



Statement on Executive Order on Immigration & Refugees

January 30, 2017

As the largest resettler of refugees in the state of Michigan and the fourth largest in the nation, Samaritas opposes President Trump's January 27, 2017 Executive Order halting refugee resettlement for 120 days and thereafter, limiting both volume and certain identities of the people welcomed to our country.

Signed on the premise that such action will ensure greater safety for Americans, this order may in fact create an isolationist philosophy that could diminish our nation's long history of welcoming people fleeing for their lives.

We call on President Trump to recognize our country's role as a beacon of freedom for the entire world and hope that in that light, he will alter the specifics of these changes to our national refugee resettlement program. Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the world. Our federal agencies collaboratively engage in an extremely thorough and precise vetting process and only select those refugees for admittance who are exemplars of the values we perpetuate in America.

The [security screening process](#) is thorough, well-documented and proven to be highly effective in the course of the admission of [3 million refugees to the U.S. since 1975](#). It is by far the most rigorous form of screening applied to any group of people seeking admission into the United States.

This order will likely result in good people having to continue living in refugee camps, where living conditions are often inadequate, and their safety is often threatened. We cannot stand idly by while our nation ceases its role of advocate for all people worldwide seeking justice, freedom and a chance at a healthy, meaning-filled future.

Fearing people who are different from us prevents us from loving as Christ loved. Following in the faith-filled footsteps of our Creator, we cannot judge a nation or a religion by the actions of extremists, for there are extremists who seek to do harm in every ideology on the planet, including Christianity.

We believe in continuing the legacy of moral leadership that we see in America's ideals. We as an organization are devoted to saving lives every day in every way that we can, including assisting in the peaceful resettlement of refugees seeking safe haven in America. We hope we continue to have the chance to do so.

The refugees we have welcomed here already profess an unbroken belief in the goodness of America. We choose to follow their lead and remain optimistic that what they see in America will remain a crucial part of the fabric of our ideals. Not one refugee has expressed doubt, fear or a sense of tension since they arrived. This speaks volumes for the everyday Americans who live and work alongside refugees. The fear driving this executive order is clearly unfounded.

Samaritas has been welcoming refugees to Michigan since 1949. Our organization and our nation have a deep and cherished history of providing a safe haven to people who have nowhere else to go. This country was built on the notions of freedom, asylum and welcome. Closing our doors to people fleeing terror, danger and persecution flies in the face of all that America stands for.

Almost every American can trace his or her roots back to a refugee or immigrant. Most refugees become grateful, hard-working and proud Americans. Seventy-five percent of the refugees we welcome are self-sufficient within 180 days of arrival – despite many not having fluency in English.

The long-term impact of refugees on our communities is profound. We see a high number of refugees becoming entrepreneurs, creating new revenue streams for our economy and creating jobs for our citizens, and the pride they feel in building a life with limitless possibilities is beyond words.

Today, we are witnessing the highest levels of global displacement ever recorded, with 65.3 million people forced from their homes - 21.3 million of whom are refugees. More than half of all refugees today are younger than 18, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>).

The most shared value of the Abrahamic faiths – including Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which serve as the foundation for our nation’s moral code – is a mandate to *welcome the stranger & love thy neighbor*.

This imperative is mentioned no fewer than 36 times in Judeo-Christian Scriptures: “you know the feelings of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 23:9)

“The stranger who dwells with you shall be like a native among you” (Leviticus 19:33-34)

“Love our neighbor as ourselves” (Matthew 22:39)

“...do good to the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbor who is a stranger, the wayfarer” (Quran 4:36)

As people of faith, we urge our leaders to remember the values on which this country was founded and uphold our moral obligation to provide protection to individuals fleeing persecution. Our nation has a long and proud history of living out the moral imperative to protect the most vulnerable and offer compassion and justice to all. Samaritas supports all efforts toward ensuring that American policies and programs protect and welcome refugees as we always have.