

MAINTAIN ROBUST FUNDING FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

As Congress considers Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 appropriations to fund humanitarian assistance programs, it should maintain robust funding to support refugees and displaced persons worldwide, including through supporting the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program – an integral part of the international protection framework.

The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement in history. 65.6 million people have fled their homes, escaping persecution, torture, and violence. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are children. They face desperate circumstances and are in dire need of shelter, medical treatment, food, and other life-saving services. The U.S. has long been the single largest donor of international humanitarian aid. Now more than ever, the U.S. must provide sustained funding for humanitarian aid to protect displaced populations and provide funding and support for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Amnesty International USA (“AIUSA”) strongly urges Congress to sustain funding for humanitarian and refugee assistance in line with current appropriations and maintain funding and support for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Funding and support for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program should also support the admission of at least 75,000 refugees in FY 2019.

How does the U.S. provide humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons?

The U.S. invests in assistance for refugees and displaced persons through several appropriations accounts:

- Migration and Refugee Assistance (“MRA”): Administered by the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (“PRM”), the MRA account provides overseas assistance to refugees, supports admissions to the U.S. of the most vulnerable refugees, and funds life-saving services in humanitarian emergencies.
- International Disaster Assistance (“IDA”): Administered by the State Department’s U.S. Agency for International Development (“USAID”), the IDA account funds humanitarian assistance to people displaced by natural disaster, famine, conflict, and war
- Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (“ERMA”): Administered by PRM, ERMA can only be drawn down via presidential authorization, giving the president the ability to support relief to emergency crises deemed critical to the administration. It is a smart and efficient account that allows the U.S. to respond to rapidly occurring and unforeseen humanitarian crises without diverting funds from existing funding priorities

The President’s FY2018 budget request proposed deep cuts to humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons. If accepted, these cuts would curtail aid to over 22.5 million refugees desperately seeking protection.

AIUSA Recommendations to Congress:

In a time of unprecedented global need, Congress must sustain robust funding for humanitarian assistance for forcibly displaced people worldwide while also strongly supporting the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program that helps those in urgent need of third country resettlement. Specifically, Congress should:

- In line with current funding levels, appropriate: \$3.604 billion for the MRA Account; \$3.811 billion for the IDA Account; and \$50 million for the ERMA Account
- Support a higher refugee admission goal in FY 2019
- Support robust funding for refugee resettlement in FY 2019 Congressional appropriations bills

