

March 6, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write on behalf of Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), a coalition of non-governmental organizations committed to refugee protection, assistance, and resettlement. RCUSA would like to express our appreciation for your recommended increase in funding for international affairs and your strong message in support of reducing the reliance on supplemental requests to fund core humanitarian assistance activities.

As you finalize the details of your FY 2010 budget, we respectfully request that it include needed increases in the humanitarian accounts. Enclosed is a paper we first submitted to your transition team that details our funding recommendations for Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), Emergency Migration and Refugee Assistance (ERMA) and International Disaster Assistance (IDA). At a time when the number of conflict-affected displaced persons is on the rise, it is essential that U.S. funding for humanitarian programs keeps pace with the need for life-saving assistance. It is especially important to do so during this period of global economic stress. We recognize the pressures on the U.S., but we are also greatly concerned that should the U.S. and other leading donors reduce their assistance, it will leave many displaced persons without basic assistance and put increasing pressure on the many poor countries hosting refugees. The result will be even greater protection risks for vulnerable displaced persons, the majority of whom are women and children. These same protection concerns also inform our recommendation to increase the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. in FY 2010.

Once refugees reach our shores, we have an obligation to ensure that they have the support they need to quickly get on their feet, secure employment, and integrate into their communities. The lack of attention to the domestic refugee program during the past several years, however, has weakened its capacity to meet refugees' needs. Unless the new administration makes a major effort at reform, the domestic program will experience major challenges in upcoming years. Moreover, the humanitarian need for the United States to resettle more refugees, especially from the conflict in Iraq, will place further demands on the domestic refugee program. To ensure that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) can adequately serve refugees and other vulnerable groups a substantial increase funding is required in FY 2010 for ORR. You will also find enclosed our paper outlining RCUSA's recommendations for the ORR account.

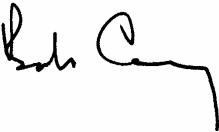
We are very grateful, Mr. President, for your commitment to assist the most vulnerable. The freedom from fear and despair that America represents to refugees around the world can only be realized with a robust budget for our humanitarian assistance and resettlement programs, and we urge you to provide increased funding for them.

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Members:

American Refugee
Committee International
Amnesty International USA
Arab American and
Chaldean Council
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Karen American Communities
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MAPENDO International Inc.
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Action Center
U.S. Conference of Catholic
Bishops/Migration & Refugee
Services
U.S. Committee for Refugees
and Immigrants
Women's Commission for
Refugee Women & Children
World Relief

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Robert J. Carey
Chair, Refugee Council USA