

Statement on US Presidential Executive Order “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” and its Impact on Refugees

World Council of Churches (WCC), ACT Alliance (ACT), The Lutheran World Federation

The World Council of Churches, ACT Alliance and The Lutheran World Federation join in reaffirming our conviction that our faith calls us and all Christians to love and welcome the stranger, the refugee, the internally displaced person, the other. We are called to treat him or her as we would like to be treated. Scripture and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ are abundantly clear on this matter.

Leviticus 19:33-34

³³ When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 23:15-16

¹⁵ If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master. ¹⁶ Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them.

Matthew 25:34-36

³⁴ ‘Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

As Christians seeking to live out this calling in service to others, we share and affirm the concerns expressed by many Christian leaders in the United States of America and around the world about the measures announced on 27 January 2017, suspending the entire US refugee admissions program for 120 days, indefinitely banning Syrian refugees, and suspending entry to the US by all nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries.

These measures have been introduced in the name of protecting the nation from terrorists entering the US. However, we support the view that in practice this order serves to further harm those who are the very victims of terrorism, genocide, religious and gender-based persecution, and civil war.

Participants in a WCC delegation to Iraq on 20-25 January met many victims of terrorism in Iraq - Christians, Yazidis, Muslims and members of many other religious communities - who must now feel doubly victimized by these measures.

We affirm and insist that, as prescribed under international humanitarian and human rights law, all those in confirmed need of refuge and international protection have a right to receive it, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity.

With further reference to the recent WCC delegation visit to Iraq, to give preference to Christians in this context does not necessarily protect the Christian community in Iraq, but may risk further jeopardizing the inter-communal reconciliation on which their future in their ancient homeland depends.

As one of the most significant destination countries for refugee resettlement worldwide, we urge the United States to uphold its long tradition of welcoming refugees and offering them international protection, in accordance with its commitments and obligations under international law.

The world is currently experiencing the largest forced displacement crisis since World War II, and 86% of the world's refugees are being hosted in developing countries. For the USA to more than halve its annual intake of refugees would not only severely affect people in urgent need of refuge, but also encourage other developed countries to participate in a further erosion of international protection for refugees.

We particularly regret the specific and indefinite suspension of refugee admission for Syrians, in view of the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in the region. This is an abysmal failure of compassion and responsibility.

Many Christian leaders in the United States and around the world, from across the spectrum of denominations and church families, have expressed essentially the same concerns and opposition to these measures, and we welcome the ecumenical unanimity of perspective on this issue. The gravity of the matter, and the suffering of so many forcibly displaced people around the world, demands nothing less than a united Christian witness for human dignity and for justice, and partnership with the many others from other faith communities who have spoken out against these measures.

We commend all, including churches and church-related organizations, who have been tirelessly serving those escaping conflict, persecution and hardship worldwide – in particular in Syria and the Middle East – and supporting them upon resettlement in the USA and elsewhere. And we stand with all those who have called for an immediate reversal of this Executive Order.

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USCCB Committee On Migration Chair Strongly Opposes Executive Order Because It Harms Vulnerable Refugee And Immigrant Families: <http://www.usccb.org/news/2017/17-026.cfm>

PC(USA) Stated Clerk opposes order banning refugees' entry into U.S.:
<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2017/1/28/stated-clerk-opposes-order-banning-refugees-entry/>

UCC: Faith leaders condemn Trump's ban on refugees as un-American:
http://www.ucc.org/news_faith_leaders_condemn_trumps_ban_on_refugees_as_un_american_01262017

UCC: 2,000 interfaith leaders oppose changes in refugee resettlement:
http://www.ucc.org/news_2000_interfaith_leaders_oppose_changes_in_refugee_resettlement_01272017

Presiding Bishop, other Episcopal leaders call on Trump to maintain refugee resettlement efforts: <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2017/01/25/presiding-bishop-other-episcopal-leaders-call-on-trump-to-maintain-refugee-resettlement-efforts/>

Catholic Relief Services: Head of CRS Reacts to Executive Order Banning Refugees:
<http://www.crs.org/media-center/news-release/head-of-crs-reacts>

Church World Service: Tell the White House & Congress that you OPPOSE Trump's Announcement to Grind Refugee Resettlement To a Halt & Bar Refugees from Certain Countries: <http://cwsglobal.org/our-work/advocacy/oppose-president-trumps-announcement-on-refugee-resettlement/>

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service Denounces Trump Administration's Executive Actions on Refugee Resettlement: <http://lirs.org/press-inquiries/press-room/lirs-denounces-trump-administrations-executive-actions-on-refugee-resettlement/>

ELCA presiding bishop addresses President Trump's refugee executive order:
<http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7873>

Statement by His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom, on the current debate regarding security and provision of refuge for the most vulnerable: <http://www.bishopangaelos.org/content/statement-hg-bishop-angaelos-security-and-provision-refuge-most-vulnerable>

Letter to President Trump on executive order on refugees from World Vision:
<https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/media-center/letter-president-trump-executive-order-refugees>

Catholic News Service: Christians who reject all refugees are 'hypocrites,' Pope says:
<http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2016/christians-who-reject-all-refugees-are-hypocrites-pope-says.cfm>

WEA Issues Call to Welcome Refugees: <http://www.worldea.org/news/4737/wea-issues-call-to-welcome-refugees>

Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders:
<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/hcdialogue%20/51b6de419/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders.html>