

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Pompeo, Acting Secretary McAleenan, and Secretary Azar:

We strongly urge you to restore our nation's long-standing bipartisan tradition of providing safety to the world's most vulnerable refugees and to immediately engage in meaningful consultations with Congress, as required by law, before setting the annual refugee admission ceiling for next year.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were more than 70 million people displaced in 2018, a record high. Among this displaced population are 25.9 million refugees, more than half of whom are children. UNHCR estimates that in 2019, 1.4 million refugees will need resettlement.

Our nation has safely and successfully resettled millions of refugees from across the world over several decades with strong bipartisan support. For example, during each year of the George H.W. Bush Administration, the U.S. accepted over 100,000 refugees. Since the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States had set an average resettlement goal of 95,000 refugees per year until President Trump took office.

However, the Trump Administration has cruelly decimated the United States Refugee Admissions Program and completely ignored the statutorily authorized role of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees. The Administration for two years in a row has established the annual refugee admissions target at an embarrassingly low number that betrays America's values

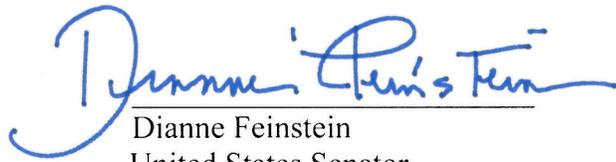
and abandons our leadership role in providing safety to refugees who are most in need of resettlement. Last fiscal year, the Administration set a target of 45,000 refugees and ultimately allowed just 22,491 refugees into the U.S. For this fiscal year, the Administration slashed the target to just 30,000 and may not even meet that low mark. According to media reports, the Administration is now considering even more dramatic cuts for Fiscal Year 2020.

As you know, prior to any presidential determination on the number of refugees to be admitted in the upcoming fiscal year, the law requires that Cabinet-level officials representing the President engage in an in-person consultation with Senate and House Judiciary Committee leaders. The law is clear that the consultation must occur before the start of the fiscal year. Yet, for the last two years, the Administration has refused to consult with Congress in a timely or meaningful manner. Fiscal Year 2020 begins in less than a month and we have not received a proposed refugee admissions plan from the Administration and the consultation has not yet been scheduled. As such, we urge you to immediately transmit the Administration's proposed refugee admissions report to Congress and schedule the statutorily-required consultation.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your prompt response.



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator