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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

September 8, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

In advance of the Administration's upcoming announcement at United Nations General Assembly, I write to affirm our commitment to resettling refugees to the United States, and ask that you set a robust Presidential Determination to lead the world's response to the growing global displacement crisis. The United States has a long, bipartisan legacy in providing refugees protection through resettlement. During this time of great global need, the United States must lead.

Today, the world faces the greatest displacement and refugee crisis in history with more than 100 million people forced from their homes, including over 31 million refugees. By comparison, just over 45 million people were in situations of displacement at the end of 2012. This represents a 122 percent increase in global needs over the past decade.

Increasingly, nations are affected by spontaneous arrivals of asylum seekers and refugees, overwhelming national protection systems and straining resources, while limiting the willingness and ability of states to participate in formal resettlement programs. Meanwhile, almost 1.5 million people are in urgent need of resettlement, according to UNHCR.

Mounting global need demands bold leadership by the U.S. government in refugee protection and resettlement. The FY23 admissions goal must meaningfully respond to protracted, worsening, and emerging humanitarian crises. The U.S. must also take steps to ensure that its resettlement program is nimble enough to respond to new needs and emergency situations.

Afghanistan is a critical example -- yet not an isolated one -- of a country that had rapidly changing political and security conditions resulting in greater protection needs. China's crackdown in Hong Kong also demonstrated the importance of a resettlement program that is robust, flexible, secure, and agile.

At the same time, the U.S. must be able to balance the resettlement of groups experiencing acute resettlement needs with resettling refugees in protracted situations, including, but not limited to, Venezuelans, Syrians, Somalis, Rohingya, and Congolese, many who have been waiting decades for safety.

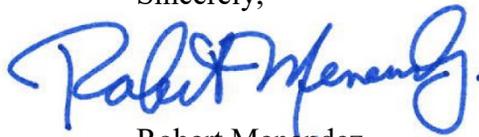
As of August 22, 2022, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has admitted 18,734 refugees, only 15 percent of the FY22 admissions goal of 125,000, in addition to the approximately 75,000+ Afghans who have been paroled into the U.S. since August 2021.

An ambitious marker to set an admissions goal must be paired with implementing the key policy and programmatic reforms to turn this vision into a reality and resettle as many refugees as possible next fiscal year. The Administration should expedite family reunifications, expand overseas refugee adjudication capacity, improve refugee vetting efficiencies, strengthen domestic resettlement capacity, and ensure due process and transparency.

I look forward to working with you to continue to strengthen the global refugee protection regime and reaffirm the U.S. tradition of providing safe harbor for those in need.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert Menendez
Chairman