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USCCB COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION CHAIR STRONGLY OPPOSES EXECUTIVE ORDER BECAUSE IT HARMS VULNERABLE REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

January 27, 2017

WASHINGTON—President Donald J. Trump issued today an Executive Order addressing the U.S. refugee admissions program and migration to the United States, generally. The executive order virtually shuts down the refugee admissions program for 120 days, reduces the number of refugees to be admitted to the United States this year from 110,000 to 50,000 individuals, and indefinitely suspends the resettlement of Syrian refugees. In addition, it prioritizes religious minorities suffering from religious persecution, thereby deprioritizing all other persons fleeing persecution; calls for a temporary bar on admission to the United States from a number of countries of particular concern (all Muslim majority); and imposes a yet-to-be determined new vetting process for all persons seeking entry to the United States.

Regarding the Executive Order's halt and reduction of admissions, Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, chairman of the Committee on Migration, stated:

"We strongly disagree with the Executive Order's halting refugee admissions. We believe that now more than ever, welcoming newcomers and refugees is an act of love and hope. We will continue to engage the new administration, as we have all administrations for the duration of the current refugee program, now almost forty years. We will work vigorously to ensure that refugees are humanely welcomed in collaboration with Catholic Charities without sacrificing our security or our core values as Americans, and to ensure that families may be reunified with their loved ones."

Regarding the Executive Order's ban on Syrian refugees, the prioritization of religious minorities suffering from religious persecution, Bishop Vásquez added:

"The United States has long provided leadership in resettling refugees. We believe in assisting all those who are vulnerable and fleeing persecution, regardless of their religion. This includes Christians, as well as Yazidis and Shia Muslims from Syria, Rohingyas from Burma, and other religious minorities. However, we need to protect all our brothers and sisters of all faiths, including Muslims, who have lost family, home, and country. They are children of God and are entitled to be treated with human dignity. We believe that by helping to resettle the most vulnerable, we are living out our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do."

Moving forward after the announcement, Bishop Vásquez concluded:

"Today, more than 65 million people around the world are forcibly displaced from their homes. Given this extraordinary level of suffering, the U.S. Catholic Bishops will redouble their support for, and efforts to protect, all who flee persecution and violence, as just one part of the perennial and global work of the Church in this area of concern."

Keywords: USCCB, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Migration, Bishop Joe S. Vasquez, executive order, refugees, resettlement, Syrian, religious minorities, religious persecution, Muslim, Christians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Syria, Rohingyas, Burma

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