



Interfaith Works of Central New York

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INTERFAITH WORKS OF CENTRAL NEW YORK--STATEMENT ON EXECUTIVE ORDER: PROTECTING THE NATION FROM FOREIGN TERRORIST ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES

For more than 30 years, InterFaith Works of Central New York has worked tirelessly to support hundreds of people coming out of war and terror to find a new home in a new land through its Center for New Americans.

The recent Executive Order of the Trump Administration severely limits refugee resettlement for our nation. The order halts the arrival of new refugees for at least four months, preventing mothers from joining their children, husbands from joining their wives and families, and sisters from joining their brothers.

The order also limits the arrival of people from predominantly Muslim countries, unless they are not Muslim. This is effectively an attack on one faith tradition, and history has shown us the danger of this kind of discrimination. Jews, Sikhs, Mormons and other Christian traditions, among others, have been targeted in this way. It is our duty as Americans to oppose this proposal to halt access to resettlement for people of certain nationalities.

InterFaith Works will not close. Our work and mission are more important now than ever before. Our board, supporters and staff are committed to using this time to strengthen the agency's ability to serve refugees once the American door is again open to them. We are committed to an expanded dialogue to include ALL Americans, so that honest, courageous conversations can be fostered.

In the next four months, we will be forced to modify staffing. However, every one of us remains committed to the mission of the agency, and we will redouble our efforts in the following areas during this hiatus. We will:

1. *Initiate and expand the dialogues on ending racism and ending Islamophobia* to better inform the public conversation about who Americans are and the benefits of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural traditions, through our El-Hindi Center for Dialogue.

2. Activate our supporters to work for *public education on the value of refugees* to our community. Empower our supporters to reach out to those opposed to refugees and Muslims so that more and more *Americans develop empathy for their brothers and sisters, and stand against an attack on any faith tradition.*
3. Multiply the numbers of events and forums across the region to *increase interfaith understanding* through our new program, Interfaith Initiatives.
4. Establish a *transitional house* for refugee families that arrive with special needs and/or who arrive without the time and ability of our agency to properly prepare their permanent housing. We will work with our faith partners, especially Plymouth Congregational Church, and the city of Syracuse's Land Bank to make this home a reality.
5. Continue explorations with *Common Grounds and the churches of Cazenovia* to extend the opportunity to refugee families to come and live in this welcoming village.
6. Conduct Strategic Planning for the Center for New Americans that guides our next 10 years of refugee work, including expanded work for people who have been settled, but still need help with English, employment, and who are *recovering from the trauma and/or torture* that they endured in their home country.

While we are saddened about the direct effect of this order on our agency, we are ALL more deeply saddened about the impact on refugees around the world. America cannot abdicate its leadership role on human rights and refugee protection, and InterFaith Works plans to be here for the long-haul to continue this work.

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InterFaith Works of Central New York, through education, service and dialogue, affirms the dignity of each person and every faith community and works to create relationships and understanding. Founded in 1976, InterFaith Works addresses deeply embedded social divisions leading to community action and policy change. InterFaith Works' social service programs address the needs of and empower people who are vulnerable, low income and targets of oppression, including refugees, the elderly and the institutionalized, through direct service and educational programs. Key programs are the Ahmad & Elizabeth El-Hindi Center for Dialogue, Center for New Americans, Interfaith Initiatives and Senior Services.