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World Relief Decries Biden Administration's Failure to Follow Through on its Promise to Set Robust Presidential Determination for Refugee Resettlement in 2021

BALTIMORE – Today, despite his repeated promises to increase the U.S.'s commitment to resettling refugees, President Biden signed a revised Presidential Determination for Refugee Resettlement (PD), maintaining President Trump's historically low admissions goal of 15,000. While President Biden's revised PD does make important and long-awaited changes to regional admissions categories, the decision to keep the refugee cap at an all-time low represents a stunning betrayal of the president's previous commitment. While, after widespread outcry, the administration indicated that further revisions may be forthcoming, World Relief believes President Biden must set the refugee ceiling at the promised level of 62,500 for the remainder of the fiscal year *immediately*.

World Relief believes the ceiling that President Biden signed today is short-sighted and an abdication of our values. The world is currently facing the greatest displacement crisis in modern history, with at least 79.5 million people currently forced from their homes. Of these nearly 80 million people, [26 million](#) are refugees, meaning they have fled their countries because they faced persecution and are unable to find safety at home should they return. The need for countries like the U.S. to welcome and care for the most vulnerable of these refugees has never been greater, and yet the U.S. refugee admissions program has been drastically cut. In fact, President Biden has now affirmed a refugee ceiling that is less than one-third of the level set by President Trump in his first days in office — a level that [World Relief's leadership](#) and many [other evangelical leaders](#) sharply critiqued at the time.

"We are shocked and disappointed to hear that President Biden has failed to keep his promise to expand the refugee admissions cap. Biden made clear that he would rebuild the U.S. refugee resettlement program that had been devastated by his predecessor; in embracing President Trump's historically low refugee ceiling, President Biden is betraying his commitment to build back better" said **Scott Arbeiter, president of World Relief**. "At a time when refugees and immigrants need American leadership more than ever before, President Biden is refusing to take action."

Restoring the U.S. refugee program was an official priority of the Biden-Harris administration, with President Biden formally proposing to raise the refugee admissions goal for the remainder of the 2021 fiscal year (FY21) to 62,500 – a move that would have paved the way for a refugee admissions goal of 125,000 during the next fiscal year (FY22). With President Biden's decision to keep Trump's refugee cap in place, the future of refugee admissions in the years to come is now uncertain.

The new commitment to leave the presidential determination at 15,000 came with new regional categories that replaced Trump's four admissions categories, which has led more than 700 refugees' flights to be cancelled in recent weeks. The new categories are as follows::

- Africa - 7,000
- East Asia - 1,000
- Europe and Central Asia - 1,500
- Latin America/Caribbean - 3,000
- Near East/South Asia - 1,500
- Unallocated Reserve - 1,000

"We are glad that President Trump's discriminatory admissions categories have been rescinded, but the fact that the refugee ceiling remains unchanged at 15,000 is a stunning disappointment, and we're not going to celebrate further vague promises that the ceiling will be reconsidered in the future. The president has effectively abandoned his commitment to help refugees around the world by keeping the refugee ceiling at the lowest levels in U.S. history. He has backtracked on the promise he made in February to raise the refugee ceiling to 62,500, continuing Trump's draconian policies that shut the door on those fleeing persecution. The effects have been felt by some of the most vulnerable people around the world. In order to truly strengthen the refugee program and reach the eventual goal of resettling 125,000 refugees, the president must do more to restore U.S. leadership in refugee protection, especially when we are facing the world's worst refugee crisis since World War II," said **Jenny Yang, senior vice president of advocacy and policy for World Relief.**

World Relief asks the Biden administration to rebuild and strengthen the resettlement program to meet the promised refugee admissions goal of 62,500. Congress should support robust federal funding for refugee protection and resettlement, as well as proactive legislation, such as the GRACE Act, which would set a minimum refugee admissions goal of 125,000 and expand congressional oversight over the operations of the resettlement program.

"The refugee resettlement ceiling should be raised immediately, so our nation can welcome those we have already vetted. Refugee resettlement is a process that is entirely separate from the challenges at the U.S.-Mexico border, and the situation there should not prevent the administration from keeping its promise to refugees who have already been vetted overseas," said **Tim Breene, CEO of World Relief.**

To learn more about refugee resettlement and to ask your congressional representative to consider legislation on it, visit <https://worldrelief.org/advocate/>.

About World Relief



World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world's greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we've partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

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