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REFUGEE ACTION COALITION OF COLORADO EXPRESSES OUTRAGE OVER FEBRUARY 18TH DHS MEMO CALLING FOR ARREST & DETENTION OF REFUGEES

ADVOCATES URGE CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TO ASSERT HUMANITARIANISM & REFUGEE RIGHTS

Denver, CO—Members of the Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado (RACC) are outraged by the [February 18th Department of Homeland Security policy memo](#) regarding ‘detention of refugees who have failed to adjust to lawful permanent residence status.’ Threatening refugees who have been resettled in the U.S. with arbitrary arrest or detaining them after lawful admission and resettlement, as called for in the memo, are egregious affronts to patriotic and humanitarian values amounting to a terror campaign against our country’s most vulnerable newcomers and their families.

In the face of our collective horror, we highlight the following initial reactions from leaders in Colorado’s welcoming and resettlement network:

“This policy of arresting and detaining refugees is cruel and serves no other purpose. These are families who fled persecution and were promised one thing by the U.S. government: safety. Refugees endure years of waiting for legal entry, undergoing extensive vetting overseas. Many have applied for green cards—applications they are eligible for—but those cases remain unprocessed. To betray our promise of refuge and arrest them is not only cruel and outrageous, it is also extraordinarily costly and entirely unnecessary.”

-Kristy Beachy-Quick, Director of [Church World Service in Fort Collins](#)

“The very idea that refugees, people who have endured horrors most of us can barely imagine, are being re-traumatized by the United States government with zero rationale is simply horrific. We must do all we can—as a state and as a nation—to embrace and protect refugees, starting with reestablishing and strengthening immigration pathways rather than scapegoating and attacking the most vulnerable who are restarting their lives as our neighbors.”

-Paula Schriefer, President & CEO of [Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning](#)

Policy Background:

As expressed in our previous [statement regarding Operation Post-Admission Refugee Reverification and Integrity Strengthening \(Operation PARRIS\)](#), RACC vehemently rejects the premise that further scrutiny of already-admitted refugees is a reasonable, responsible, or well-intentioned practice. Instead, disinformation is being circulated as a supposed justification. The Trump Administration repeatedly and disingenuously claims that scrutinizing immigrants and disrupting pathways to immigration are key strategies for ensuring American public safety, yet in truth [immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born individuals](#), immigration is associated with safer communities, pathways to immigration are already extremely limited but bureaucratically cumbersome, and enforcement measures are [flagrantly targeting noncriminals](#). Unfounded suspicion of refugees is particularly convoluted and cruel since, by definition, they have endured persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution resulting in forcible displacement from their country of origin. Refugees throughout the world seek peace, dignity, and basic safety. Those relative few who are [recommended for resettlement in the U.S.](#) (very few proportional to the number of refugees worldwide) embrace opportunities afforded by this country’s democratic

principles and patriotic ideals. That is why decades of both Republican and Democratic officials—President Trump glaringly excepted—have championed the welcoming of refugees as fundamental to our country’s global humanitarian leadership.

Not only that, such measures are a patently unnecessary waste of resources. Only the world’s most vulnerable refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) are ever recommended for resettlement in the U.S. (or a few other select countries). Those recommended for U.S. resettlement must then apply to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and undergo [extensive vetting](#) amounting to approximately two years of processing through screenings by eight federal agencies, multiple in-person interviews with the Department of Homeland Security, various security database and biometric security checks, and medical screening. Applications for U.S. resettlement have historically been limited to those falling into three principal categories prioritizing specially referred cases and making selections based on assessment of relative humanitarian urgency. The Trump Administration's other actions have only [curtailed an already rigorous process](#), infusing chaos into the national resettlement network and stranding thousands and thousands of individuals already approved for resettlement but not yet admitted to the country. Baseless targeting of those who have already been rigorously screened and admitted just adds to the injudicious upheaval. Subjecting an [estimated 100,000 refugees](#) to this new policy goes even further beyond the pale.

The idea that refugees pose a threat to American prosperity is also grossly misguided, as refugees play a vital role in our economy by providing state and local taxes, generating economic growth, and strengthening public services. In Colorado, refugees generate \$1.68 in economic activity for every \$1 provided to them in assistance, according to a [report by the Colorado Department of Human Services](#). In 2023 alone, [refugee Coloradans](#) paid \$127.1 million in state and local taxes and had a combined household income of \$1.4 billion. Their immense contributions to our state’s vibrant social and cultural fabric are unquantifiable and invaluable.

Calls to Action:

Since passage of the *Refugee Act of 1980* and establishment of USRAP, 80,000 refugees have resettled in Colorado. **RACC affirms Colorado’s humanitarian commitment to welcoming those fleeing danger in other parts of the world and we uplift the tremendous social, cultural, and economic benefits of refugee inclusion. Targeting refugees arbitrarily for arrest and detention is indefensible, irresponsible, and terrorizing.** We continue to urge Coloradans, including all members of our Congressional delegation and our General Assembly, to:

- Join in [RACC’s mission](#) and contribute to advocacy by member organizations and individuals affirming Colorado’s welcoming values, celebrating the positive influence of refugees on our patriotic vitality, and seeking to strengthen the local resettlement network;
- Embrace and uplift the [diverse perspectives and insights of refugee Coloradans](#);
- Promote basic knowledge and understanding of [refugee immigration status](#) and the Constitutional rights of refugees in the U.S.;
- Stand in solidarity with allied national and international experts offering critical analysis, campaigns denouncing the federal administration’s anti-refugee rhetoric and harmful policy actions, and legal defense of refugees such as [Refugee Council USA](#), [Church World Service](#), [Refugee Congress](#), [Refugees International](#), [Refugee Advocacy Lab](#), [U.S. Committee for Refugees & Immigrants](#), [International Refugee Assistance Project](#), [We Are All America](#), [Migration Policy Institute](#)—and more; and
- If you witness action by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or another immigration authority in Colorado, call the [Colorado Rapid Response Network \(CORRN\)](#) hotline: 1-844-864-8341. Report any federal agent misconduct using the Attorney General's [complaint filing system](#).

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The [Refugee Action Coalition of Colorado \(RACC\)](#) advocates for and with refugees to promote a welcoming community and to advance opportunities where refugees thrive. [Learn more, apply to join RACC](#), and connect on [Facebook](#).