

# REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

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## STATEMENT CALLING FOR SOLUTIONS TO END THE WAREHOUSING OF REFUGEES.

The 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees provides that persons fleeing persecution across borders deserve international protection, including freedom from forcible return (*refoulement*) and basic rights necessary for refugees to live a free, dignified, self-reliant life even while they remain refugees. These rights include the rights to earn a livelihood—to engage in wage-employment, self-employment, the practice of professions, and the ownership of property—freedom of movement and residence, and the issuance of travel documents. These rights are applicable to refugees independently of whether a durable solution, such as voluntary repatriation, third-country resettlement, or naturalization in the country of first asylum, is available. They are part of the protection mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

A majority of the world's refugees have been *warehoused* – confined to camps or segregated settlements or otherwise deprived of these basic rights – in situations lasting 10 years or more. Warehousing refugees not only violates their rights but also often reduces refugees to enforced idleness, dependency, and despair:

In light of the foregoing, the undersigned

1. Denounce the practice of warehousing refugees as a denial of rights in violation of the letter and spirit of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol and call upon the international community, including donor countries, host countries and members of the Executive Committee of UNHCR to do the same;
2. Call upon the international community to develop and implement strategies to end the practice of warehousing, including examining how refugee assistance can enable the greater enjoyment of Convention rights;
3. Call upon UNHCR to monitor refugee situations more effectively for the realization of all the rights of refugees under the Convention, including those related to freedom of movement and the right to earn a livelihood;
4. Call upon those countries that have not yet ratified the Convention or the Protocol to do so;
5. Call upon those countries that have ratified the Convention and/or the Protocol but have done so with reservations on key articles pertaining to the right to work and freedom of movement to remove those reservations; and

6. Call upon all countries to pass legislation, promulgate policies, and implement programs providing for the full enjoyment of the basic rights of refugees as set forth in the Convention.

*Members listed alphabetically:*

John Salzberg, Washington Representative  
***Center for Victims of Torture***

Joseph Roberson, Director  
***Church World Service/Immigration and Refugee Program***

C. Richard Parkins, Director  
***Episcopal Migration Ministries***

Leonard Glickman, President & CEO  
***Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society***

Bo Thao, Executive Director  
***Hmong National Development***

Elisa Massimino, Director, Washington Office  
***Human Rights First***

Lavinia Limón, Executive Director  
***Immigration & Refugee Services of America/U.S. Committee for Refugees***

William Canny, Secretary General  
***International Catholic Migration Commission***

Arnold Leibowitz, President  
***International Refugee Research Institute***

Robert Carey, Vice-President for Resettlement  
***International Rescue Committee***

Pary Karadaghi, Executive Director  
***Kurdish Human Rights Watch***

Ralston Deffenbaugh, Jr.  
***Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service***

Max Niedzwiecki, Acting Executive Director  
***Southeast Asia Resource Action Center***

Wendy Young, Director of Government Relations  
*Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children*

R. Timothy Ziemer, Rear Admiral, USN (ret), Executive Director  
*World Relief*