

The Honorable Senator Lamar Alexander
Joel E. Soloman Federal Building
900 Georgia Avenue, #260
Chattanooga, TN 37402

August 3, 2019

Dear Senator Alexander:

I am writing to you as a concerned constituent from Knoxville, Tennessee. Even as more than 25 million refugees are in need of protection around the world--the highest number in recorded history, the administration has returned asylum seekers to harm and cut refugee resettlement to all-time lows. And now they are considering zeroing out the program altogether. This cannot happen. I want to urge you to do everything in your power to protect the U.S. asylum system and refugee resettlement program from being decimated by the administration.

Resettlement is reserved only for the most vulnerable refugees who cannot return to their homes and do not have safety in the places where they have fled. And refugees already face the most rigorous security vetting and medical screening process of any traveler to the United States.

After barring people from seeking asylum if they travel through another country, the administration is considering setting the refugee admissions goal for next year at ZERO. Congress must hold the administration accountable. By law, the administration must consult with Congress prior to setting the refugee admissions goal, which means you are uniquely poised to ensure that the administration fulfills its obligation to consult with Congress ahead of deciding how many refugees to welcome in FY20. Please do everything in your power to see that the administration stops its attacks on asylum seekers and commits to resettling 95,000 refugees in 2020. My community welcomes refugees, and I urge you to reflect the best of our nation by supporting refugee resettlement.

The complete decimation of the refugee resettlement program would devastate the people of Knoxville, who stand ready with open arms to welcome refugee families. Refugees are contributing to our community and local economy, as we have seen in the case of Yassin Terou of Yassin's Falafel House. Yassin's restaurant was voted the Nicest Place in America by Reader's Digest, and Yassin continues to give back to our community by creating jobs for homeless citizens. Our case is not unique. Study after study shows that refugees and immigrants create new businesses and new jobs. Even a study by this administration found that refugees have made a net contribution of \$63 billion to government revenue over the last decade.

Welcoming the persecuted is a fundamental American value and the backbone of our nation's history. This country was founded on the hard work, determination, and skills of generations of immigrants from all countries, religions, and backgrounds. We must continue to be a beacon of hope. We have enough support and resources to welcome 95,000 refugees next year.

Congress must hold the administration accountable to keeping its promise to tens of thousands of refugees still waiting to see if they will be welcomed this year, as well as those who are and will continue to seek safety at our borders and through the resettlement program. The destruction of our asylum system and refugee resettlement program would be devastating for them, as well as our community and absolutely diminish America's standing on the global stage.

Please do everything in your power to defend American leadership of refugee resettlement worldwide and protect our reputation as a place of refuge, not rejection. Please commit to advocating for 95,000 refugees to be admitted in the next fiscal year.

Sincerely,

