

In the wake of the tragic attacks in Paris and Beirut, we, the undersigned refugee and immigrants' rights advocates, faith, and civil and human rights groups, write to express our deepest sympathies with the people and communities affected by these horrific acts of terror and in strong opposition to those who are using this tragedy to promote actions and politically motivated policies that fundamentally contradict our values as a nation.

More than ever, in this moment of global crisis, we must remain true to the values we strive for as a nation, among these are equality, justice and freedom of religion. National Islamic organizations have denounced the terrorist attacks in Paris and Beirut and point to the fact that they are contrary to the teachings of Islam. The United States is and always has been a refuge for those fleeing persecution. Our shores have long been the destination for those with no other option. We strive to be a nation that welcomes newcomers, reunites families, and supports the integration of immigrants and refugees: that is fundamentally what makes this nation great.

The world is witnessing the largest refugee crisis since World War II. More than 4 million Syrians have fled conflict and violence in their home country, and 12 million are internally displaced, fleeing exactly the kind of terror that unfolded on the streets of Paris. They have suffered unimaginable devastation for nearly five years. Most have lost loved ones to persecution and violence, in addition to having had their country, their community, and everything they own brutally taken from them.

At a time when the world needs humanitarian leadership, at least 31 governors to date, including NM Governor Susana Martinez, have voiced opposition to allowing Syrian refugees to resettle in the United States—governors have no legal authority to restrict refugee resettlement though they may attempt to make refugee resettlement inhospitable and can foment xenophobic sentiment in their respective states. In addition, there are those in Congress who are using this issue as a pretext to introduce knee-jerk, xenophobic legislation to impose additional restrictions and security measures for refugees. These are some of the same politicians that are using an anti-immigrant platform to block the implementation of administrative relief for immigrants and the passage of comprehensive immigration reform.

Governor Martinez and other politicians are sending a demoralizing and dangerous message to the world that the United States limits freedom based on one's country of origin and their religion. This is NOT a way to lead.

Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted group of people who come to the United States. Rigorous security screenings are conducted by intelligence agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and the Department of Defense. The process typically takes over two years. There is not need for Congress to impose additional restrictions or security measures. Accordingly, we strongly feel that efforts by governors and Congress to limit refugee resettlement are politically motivated.

Immigrants and refugees have enriched communities in New Mexico and across our country and have been part of the American fabric for generations. We urge Governor Martinez and other elected officials to choose wisdom over rhetoric and show true leadership in this time of great tragedy. We must allow our values—and not our fear—to guide us in this critical time. In addition, we call upon Congress, and other elected officials, to demonstrate leadership by speaking out against the scapegoating of any group during this time of crisis and to ensure that our nation’s humanitarian efforts strongly welcome refugees.

Sincerely,

All Families Matter Coalition
Anti-Defamation League New Mexico
Border Service Corp
Center for Civic Policy
Centro Savila
Rev. Craig Cockrell, St. John United Methodist Church
East Central Ministries
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos
Encuentro
Enlace Comunitario
Equality New Mexico
Fr. Francis Quintana, Blessed Oscar Romero Catholic Community
Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center
Imam Shafi N Aziz, Islamic Center of New Mexico
Native American Voters Alliance
New Mexico Asian Family Center
New Mexico Conference of Churches
New Mexico Faith Coalition for Immigrant Justice
New Mexico Immigrant Law Center
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light
New Mexico Women's Global Pathways
OLE
Pr. Michael Bastian, Community of Joy Lutheran Church, Rio Rancho
Rabbi Arthur Flicker, Congregation B’nai Israel
Rabbi Deborah J. Brin, Congregation Nahalat Shalom
Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld, Congregation Albert of Albuquerque
Rabbi Min Kantrowitz, Rabbinic and Cantorial Association of Albuquerque
Refugee Mentoring Project
Rev. Antonio (Tony) Aja, D.Min., Pastor, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Santa Fe
Rev. David M. Cameron, Pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian Church
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Rev. Robert Woodruff, Second Presbyterian
Rev. Rhonda Smith McIntire, Rector, San Gabriel the Archangel Episcopal Church
Rev. Seth N. Finch, Covenant Presbyterian Church
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Together for Brothers
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Women for Women International