



The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

April 18, 2018

**RE: Refugee Resettlement Case of [REDACTED], U.S.  
Citizenship and Immigration Services Case [REDACTED]**

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I am writing on behalf of Amnesty International<sup>1</sup> to formally request a meeting on the case of [REDACTED], which we understand is currently under review by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS"). Further, I request that his case be expedited on account of his well-being and safety being at immediate risk. [REDACTED] goes by the pseudonym of "Sam" for his safety, and I request that you keep his real name and identifying information confidential, as both his and his family's safety and well-being are at risk.

Amnesty International is requesting that you exercise your authority to expedite his case so that he can be resettled in the United States, as he was slated to be in October 2017. This is an urgent humanitarian case.

While awaiting resettlement, Sam's security in Cairo is at risk, as evidenced by the recent robbery of his home by armed men. Further, as a result of delays caused by additional security screening procedures, he is in danger of being returned to Iraq, where he would be at risk of serious harm or death. Return to Iraq would constitute *refoulement*, in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Against Torture, and customary international law, which prohibits the return of individuals to a situation in which they would be at risk of torture or other serious human rights abuses. Such safeguards are imperative for protecting refugees fleeing persecution.

Sam should be able to enjoy his human rights as a refugee, and should not fear for his life because the U.S. failed to live up to its promise to resettle him.

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International is a global movement of more than seven million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. Amnesty International USA is the U.S. section of Amnesty International with more than two million supporters.

On April 18, 2018, Amnesty International, in conjunction with the International Refugee Assistance Project ("IRAP"), a legal services and advocacy NGO representing Sam, will launch a public campaign to bring Sam home to the United States.

Sam fled Iraq in 2014 after his and his family's lives were threatened because of his work alongside the U.S. Army as an interpreter. He was accepted for resettlement to the U.S. through the Direct Access Program for U.S.-Affiliated Iraqis. He has a sponsor in the U.S., a U.S.-based refugee resettlement agency set to receive him, and a community waiting to welcome him.

Sam was preparing to travel to the U.S. in October 2017 when President Trump signed Executive Order 13815, which was accompanied by an inter-agency memo that suspended admissions for refugees from Iraq, among 10 other countries (Egypt, Iran, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and stateless Palestinians) and imposed an indefinite ban on family reunification visas for refugees, until those provisions were enjoined by a federal district court in December 2017.

After the ban was enjoined but before Sam's travel was scheduled, his medical checks required for resettlement expired. In addition, he is now undergoing additional security checks because of new screening procedures implemented *after he was cleared for travel to the United States*. Sam has already undergone years of vetting, involving multiple layers of biometric and biographic security checks involving multiple federal and international databases and agencies. He also has an extensive community of friends and former colleagues waiting for him inside the United States, including some who have advocated on his behalf for several years.

While the U.S. government has the right to regulate immigration, new procedures must be implemented in accordance with human rights standards. The U.S. government has recognized Sam as a refugee. However, delays caused by the ban and additional security screening procedures have put him in danger of being returned to Iraq, where he would be at risk of serious harm or death. Even though he is registered with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees ("UNHCR"), the Egyptian government does not recognize his refugee status and could deport him. He cannot return to Iraq, where numerous Iraqi interpreters like him are at substantial risk to their lives, and many have been murdered. He is afraid of meeting the same fate.

Just thirteen days ago, Sam was targeted in Egypt and robbed by armed men, underscoring the insecurity he faces in Egypt due to unnecessary and prolonged delays in his permanent resettlement to the U.S. Along with his money, his cell phone was also stolen and it contained potentially compromising information about his campaign with Amnesty International and IRAP. The armed men told him they were with the Egyptian authorities. While we cannot confirm their exact identity, we are gravely concerned about his safety, especially as sensitive information was on his phone. Furthermore, refugees such as Sam, who are under threat of deportation in Egypt despite having official refugee status with the UNHCR, are vulnerable to criminal attacks, sometimes by local law enforcement with knowledge of their status who target them, knowing they will be reluctant to report the crimes for fear of possible deportation or further retaliation.

Sam was also forced to leave his wife and children behind in Iraq. He desperately wishes to be reunited with them, which he can only do when he is safely arrived in the United States.

I urge you to use your authority to expedite Sam's case because his immediate safety is at risk, both from risk of *refoulement* and his lack of security in Cairo.

I further request a meeting to discuss Sam's case with you, and introduce you to community members waiting for him in the United States.

Sincerely,



Margaret Huang  
Executive Director  
Amnesty International USA

Cc: L. Francis Cissna, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
John J. Sullivan, Acting Secretary of State  
Carol Thompson O'Connell, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
James Mattis, Secretary of Defense  
Robert Wilkie, Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
Thomas W. Goffus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy