

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We are writing to express grave concern about the direction of the Administration's overall refugee admission policy, and the implications of the recent appointment of Andrew Veprek to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), particularly without a nominee to be Assistant Secretary for PRM.

A record 65 million people worldwide are currently displaced because of war, famine, and other disasters. In times of crisis, the United States must assert leadership on the global stage through the values that have made this country so successful. That leadership has historically served as an important uniting voice in the face of great challenges. However, instead of asserting moral and strategic leadership, we are concerned that this Administration has developed a hostile posture towards refugees, which ultimately weakens our global standing and the ability to promote international stability. The Administration mandated that the number of refugees to be admitted in fiscal year 2018 should be 45,000 – nearly half the historic average. Even more concerning, it is now clear that this administration is rigging the admissions system to ensure that only around 20,000 refugees are permitted to come here in that period. Previously, even in times when the global humanitarian situation was not as grave, the United States welcomed an average of 80,000 people per fiscal year. Prior to this year, the lowest refugee admission ceiling was 67,000 in 1986. Admitting refugees to the United States is a moral imperative and reducing the number of people we accept sends the wrong message to other countries.

At a time when a number of qualified Senior Foreign Service officers remain unassigned, Andrew Veprek, a mid-level Foreign Service Officer, has been appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of the PRM Bureau, and has assumed the refugee admissions portfolio. His appointment is the equivalent of placing a lieutenant colonel into a one-star general position. This is just another troubling signal that this Administration intends to continue dismantling our nation's already crippled refugee program, with little regard for both the real-life and geopolitical implications of the policy. Earlier reports suggest that Veprek favors dramatically lowering the annual cap on refugee admissions, and that international migration should be curtailed.

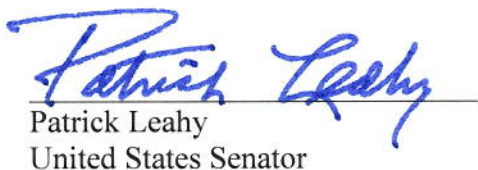
War, persecution, and terrorism will continue to drive people from their homes. It is in our national security interest to be equipped to manage and respond to international migration flows; not pretend they do not exist. To that end, it is critical that the leadership within PRM effectively leverages refugee resettlement and protection to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives, including pursuing regional security and cooperation with our allies. Further damage to our refugee resettlement program leaves tens of thousands of people already in the resettlement pipeline in

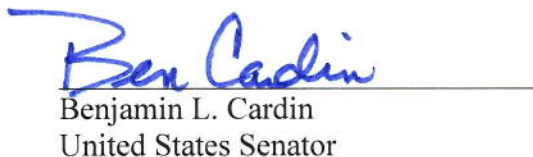
limbo, and would harm important relationships the United States has with countries like Kenya, Uganda, Jordan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt, which are hosting hundreds of thousands, and in some cases millions, of refugees. A lack of understanding of how to utilize resettlement as a tool to advance U.S. foreign policy interests will undo decades of progress on refugee protection, shake critical alliances, and ultimately lead to further abdication of U.S. leadership. Therefore, we strongly urge you to impress upon Mr. Veprek the value of implementing a robust refugee resettlement program and recommit to U.S. leadership in resettling the most vulnerable populations in the world.

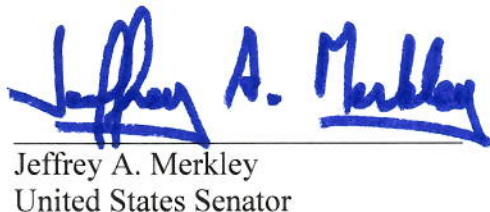
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

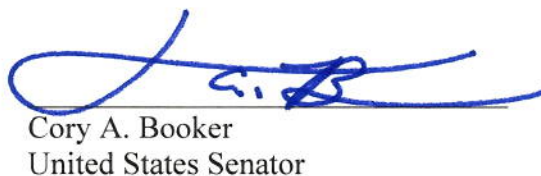

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

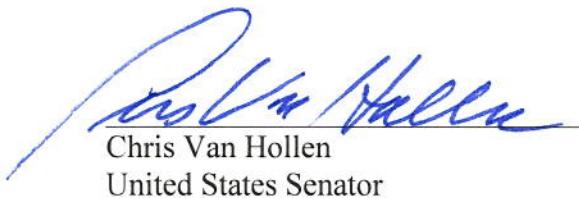

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

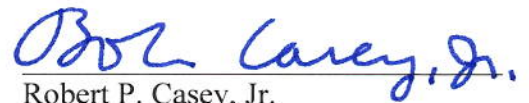

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator