

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 19, 2018

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear President Trump:

As the Co-Chairs of the Women's Working Group on Immigration Reform, we write out of deep concern with the interim rule and subsequent Presidential Proclamation that bars individuals crossing the U.S. border between designated ports of entry from seeking asylum.<sup>1</sup> These actions violate domestic and international law and stand in stark contrast with our nation's history of providing humanitarian relief to vulnerable individuals fleeing violence and persecution. In conjunction with U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) ongoing efforts to meter asylum seekers at the southern border of the United States, the interim rule effectively creates an asylum ban targeting individuals and families from Central America.

Over the past two years, your administration has attempted to remove legal access to safety for those fleeing violence, abuse, and death threats in their home countries. However, U.S. laws have consistently upheld the tradition of compassion and respect for those fleeing violence and persecution. In 1968, the U.S. agreed to the obligations of the 1951 Refugee Convention, a treaty established in the aftermath of the Holocaust to ensure that those fleeing death would be provided asylum in other countries. Accordingly, the Immigration and Nationality Act provides the opportunity for asylum seekers to seek humanitarian protection in our country at their point of entry, "whether or not a designated port of arrival."<sup>2</sup> Your actions to revise longstanding rules in order to remove asylum as an option for those crossing between ports of entry recklessly violate our domestic and international obligations.

We also write to express our discontent with CBP's ongoing efforts to meter and turn back asylum seekers at ports of entry along the southern border. By turning away families with young children seeking relief, the United States is thrusting these vulnerable populations into the hands of traffickers and criminals as they wait for days or weeks in Mexico's border towns. The practice of metering and turning asylum seekers away at ports of entry does not deter asylum seekers from seeking protection and humanitarian assistance in the U.S., and can leave them no choice but to cross between ports of entry. In fact, a report issued by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of the Inspector General on September 27, 2018, noted that turning

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. President, Proclamation, "Addressing Mass Migration Through the Southern Border of the United States, Proclamation 9822 of November 9, 2018," *Federal Register* 83, no. 221 (November 15, 2018): 57661, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-11-15/pdf/2018-25117.pdf>

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Department of Justice: Executive Office for Immigration Review, "Aliens Subject to a Bar on Entry Under Certain Presidential Proclamations; Procedures for Protection Claims," *Federal Register* 83, no. 218 (November 9, 2018): 55934, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-11-09/pdf/2018-24594.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Immigration and National Act, U.S.C. § 208(a)(1)

asylum seekers away at the port of entry caused many to seek entry into the U.S. between the ports of entry during the family separation crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Your actions will not stop the flow of asylum seekers. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have consistently been reported to be among the most dangerous countries in the world due to the proliferation of transnational and domestic criminal organizations, drug trafficking, corruption, and instability. While these root causes of migration persist, individuals from these countries will continue to be forced to flee from their homes.

This asylum ban does not make our country safe, but it does damage our nation's tradition of adhering to international humanitarian standards and providing assistance and compassion to the most vulnerable populations. We urge you to rescind the interim rule and proclamation and uphold America's commitment to those seeking asylum at our borders.

Sincerely,



LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD  
Co-Chair, Women's Working Group  
on Immigration Reform



PRAMILA JAYAPAL  
Co-Chair, Women's Working Group  
on Immigration Reform

Cc: Kirstjen Nielsen, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security,  
Cc: Matthew Whitaker, Acting Attorney General, Department of Justice

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Office of the Inspector General. *Special Review – Initial Observations Regarding Family Separation Issues Under the Zero Tolerance Policy* (Sept. 27, 2018), <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2018-10/OIG-18-84-Sep18.pdf>