



April 16, 2018

The Honorable John Sullivan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Acting Secretary Sullivan:

I am gravely concerned by our nation's shameful failure to admit thousands of qualified refugees fleeing unspeakable horrors in Syria and other regions affected by violence. While the Trump Administration proclaims its concern for the people of Syria, it turns its back on the very people affected by the humanitarian crisis in question.

People around the world are struggling at this very moment to survive in countries where violence, persecution, war and pervasive poverty are depriving them or their children any chance of a healthy or secure future. It is time for us to renew our American commitment to supporting those in need during a time of crisis.

Last week, President Trump described the gruesome chemical weapons attack in Syria that killed at least 70 people and injured hundreds more to be "atrocious." He rightfully said, "This is about humanity. We're talking about humanity." Also last week, Defense Secretary Mattis told the House Armed Services Committee, "I have seen refugees from Asia to Europe, Kosovo to Africa. I've never seen refugees as traumatized as coming out of Syria. It's got to end."

While this Administration decries these atrocious attacks against humanity, it still unconscionably condemns Syrians to suffer these atrocities. Last year, the President stunned the world when he tried to ban refugees from certain majority Muslim countries, including Syria. He later announced that the United States would cap the number of refugees allowed into the country at 45,000, a historic low that is almost less than half the number of refugees resettled under the Obama Administration.

As inhumane as these policies are, it is even worse in practice. This Administration is currently on pace to admit only half the allowed number, with a mere 21,000 refugee resettlements anticipated in the current fiscal year. To put this in context, the United Nations estimates approximately 5.5 million Syrian refugees have fled the country, yet only 11 Syrians have been admitted to the United States so far this year.

But this is not just about Syria. Millions more are fleeing Afghanistan and South Sudan. Since 2016, an unprecedented 65 million people have been forced to leave their homes due to violence and



persecution. Meanwhile, this Administration has reduced funding for UN programs to assist refugees and is shutting down refugee resettlement offices around the United States. At a time when record numbers of refugees are fleeing for safety, our country is setting record lows for the number of men, women and children we are choosing to help.

Washington State has a history of welcoming refugees, including in 1975 when Republican Gov. Dan Evans welcomed thousands of Vietnamese refugees searching for a new home following the end of the war. Since 1975, Washington has resettled more than 145,000 refugees from over 70 different countries. Every year Washington welcomes refugees from more than 30 different nations. We are home to thousands of refugees and their families from Somalia, Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and many more. More than 40 percent of refugee arrivals in Washington are children under the age of 18. Among their ranks are men and women who are researching HIV vaccines, serving as teachers in our schools or in our military, or studying to be lawyers. Each of them contributes to making our state a vibrant place to live and do business.

In fiscal year (FY) 2016, Washington State welcomed about 3,297 refugees. In FY 2018, that is expected to drop to about 1,500. Those numbers may not mean much in a letter, but they mean everything to the 1,797 individuals who could seek refuge in my state — but because of this Administration's policies, will not be allowed in. These 1,797 individuals are, at this very moment, experiencing hardships and trauma that threaten the lives of their children and themselves. Their futures are unclear. We could be providing a lifeline, but instead we are turning our back.

I urge you to swiftly review and reverse the current policies that are restricting the ability of qualified refugees to be admitted into the United States. Our nation is not doing its fair share in taking in endangered men, women and families, and this could have major long-term implications for our standing in the world.

This is, after all, about humanity.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Inslee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "I".

Jay Inslee
Governor