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Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass more than 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, whose membership includes more than 2,000 Reform rabbis, I urge you to support robust refugee resettlement in the United States by resettling at least 75,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2018. I also strongly urge you to oppose efforts to dismantle the resettlement program, denying the United States' legacy as a land of refuge for the world's most vulnerable people.

As we face the worst global refugee crisis in history with over 65 million individuals displaced, we have a moral obligation to open our doors to victims of unimaginable violence and terror. And, as Reform Jews, we know too well the sting of persecution and the pain of being forced to flee one's home. Jewish tradition teaches, "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," (Leviticus 19:33-34). We have not forgotten this charge, and it compels Reform Jewish communities to welcome newly arrived refugees in their towns and cities across the country.

We open our arms to the stranger not only because our tradition obligates us to do so, but also because our parents and grandparents came to this country seeking refuge. It is because of our scriptural teachings and our historic experiences that President Trump's executive order severely limiting the refugee resettlement program strikes a painful, personal chord.

As the refugee crisis and anti-refugee rhetoric in the United States have both reached a fever pitch, Reform communities have felt compelled to act. Synagogues in New Haven, Connecticut; Wellesley, Massachusetts; Austin, Texas and Durham, North Carolina have met newly arrived refugee families at the airport, settled them into apartments furnished by the congregation, and provided winter clothes. These families survived the horrors of war in Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Afghanistan and arrived in the United States seeking safety and security. Our nation can do so much more to support refugee resettlement, and our congregations, and the broader faith community, are ready to welcome them.

We have a duty as Americans to ensure that this country continues to be a land of refuge and welcome. Efforts to limit refugee resettlement in the U.S. defy the great American tradition of providing safe haven to those fleeing violence and persecution. In answer to this call, I strongly urge you to oppose efforts to dismantle the resettlement program, and instead support admission of at least 75,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2018.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism



The Religious Action Center pursues social justice and religious liberty by mobilizing the Jewish community and serving as its advocate in Washington, D.C. The Center is led by the Commission on Social Action of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Union for Reform Judaism (and its affiliates) and is supported by the congregations of the Union.

