

Upcoming Meetings & Events

GOOD JOBS WEBINAR – APR 2

On April 2 at 2 pm EST, Alianza Americas, United for a Fair Economy, and the AFL-CIO will host a webinar titled “Good Jobs: Protecting Workers in the COVID-19 Pandemic.” For registration and more information, click [here](#).

IMMIGRATION AND EQUITY – APR 14

Children’s HealthWatch will host a webinar on April 14 from 12-1:15 PM EST. The webinar will be hosted by Dr. Jackie Vimo, a policy analyst and immigrant rights expert who oversees the Economic Justice Program at the National Immigration Law Center (NILC). The webinar will focus on recent, harmful immigration policies and proposals, how they impact children, and what we can do about it. More information can be found [here](#).



Socially Distant? The Impact of Pandemics in Refugee Camps

By Kelly Ann Whelan

In the last few weeks, in response to COVID-19 or [coronavirus](#), millions across the world have been asked to stay home and keep their distance from other people, which has come to be known in the United States as “social distancing.” For many of us, this isn’t a problem. We work from home on our computers, interfere with the lives of our house cats, and sit, maybe a bit stir-crazy, in our fortresses full of toilet paper. For others who have lost their livelihoods or who are susceptible to the virus, this is a particularly difficult time.

And what about those who can’t engage in any social distancing? According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around 2.6 million refugees live in [camps](#), and 27.4 million more live in crowded informal dwellings worldwide. These camps are often cramped, have limited access to clean sanitation, electricity, and medical care, insufficient nutritional provision, and poor housing conditions. Such conditions make it difficult, if not impossible, for refugees in such protracted situations in the camps to socially

distance themselves from others or quarantine all together. Moreover, such conditions create fertile ground for the spark for the wildfire of pandemic to spread throughout the camps.

The coronavirus pandemic only highlights the standing issue of public health of refugee populations, in formal and informal camps. While the pandemic clearly places all people in danger, it [exacerbates](#) the already poor health conditions in refugee camps. This paper discusses the key aggravating conditions and how the pandemic is expected to affect refugees in the camps.

Read this week’s full brief [here](#).

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FEDERAL REGISTER ANNOUNCEMENT, COMMENTS DUE – APR 28

The Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to the Federal Register regarding some EOIR forms, including instituting a \$50 fee for an asylum application. Fees for other forms could increase by up to 900%. Submit comments [here](#).

• Judge Partially Grants Restraining Order against ICE, ORR

Last week, the National Center for Youth Law filed for a Temporary Restraining Order against the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The filing sought to expedite the release of unaccompanied children in ORR custody away from group-care facilities, as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. On Saturday, Judge Dolly Gee found that ICE facilities were out of compliance with the *Flores* settlement, and partially granted the order. Judge Gee also ordered additional hearings next week. Read the ruling [here](#).

• CARES Act Signed into Law

On Friday, March 27, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act into law. The bipartisan COVID-19 bill response provides \$2 trillion in funding, including to small businesses and expanded unemployment and health-care support for individuals. It is the third supplemental appropriations bill passed since the COVID-19 crisis began. Because of limitations from the 1996 welfare reform act, many non-citizens are excluded from social support, such as TPS holders and DACA recipients.

• Washington State expands antidiscrimination law to add immigration and citizenship status

Late last month, the legislature of the state of Washington approved SB 5165, adding immigration and citizenship status to the classes protected from discrimination under state law. Washington Governor Jay Inslee signed the bill this month. The existing law had protected individuals from discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, families with children, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or disability. The law takes effect June 11, 2020. See the legislative history [here](#).

• EOIR reopens some immigration courts, despite federal guidance

Despite federal guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and other sources, the Executive Office for Immigration Review has this week reopened some of its previously closed courts. Immigration courts in Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Newark, Memphis, Sacramento, and Seattle are reopening for the “limited purpose of accepting filings” and filing deadlines remain unchanged. While these changes were announced via Twitter, on Thursday night the EOIR made a website operational to track court status. The website can be found [here](#).

• 1st Circuit Rules in Favor of Sanctuary Cities, Against DOJ

On Tuesday, March 24, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 1st Circuit unanimously affirmed a lower court ruling against the Department of Justice (DOJ). The lower court had ruled that the DOJ cannot compel the cities of Providence and Central Falls, Rhode Island to cooperate with the administration by holding immigration detainees solely on suspicion of immigration-status violations. Retired Supreme Court Justice David Souter was one of three judges who heard the case. The Third, Seventh, and Ninth Circuits have issued similar rulings against the DOJ. The Second Circuit ruled in favor of the DOJ in a similar case in February. Read the opinion [here](#).

• USCIS Extends Office Closure through April 7

On Wednesday, March 25, the official Twitter account of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that its offices would remain closed to the public through April 7. More information may be found from USCIS [here](#).

• Montana Supreme Court Rules Against Use of DHS Immigration Detainers

This week, the Montana Supreme Court ruled unanimously that immigration detainers are not judicial warrants. Consequently, detention of individuals solely on the basis of an immigration detainer issued by DHS is unlawful in the state. Courts in Oregon and Connecticut have issued similar decisions in the past. Read the ruling [here](#).

Issue Updates (cont'd)

• READ ID Deadline Extended

Following an earlier letter led by House Democrats, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has agreed to extend the REAL ID deadline for an extra year. As of last month, only about 35% of US IDs complied with the REAL ID Act, which mandated state-issued identifications meet more robust standards. A REAL ID-compliant driver license or other identification will be required to board airplanes when the rules come into effect. Read the announcement from DHS [here](#).

• USCIS Announces Flexibility for Requests for Evidence, Notices of Intent to Deny

On Friday, March 27, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced measures to assist applicants and petitioners who are responding to requests for evidence and notices of intent to deny. For applicants and petitioners who receive a request for evidence or notice of intent to deny that is dated between March 1 and May 1, 2020, USCIS will consider responses submitted an additional 60 calendar days after the printed deadline. More information on changing USCIS policies can be found [here](#).

• 9th Circuit Affirms Right to Bond Hearings for Certain Asylum Seekers

On Friday, March 27, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit affirmed a lower court injunction in the case of Padilla v. ICE. The case challenges the ICE practice to keep asylum seekers in custody for extended periods without either credible fear interviews or bond hearings. A lower court had issued a preliminary injunction against the government practice; the 9th Circuit affirmed the injunction. Read more here. Read the decision [here](#).

USCRI Time Machine

This week's Time Machine looks to Colombia, via USCRI's 1998 report "Colombia's Silent Crisis: One Million Displaced by Violence." Despite the stresses caused by the COVID-19 outbreak worldwide, Colombia has been broadly successful in managing the influx of Venezuelan refugees and asylees prior to the outbreak. Their success stems from earlier state experience in managing the needs of internally displaced people. In 1998, however, things appeared less well managed. Here are some of the pro-active steps that USCRI recommended 22 years ago:

"1. The Colombian government should establish better coordination between government offices at the national level, and between the national government and departmental and municipal governments, to improve programs and services for the displaced.

2. The government should establish better communication and coordination with NGOs and church groups that assist the displaced.

3. The government should accurately measure the size, conformation, and

needs of the displaced population. Any coordinated effort to address the needs of the displaced must begin with a reasonably accurate assessment of its size, character, and condition.

4. The government, NGOs, and international community should expand efforts to assist newly displaced persons. Currently, the government and others give aid during the first 90 days of displacement, but such an approach falls far short of the need. Further humanitarian aid, channeled through existing governmental and nongovernmental mechanisms, is needed.

5. All parties concerned with the displaced should seek ways to assist people who have been displaced for more than 90 days. These displaced make up the vast majority of the displaced population. Besides ensuring access to health care, education, and other public services, efforts must be made to help the displaced find ways to support themselves. Priority should be given to implementing micro-enterprise and other income generation projects, skills training, and encouraging and supporting cooperative and community-based initiatives...

Global Gigabyte

As always during disasters, people find a way to give back. This week, we highlight Syrian refugees in Switzerland who are helping their elderly neighbors during the COVID-19 outbreak. In the Swiss cities of Lausanne and Geneva, a network of 26 people shops for between 100 and 200 elderly Swiss who must isolate from the pandemic. Eighteen members of the group are Syrian refugees. "We lived, and we are still living, a crisis as refugees," says Shadi Shhadeh who came to Switzerland in 2013. "That makes us probably in a better position to understand that there is a crisis and how to help." Switzerland has more than 11,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within a population of 8.5 million. "We know what is a medical system being down," Shadi says. "We know people who died from little injuries because they received no treatment, and we don't want to reach that. If we stand together now, we will support the medical system."

Read more [here](#).

If you have any questions or comments, please contact

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