority-3 applicants.
 - How many cases are pending interviews? What is the length of time that each case has been pending?
 - How many cases have completed interviews?
 4. The FY23 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) provided an operational capacity figure of 65,000 arrivals next fiscal year. Will that number be adjusted based on the FY23 Presidential Determination, and if so in what direction?
 5. Does USCIS have refugee processing circuit rides planned for the remainder of FY22?
 - If so, will circuit rides include interviews for pending family reunification cases?
 6. Please describe the status of planning for refugee processing circuit rides for FY23.
 - How many are planned for the first quarter of FY23, and what is their duration?
 - Will these circuit rides include interviews for pending family reunification cases?
 7. How many refugee corps officers has United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) hired since January 2022?
 8. Please describe the status of USCIS plans to reopen international offices.
 9. Has the U.S. Digital Services deployed staff to lead coordination for resettlement rebuilding? If so, please provide information on such individuals.
 10. Has the National Vetting Center (NVC) assumed a role in refugee vetting?
 - If so, has this impacted the speed of vetting?
 - Please describe the oversight measures in place to ensure the NVC improves the efficiency of refugee processing.
 11. How many Afghans have been processed to the United States as part of the expedited refugee processing model to date?
 - What are the projections of Afghan refugee arrivals for the remainder of FY22?
 - Of projected arrivals for the remainder of FY22, how many are projected to arrive via the expedited model?
 12. Please describe the status of plans to expand the expedited refugee processing model to other regions, including RSC Africa's implementation of this model.
 13. How many Ukrainians and non-Ukrainian residents of Ukraine are projected to arrive in FY22 as refugees?
 - How many Lautenberg cases are in the USRAP pipeline?

- How many have been closed as a result of pending Lautenberg individuals who have arrived as U4U beneficiaries?

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



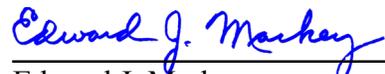
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