



3211 4th Street NE, Washington, DC 20017

Ph: (202) 541-5402/5404 • Fax: (202) 541-3468 • info@rcusa.org • www.rcusa.org

Refugees from Iraq Require Urgent Protection and Assistance • May 21, 2007

The Iraqi refugee crisis represents the greatest displacement of people in the Middle East since 1948 and the U.S. response must reflect the magnitude of the crisis. To date, the response has been insufficient to meet the urgent humanitarian assistance needs of the nearly 2 million internally displaced Iraqis and the 2 million Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries. The U.S. must develop a comprehensive assistance plan that contains these essential components:

- **A humanitarian aid package that fully addresses the shelter, health, nutrition, education, livelihoods and general protection needs of refugees and the internally displaced.** This package should include generous support of the assistance appeals of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other UN humanitarian assistance organizations, such as UNICEF, as well as funding for international and national non-governmental organizations to assist internally displaced persons and Iraqi refugees in the region.
- **Sufficient funding to resettle in the U.S. at least 20,000 and potentially many more vulnerable Iraqi refugees per year over the next several years.** Priority should be given to (1) those at special risk because of their association with the U.S., including but not limited to former employees of the U.S. government and of private U.S. organizations and the family members of Iraqis residing legally in the United States; (2) religious and other communities at special risk; (3) especially vulnerable persons including vulnerable women-headed households and unaccompanied children. Note: To ensure that the resettlement of vulnerable Iraqis does not come at the expense of eligible, highly vulnerable refugees in other parts of the world, Congress and the Administration should raise the refugee admissions ceiling from the current 70,000 to at least 90,000.
- **Funding for special immigrant visas and other mechanisms to ensure that vulnerable Iraqis, including those still inside Iraq, can also be admitted to the U.S.** Congress should also ensure that these Iraqis have full access to the range of benefits that are provided to resettled refugees when they arrive in the U.S.

RCUSA calls on the Congress to take prompt action on legislation to aid the displaced and ensure the timely resettlement of vulnerable Iraqis whose lives hang in the balance in many cases because of their support for U.S. efforts in Iraq.

There are two bills in the House of Representatives that would admit thousands of vulnerable Iraqis to the U.S. and authorize additional humanitarian assistance for displaced Iraqis. The bills are H.R. 1581, the *Iraq Reconstruction Improvement Act of 2007* introduced by Representative Lantos and cosponsored by Representative Ackerman, and H.R. 2265, the *Responsibility to Iraqi Refugees Act of 2007* introduced by Representatives Blumenauer, Schakowsky and Shays. Similar legislation is also being developed in the Senate.