

Statement for  
Multifaith Alliance (MFA) for Syrian Refugees  
and the  
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC)  
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**At a time when the world faces the most serious refugee challenges since World War II and the highest number of displaced persons in history, the Multifaith Alliance, a coalition committed to mobilizing an effective interfaith response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis, and the national Reform Jewish Movement, join in expressing their grave alarm at reports that the Administration is intending to drop the number of refugees in the coming year to 45,000. The reports of such low numbers are chilling; and the consequences of implementing such numbers, dire. The United States will squander its moral authority as a nation of values, and its foreign diplomatic authority as a global leader and exemplar of humane and pragmatic**

**refugee policy. It will also squander the incontrovertible national security and economic benefits refugees bring to this country, while exacerbating untold human suffering.**

**MFA is a remarkably broad-based coalition comprised of nearly 90 secular and faith-based participating organizations including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. The Reform Jewish Movement is the largest segment of American Jewry. We join in urging the U.S. government to maintain refugee admissions for FY18 at absolutely no fewer than 75,000, a number that has been surpassed by every administration since 1980.**

**Since 1975, the United States has admitted more than three million refugees. The faith community's remarkable refugee agencies have played a key role in supporting refugees across the globe and in resettling successfully so many of those who have come to the U.S.. We know, first hand, that these refugees strengthen our economy, fight in our armed forces, enrich our cultural life and enhance our social capital.**

**As an Ambassador-at-Large, I have seen personally — from inside the government —the intensive vetting process to determine that incoming refugees do not impose a security threat; this is a process that can take up to two years of investigations. As a rabbi, I know all too well the disastrous consequences when the United States abdicates moral obligations and turns away refugees at its shores. Indeed, Jews have experienced keenly the price paid when good people do not act to protect the victims of discrimination, persecution and crimes against humanity. Too often, doors were closed to us with tragic consequences when all we sought, like so many refugees today, was safety and freedom. And as part of a coalition of faith leaders in the MFA committed to interreligious expression, I know our collective voice speaks to the obligation, as well as to the value to our country, of a moral response to the refugee crisis, as well as our commitment to work to its resolution. President Obama set a target of 110,000 refugees in FY17, a number far more appropriate to the global crisis than the reported numbers**

**planned for next year. While the 110,000 was an increase from some prior years—which generally averaged 95,000—I would remind us all that President Reagan went as high as 140,000 refugees.**

**America cannot save all the world’s refugees by itself. The argument that we cannot do everything, however, must never be used to justify doing less than that of which we are capable. The numbers admitted by President Trump’s Republican and Democratic predecessors are a clear reflection of what is possible at this time of such great need.**

**How can a nation built by refugees turn our back on refugees fleeing religious and political persecution and violence? It cannot. It must not. And we are gathered here today to demand that our President and Congress act to ensure it will not.**

**The great medieval scholar Maimonides suggests that between Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the approaching Day of Atonement, we should consider that all the good deeds and all the evil deeds of the world are in perfect balance in the scales of justice – and what we do next will tip those scales one way or the**

**other. For our President and our Congress, this is literally true:  
what hangs in the balance of their decisions and actions is life or  
death, hope or despair for so many innocent children of God.**