

**Statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, regarding
Proposed Department of State Reorganization
September 26th, 2017**

Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record on the proposed re-organization of the Department of State. We strongly oppose any efforts to remove the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) from the Department State (DOS) and divide its functions, with refugee resettlement operations moving to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and overseas assistance responsibilities moving to U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Such changes would not only harm many of the world's most vulnerable people, it would also jeopardize the United States' security and diplomatic standing with allies around the world.

We recognize that if there are mechanisms by which the United States could respond more effectively to global humanitarian crises, then they should be fully considered. However, at a time when more than 65 million people have been forced to flee their homes, maintaining PRM's unified functions within the Department of State is more important than ever.

PRM provides life-sustaining assistance to persecuted and uprooted people by working through multilateral systems to build global partnerships, promote best practices in humanitarian response, and ensure that humanitarian principles are thoroughly integrated into U.S. foreign and national security policy. PRM's mission combines global security, international political engagement and diplomacy, human rights, and humanitarian assistance. It is essential for DOS to maintain the ability to craft cohesive diplomatic responses that are informed by all of these priorities. Through the Refugee Act of 1980, Congress unanimously expressed this intent that specifically, resettlement be used as a tool of foreign diplomacy and international humanitarian policy. The connection between refugee assistance and international diplomacy is also a cornerstone of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, which authorizes PRM's assistance programs, and also have a long history of bipartisan support.

Because we are facing a global refugee crisis that requires a global response, DOS, with PRM, has been a key player in influencing other countries to protect refugees in substantial ways. For example, by resettling refugees and leading on the provision of humanitarian assistance, the United States is better positioned to encourage frontline refugee hosting countries, as well as other resettlement countries, to provide safe haven, educational opportunities, and other forms of social integration to significantly larger populations of displaced people.

The humanitarian assistance administered by PRM is substantially different in nature than the assistance administered by USAID in development and disaster relief contexts. PRM and its traditional partners engage on a wide range of issues which require highly-specialized expertise in international refugee law, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law. This expertise is mobilized in PRM's humanitarian diplomacy and assistance activities to engage in contexts that involve transnational smuggling and trafficking, arbitrary detention, forced return of refugees across international borders back to persecution or torture, international family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied refugee children with parents or relatives across multiple countries, and the exclusion of combatants from refugee status – just to cite a handful of examples. It is difficult to envision how these functions would be more efficiently or effectively carried out by placing them within the mission of USAID.

By the same token, reported proposals to move PRM's refugee resettlement functions to DHS also fail to consider the reality of how the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) already functions, and PRM's critical function in the resettlement process. PRM ensures that refugee populations in need of resettlement are identified within complex international and cross-border contexts. One can scarcely imagine stripping the Department of State's leading role in the emergency rescue of Hungarians in the 1950s, or the US-led emergency evacuation of 125,000 persons after the fall of Saigon, or the U.S. airlift of Kosovars from Macedonia to Fort Dix after the NATO airstrikes in Kosovo. These examples demonstrate that resettlement is not simply another immigration program, and requires a diplomatic mission, staffing, infrastructure and expertise that is distinct and complementary to that of DHS. DHS

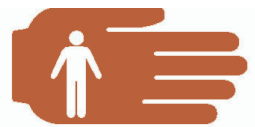
already plays a significant role in refugee resettlement since no refugee can be admitted to the U.S. without going through extensive security vetting, including DHS-conducted, in-person interviews with every single refugee applicant. Keeping our homeland safe is of paramount importance to all of us, which is why DHS already plays an integral role in the USRAP. But moving the USRAP to DHS would inherently strip DOS of its ability to leverage its combined diplomatic, resettlement and humanitarian assistance expertise. In addition, transferring responsibility for refugee resettlement to DHS would have tremendous fiscal and staffing implications. DHS is a large, complicated department that is already home to multiple divisions and 200,000 employees. Adding to this bureaucracy could overburden DHS, as well as being a waste of taxpayer monies. Furthermore, despite its massive size, DHS does not have the staffing or expertise to assume all of the responsibilities that go along with running the USRAP, including engaging with refugee populations, host governments, and the UN Refugee Agency on the ground.

In closing, the reported proposal to dismantle PRM would not make America safer nor would it make the State Department more efficient. Rather, it would lead to a diminished U.S. diplomatic and humanitarian presence in regions around the world that can little afford the decreased stability that a lack of U.S. leadership would cause. Such a move would also surely indicate to the rest of the world that the U.S. is retreating from its commitment to leading on refugee protection issues. To do so when some of our most important strategic allies, including Turkey, Kenya, and Jordan are hosting millions of refugees, would be irresponsible and a dangerous precedent for us to set. **We strongly believe that the refugee assistance, humanitarian diplomacy and refugee resettlement functions performed by PRM within the Department of State are inter-dependent and indivisible from each other, and critical to ensuring that the United States has a coherent and effective refugee protection policy.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.

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