

Policy & Advocacy Report

Upcoming Meetings & Events

BEYOND "ABOLISH ICE" – JAN 12

On Tuesday, January 12 at 6:30 PM EST, join New Sanctuary Coalition for an educational panel discussion about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency's roots in xenophobia and exclusion, and why it should be abolished. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

LANGUAGE ADVOCACY ON THE PERIPHERY: LGBTQ+ ASYLUM SEEKERS – JAN 14

On Thursday, January 14 at 12:00 PM EST, a coalition of grassroots organizations will be hosting a discussion on how language service providers can help remove barriers for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers attempting to access services. The panelists will answer the question of what role language service providers can play in supporting the LGBTQ+ community to access their language rights. For more information and to register, click [here](#).



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United States Issue Updates

• Fourth Circuit Blocks Executive Order That Conditioned Resettlement on State Consent

In a historic [ruling](#) on January 8, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously upheld the injunction blocking an executive order that required states and individual cities to affirmatively consent to resettling refugees. The executive order not only allowed states to refuse to resettle refugees, but it made refusal the default position, requiring extra steps for states to opt into welcoming refugees. The Court ruled that the executive order violates the Refugee Act of 1980 and causes undue burden to resettlement agencies, which would have to seek out consent from each jurisdiction in which they plan to resettle refugees. The Court recognized the order as a blatant attempt to burden the refugee resettlement process, and immigrant rights advocates say that the ruling serves as a validation of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

• Department of Homeland Security Publishes Final Rule Restricting H-1B Visas

On January 8, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a final [rule](#) requiring H-1B visas (temporary non-immigrant visas for skilled workers) to be granted based on job salary, prioritizing the highest paying jobs over the previous H-1B lottery system. While the purported goal of the rule is to protect American jobs and reduce abuse of the immigration system by employers, USCRI raised concerns through the Federal Register comment process that the rule would make it prohibitively expensive for employers to hire skilled foreign workers. DHS expects that the rule will limit H-1B visas to only the highest skilled and highest paid workers, weeding out those in entry-level positions.

Upcoming Meetings & Events (cont'd)

PATRICK GALE READS FROM REFUGEE TALES – JAN 14

On Thursday, January 14 at 2:00 PM EST, author Patrick Gale will be reading from his new story about a young refugee who settled in the United Kingdom. The story is based on Gale's interview with the young man, and Gale aims to bring a dignity to the story-telling process that is so often lacking in the asylum process. The event requires a small donation to attend, and all proceeds from the event go to Freedom from Torture, an organization that provides support to torture survivors. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

United States Issue Updates (cont'd)

• Immigration Advocates Ask Court to Block Administration's Asylum Ban Efforts

On January 6, immigration advocates filed a [motion](#) for a temporary restraining order against the Administration's new final rule barring certain immigrants crossing the United States-Mexico border from obtaining asylum. The rule bars those who did not physically reach the United States before July 16, 2019 from seeking asylum here if they stopped in another country on their way to the border. The Administration attempted to apply this rule to those who were "metered," or prevented from entering under another administration policy in which only a certain number of migrants were allowed to cross the border each day. In their motion's memorandum, the advocates point out that the United States District Court for the Southern District of California has already ruled that the Administration cannot deny those metered at the border, even before July 16, 2019, from applying for asylum simply because they passed through another country. The advocates say that this new rule is identical to the previous rule in its effect, and should be rescinded.

Around the World in International Migration

• More than 48,000 Refugees Return Home to Nagorno-Karabakh Region

In the midst of ongoing negotiations between the president of Azerbaijan and the prime minister of Armenia in Moscow for a lasting peace over the conflict in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, more than 48,000 refugees have returned home. In November, Russia brokered a peace agreement that halted the 44-day long active, violent conflict over territorial control of the region. However, tensions persist with sporadic fighting, prisoners of war continuing to be held by both sides, and disagreements over how a prospective new transport corridor cutting through the region will work.

• Conflict in Ethiopia Continues to Endanger Refugees

The ongoing conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia continues to put refugees' lives at risk. The armed conflict over the past two months has displaced 2.2 million people and created dangers to refugees living in camps in the region. In particular, refugees in the Hitsats and the Shimelba camps, which hosted 25,000 and 8,000 people, respectively, have been impacted. On January 8, the United Nations (UN) released satellite [images](#) showing the destruction of UN facilities, a health-care unit, a high school and houses at the two camps sheltering Eritrean refugees. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) has not had access to the camps since fighting started in early November, according to Chris Melzer, a UNHCR communications officer. UNHCR has, however, been able to reach its two other camps, Mai-Aini and Adi Harush, which are to the south.

• Humanitarian Crisis Still Looms in Bosnia and Herzegovina

After a fire forced the reception center in Lipa, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to close on December 23, vulnerable migrants continue to be exposed to freezing temperatures and harsh winter conditions. Nearly 2,000 migrants, including children, are either living outdoors or in suboptimal living conditions in the burned-out ruins of the center. On January 3, the European Commission announced it would be allocating an additional €3.5 million (\$4.2 million approx.) in humanitarian aid to provide the migrants adequate shelter. This funding is on top of the €4.5 million (\$5.5 million approx.) allocated in April 2020, bringing European Union (EU) humanitarian assistance for refugees and migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina to €13.8 million (\$16.8 million approx.) since 2018. BiH is not currently a member of the EU. Of the aid, the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, [stated](#) that, "Humanitarian assistance would not be required in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if the country implemented appropriate migration management, as requested by the EU for many years."

Whispers from Washington

Current Capitol Hill Considerations

Failed Coup Attempt Rings Warning Bells for Immigrants

On January 6, as insurrectionists invaded the U.S. Capitol, many immigrants who had fled to the United States saw similarities in the attack with the very situations in their home countries that had caused them to seek safety elsewhere. While a coup has only been attempted in the United States twice in its nearly 245-year history, in many countries in the world, such instability and violence is sadly commonplace. Since the end of World War II, there have been 225 successful coups in countries of more than 500,000 people, according to the [Center for Systemic Peace](#), which studies global political violence.

The Center puts the Capitol attack in a different category, called a “presidential coup” or “autocoup,” which includes circumstances where a leader attempts to stay in office after being voted out. Since 1946, there have been 39 autocoups in 35 countries, including Bangladesh (2018), Burundi (2015), Haiti (1999), Niger (2009), and Venezuela (2017).

Global Gigabyte

One year ago, a ten-year old Syrian refugee boy, recently arrived in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, desperately wanted to play ice hockey with his new friends, but did not have any equipment.

Local hockey dad Michael Doyle heard of Yamen Bai’s dream and posted on social media, asking if anyone in the community had extra equipment.

“Within minutes — 20 minutes — gear started showing up at my door,” he said, “People were just amazing. The community came together and it was like nothing I’ve ever experienced and nothing I ever expected to happen.”

Bai was born in Aleppo, Syria, but fled for Iraq when the country’s civil war became too dangerous. His mother, two sisters and one brother eventually made the trip to Canada, landing in St. John’s in March of 2019. He’s since found a home with the Avalon Celtics hockey team.

“I like hockey because I like my team,” says Bai.

His Celtics squad emerged victorious in a Christmas tournament. Bai won his first gold medal, less than a year after picking up the sport.

“It’s the joy he gets playing hockey. He comes to the rink with a smile and he leaves hockey with a smile,” Bai’s coach says.

To read more, click [here](#).

If you have any questions
or comments, please
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