

# REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

April 5, 2022

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

Dear President Biden:

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) is [grateful](#) for your administration's commitment to share responsibility with European countries of first asylum and welcome 100,000 Ukrainians to the United States so they can live in safety and security until they decide it is safe for them to return home. We also very much appreciate your administration's recent designation of Ukraine for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and generous support to help to meet the significant humanitarian needs of displaced Ukrainians overseas.

While we await the details about how and when the 100,000 Ukrainians will arrive in the United States, we urge you to fully maximize and rebuild the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), rather than heavily rely upon the use of humanitarian parole. As an original co-sponsor of the Refugee Act of 1980, you are well aware that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) was specifically designed to replace the mass use of humanitarian parole, which comes without resettlement, financial, and casework assistance, lacks a pathway to family reunification, and leaves parolees in legal limbo (absent an act of Congress). All of these benefits are conveyed through the use of the USRAP.

The genius of the Refugee Act of 1980 is that beneficiaries are initially given refugee (or asylum) status for a period of twelve months, but with a pathway to lawful permanent residence. Only after those twelve months have passed may the refugee or asylee apply for a green card. Refugee status is not permanent residence, but empowers refugees to decide for themselves whether to return home when it is safe to do so or to apply for a green card in the United States.

In 1999, the Clinton Administration demonstrated the full potential of the emergency application of the USRAP, commencing the adjudication of the [refugee application of 13,989 Kosovar refugees as it evacuated them from North Macedonia](#), and completing that adjudication after their arrival in the United States. In the case of the Kosovars, most of these adjudications occurred at Fort Dix, but many occurred while the applicants were living in their new communities and with family members. The majority of these refugees returned home once it was safe to do so, just as we expect many Ukrainians may opt to do.

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We are grateful that over 80,000 Afghans have been rescued through humanitarian parole, and for Congress' conveyance of resettlement benefits upon them. Afghan parolees, however, are now in legal limbo, facing challenges to reuniting with family members and without any durable legal status in the United States. Unless Congress acts soon, Afghan parolees will have no choice but to navigate the broken, backlogged, and retraumatizing asylum process. We do not want to see Ukrainian refugees endure these unnecessary challenges, when the USRAP offers a much more humane and efficient alternative.

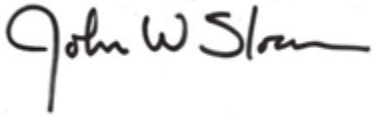
We therefore call on your administration to:

- 1) Urgently admit as refugees Ukrainian family reunification cases, both through the Lautenberg program, for both current and new cases, as well as through filed I-130 and I-730 cases and others with close family members in the United States with TPS, immigrant, or non-immigrant (temporary) status;
- 2) Provide resettlement opportunities for the estimated 5,000 non-Ukrainian asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable third country nationals who fled Ukraine after the invasion. This group is made up of Afghan asylum seekers and evacuees, as well as people originally from other refugee-producing countries.
- 3) Prepare for and launch a pilot private sponsorship program concurrently with the admission of Ukrainian refugees, as we have seen an outpouring of support from the American public to welcome Afghans, and a similar desire to do the same for Ukrainians.
- 4) To the extent that a subset of people are brought here under humanitarian parole, it will need to be "parole with a plan." This would require making a formal request with Congress for the necessary funding and authorizations, and working with the Departments of State, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services to ensure they will have access to the full suite of refugee resettlement services, including reception and placement (R&P), refugee cash and medical assistance, additional refugee support services; a simple, clear, and fee-less pathway to reunite with parents, children, and spouse or partner; and support in applying for asylum (similar to the support provided by Resettlement Support Centers for USRAP applicants, and as provided to asylum applicants from Northern Iraq airlifted to U.S. territory in 1996).
- 5) Urge Congress to enact an Afghan Adjustment Act, so that evacuated Afghan allies have a pathway to lawful permanent residence without being faced with the challenge of navigating the backlogged asylum process;
- 6) Rather than launching parallel humanitarian programs, focus on investing and rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program so that it can be restored as a tool of protection, durable solution and responsibility sharing for the many other refugee crises in the world.

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Thank you for your urgent attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



John Slocum  
Executive Director  
Refugee Council USA

cc:

The Honorable Antony Blinken, Secretary of State  
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary of Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security  
Ron Klain, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff  
The Honorable Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor  
The Honorable Susan Rice, Director of the Domestic Policy Council

*RCUSA is a diverse coalition advocating for just and humane laws and policies, and the promotion of dialogue and communication among government, civil society, and those who need protection and welcome. Individual RCUSA members do not all address all refugee-related issues, nor do all individual members approach common refugee-related issues identically.*