

## Civil Society Statement on the Proposed, Reckless Reorganization of the Department of State

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, express our grave concern about Secretary Marco Rubio's proposed, reckless reorganization of the Department of State. Coupled with the drastic cuts to human rights and humanitarian assistance in the President's FY26 budget request, these actions would devastate the longstanding institutional capacity of the U.S. Government to advance democracy, human rights, and refugee protection in U.S. foreign policy. For the last five decades, every administration has agreed that human rights and humanitarian protection not only reflect fundamental American values but also advance global peace, security, and prosperity, consistent with international law. The proposed dismantling of key offices and funding decreases hollow out that long standing bipartisan-supported strategic capacity and undermines U.S. international commitments and interests.

In defense of his proposed plan, Secretary Rubio testified that the activities of the offices carrying out human rights and humanitarian functions will continue, albeit primarily under the Department's regional bureaus and embassies. However, the elimination of certain offices and bureaus, including the Office of Global Women's Issues, the Office of Global Criminal Justice, and the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, and the drastic reduction of mission-critical bureaus, namely the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) and the Bureau of Population Refugees, and Migration (PRM), belie that claim. The radical reduction in staff devoted to these important policy roles and concomitant funding decreases will dramatically detract from the ability and expertise of the Department to respond to and manage current and future global crises, including armed conflict, mass displacement and natural disasters. We are also very concerned that the proposed reorganization includes a new Office of Natural Rights, which would presumably advance the discredited conclusions of the Commission on Unalienable Rights from the first Trump Administration by promoting a hierarchy of rights, undermining the rights of LGBTQI+ persons and other minorities, and opposing long standing agreements on global access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Moreover, the shift in focus of PRM toward a deportation and returns agenda, and away from its historic leadership in protecting refugees and stabilizing displacement situations, will exacerbate these dangers. Indeed, the newly proposed Office of Remigration within PRM embraces a highly racist and offensive term, "remigration," that is recognized more commonly across Europe as a brand of extremist propaganda promoting policies of ethnic cleansing and ethno-nationalism. The results would further diminish the United States' global role and render the country less safe and prosperous, at a time of rising authoritarian practices worldwide and expanding threats to human rights and security. We urge the administration to revisit the drastic cuts it has made to the positions and funding devoted to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and refugee protection to ensure that the United States maintains a meaningful role in preserving and promoting those values that are crucial to global stability and a cornerstone of U.S. strength as a country and multilateral partner.

The U.S. Congress has a constitutional obligation to ensure the U.S. remains committed to human rights principles, including as reflected in its foreign policy, and that life-saving funds it has appropriated for humanitarian and refugee assistance are executed as intended by Congress and

not diverted for other purposes, including mass deportations, some of which amount to enforced disappearances, or so-called “voluntary returns.” Congress should act expeditiously, using all oversight, appropriations, and other powers, to prevent permanent damage to the State Department’s long-developed institutional expertise and relationships supportive of human rights and refugee protection around the world.

Signatories

Access Now

American Jewish World Service

Amnesty International

Center for Reproductive Rights

Center for Victims of Torture

Committee to Protect Journalists

Council for Global Equality

Human Rights First

Human Rights Watch

Middle East Democracy Center

PEN America

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society