

Dear Representative /Senator:

Today more than 12 million lives in the Horn of Africa are in danger, and hundreds of thousands are on the move seeking help. We, the undersigned faith leaders, write to ask for your support at a challenging time for refugees and displaced populations in the Horn of Africa and around the world. The United States has been a world leader in protection of those fleeing conflicts and natural disasters, and this is the time to renew that commitment. Given the extreme severity of the unfolding disaster in east Africa—in which tens of thousands of lives are expected to be lost in the next few months—and pressing humanitarian needs in other areas of the world as well, we are concerned about the consequences that drastic budget cuts would have on refugees and other vulnerable populations. As people of faith we are called to serve “the least of these” and to “welcome the stranger.” The United States’ support to refugees and the resettlement program are expressions of those values, and it should not be compromised.

Funding cuts to the life-saving international assistance, in particular the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), International Disaster Assistance (IDA), and the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), would have a devastating impact on displaced persons around the world who are almost entirely dependent on international life-saving assistance. The people supported by these accounts are women, children, the disabled and the elderly whose lives have been devastated by war and natural disasters. The needs of displaced populations have increased in the last years: Iraqi refugees continue to live in deepening poverty in urban centers across the Middle East or are displaced inside their own country. Other displacement crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan require significantly more attention.

The MRA account, as well as the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account in HHS, provide funding for the U.S. resettlement program, a real expression of the responsibility to welcome the stranger. Our diverse faith traditions all require that we welcome our brothers and sisters with dignity, and it is with this commitment in mind that we seek to ensure their successful integration into our communities. As partners with the government in the U.S. refugee program, we commit our ministries, religious services, and resources to helping refugees. As faith leaders, we see the positive impact refugees have on our communities, as well as the challenges they face as newcomers to our country.

We know of your commitment to those in need and we respectfully request that you strengthen humanitarian funding in the years to come.

Sincerely,