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October 30, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington DC, 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Refugee Council USA, a coalition of 23 agencies committed to the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons, we express appreciation for your recommendation that 70,000 refugees be resettled in the United States in FY2007. As agencies who have a long history of welcoming refugees into the United States, we remain optimistic that our capacity as a nation to receive these vulnerable persons is great and could, in fact, absorb an even greater number. We also believe that the only solution for thousands of refugees worldwide is resettlement to the United States; thus, your leadership in keeping our doors open to refugees is greatly appreciated.

We are concerned, however, that the Presidential Determination contains troubling language not previously included in these annual submissions. This language may in fact suggest a retreat from the commitment to a generous refugee admissions program that your Administration has so strongly endorsed. To refer to the 70,000 admissions number as a ceiling and not a target implies that we are not fully committed to reaching the goal expressed in the determination. In order for the Administration, Congress, and private agencies to be accountable to your goal, the emphasis should be on reaching a target.

The leadership which the United States has traditionally expressed in protecting thousands of the world's refugees should not be comprised at a time when so many vulnerable refugees languish in extremely desperate circumstances. Being clear that the Presidential Determination represents a target to be achieved enhances prospects that all those concerned with this program will commit to admitting at least 70,000 refugees to the United States this fiscal year.

Sincerely yours,

C. Richard Parkins  
Chair, Refugee Council USA  
Director, Episcopal Migration Ministries