



Resettlement Agencies Decide Where Refugees Are Initially Placed in the United States

Not refugees (or state and local officials)

By Nayla Rush

In an appearance on French television at the end of May, French-American journalist and author Anne Toulouse reacted to the violent protests that followed the death of George Floyd in the United States. Toulouse said (my translation):¹

*What is sad is that this violence is turning against the community they [rioters] pretend to be defending, but also against other communities — for instance in Baltimore the stores of Koreans were destroyed — so it's a type of self-destruction. We wonder each time why this is taking place. ... Minneapolis is a rather calm city where cohabitation is good. ... The Somali community tends to regroup there, most blacks there are Somalis. ... One wonders why they chose the coldest place in the United States.*²

Her words, deemed controversial by some, were criticized on social media (see here³ and here⁴). But that's not the point of this report.

It is true that the majority of the black community in Minneapolis (the largest city in Minnesota) is of Somali origin. Around 150,000 Somalis live in the United States. The Minneapolis population is around 425,000, of whom 18 percent (or 80,000) are Black or African-American.⁵ The Somali community in Minneapolis is estimated at 74,000 or more.⁶

Toulouse is also right to wonder about Minneapolis as a choice of residence for this specific community. Here's why: While migration is mostly conditioned by job opportunities and networking — the meat industry in Minneapolis, for example, employs unskilled migrants and refugees, including Somalis — refugee placement is in fact orchestrated by a number of resettlement agencies and not by refugees themselves.

Most Somalis who came to Minneapolis in the early 1990s (following the beginning of a long civil war and clan violence), including U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, were admitted here as refugees. According to the U.S. Refugee Processing Center portal, the United States has resettled more than 100,000 Somali refugees since fiscal year 2001.⁷

The reception and placement (R&P) of refugees is explained in this “Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for FY 2020”:

*Unlike asylees, who arrive in the United States on their own, refugees selected for resettlement through US-RAP [the United States Refugee Admissions Program] are eligible for R&P assistance. **Each refugee approved for admission to the United States is sponsored by a resettlement agency.** Several non-profit resettlement agencies participate in the R&P Program under a cooperative agreement with the Department of State. [Emphasis added.]⁸*

Nine religious or community-based organizations, called resettlement agencies, have contracts with the Department of State to resettle refugees inside the United States.⁹ These agencies (formerly known as “volags”) maintain

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nationwide networks of local affiliates to provide services to refugees, including reception on arrival in the United States, placement, support with housing, community orientation, help accessing health services, enrollment in various benefits and welfare programs, employment, etc.

Resettlement agency representatives determine where refugees are resettled in the United States:

*Representatives from the resettlement agencies meet frequently to review the biographic information and other case records sent by the RSC [overseas Resettlement Support Centers], **seeking to match the particular needs of each incoming refugee with the specific resources available in U.S. communities.** Through this process, they determine which resettlement agency will sponsor and **where each refugee will be initially resettled in the United States.** [Emphasis added.]¹⁰*

Under the reception and placement program, “initial resettlement services are provided to newly arriving refugees by a local affiliate of one of the participating resettlement agencies. Thus, as a general matter, *refugees are not resettled in states that do not have any local affiliates* or in parts of states that do not have local affiliates within an allowable distance.”¹¹ (Emphasis added.)

Again, Toulouse’s query was well founded. In general terms, when we’re not dealing with family reunification, refugees cannot pick and choose the state/city they are to call home (let alone their country of resettlement). Of course, they can always move to another location later on (at their own expense), but their initial placement is, in reality, imposed on them.

Even state and local governments don’t have a real say in this matter. In principle, the federal government (and the resettlement agencies it works with) needs to consult with states and localities about welcoming refugees into their communities, but reality is quite different, as my colleague Mark Krikorian explained:

*The 1980 Refugee Act, that established the taxpayer-funded resettlement system, required both that states be consulted and that Washington reimburse them for the costs imposed on them by the arrival of refugees (who are eligible, and make extensive use of, welfare from the day they arrive). It will come as no surprise that both these requirements have been abandoned; **the “consultation” has become a fiction, with even states that withdraw from the system being sent refugees anyway,** and resettlement has become an unfunded mandate because Congress wshed on its promise to reimburse states. [Emphasis added.]¹²*

In an attempt to correct such omissions, President Trump issued an executive order on September 26, 2019, allowing state and local authorities to opt out of the refugee resettlement program altogether.¹³ This was later blocked by a Maryland judge.¹⁴ Three resettlement agencies (HIAS, Church World Service, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service) filed a lawsuit “challenging [the] Trump administration executive order allowing state and local officials to block refugee resettlement.”¹⁵

Following Trump’s executive order, 42 governors (including Republicans) expressed their commitment to resettling refugees in their communities. Only Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas announced that his state would not be participating in the refugee resettlement program in FY 2020. However, and as explained in a Star Tribune post last January, “a governor’s decision doesn’t preclude local officials from refusing to give their consent. For instance, the Democratic mayor of Springfield, Massachusetts, has refused to give written consent for refugees to be resettled in the city.”¹⁶

Resettlement agencies are indeed concerned about the limitations this executive order — if it survives court challenges — would impose on their authority over placement, as reported in the Star Tribune:

*HIAS President Mark Hetfield called it **“unacceptable and un-American”** that refugees could be banned from living in cities or even entire states. He said the executive order doesn’t explain how the secretary of state could override a governor or county official’s refusal to give consent.*

“It’s even worse than a veto,”** Hetfield said. **“It’s very clear that we can’t even submit for a place unless we think that they’re going to consent.”

Before Trump signed the executive order, state and local officials were given a voice but not a veto in deciding where refugees would be resettled, resettlement agency lawyers argue.

Trump's order says the agencies were not working closely enough with local officials on resettling refugees and his administration acted to respect communities that believe they do not have the jobs or other resources to be able to take in refugees. [Emphasis added.]¹⁷

In short, until further notice, refugees' initial placement into one American community and not another remains in the hands of resettlement agency representatives.

These agencies, as I underlined a couple of years ago, are mostly funded by the U.S. government, i.e. by American taxpayers.¹⁸ Their leaders have been very critical of the Trump administration's refugee policy that has lowered refugee admissions ceilings; but, bear in mind, for these organizations, lower resettlement admissions also means less federal funding.

My earlier calculations of the share of these agencies' budgets coming from government funding and the salary of their directors/presidents/CEOs needed updating. I do so here, using the most recent publicly available Form 990 federal tax returns (from 2018, and 2019 when available). I also retrieved, when possible, financial data from the agencies' websites. Finally, I share a brief biography of the heads of these organizations and some of their public stands on the Trump administration's migration and refugee policies.

The full details are below, but here's a summary of what I found:

These resettlement agencies are funded, for the most part, by the U.S. government. Government funding ranges from a low of 41 percent to a high of 96.1 percent. (Some services provided, and government funds received, by these organizations may be non-refugee-related.)

Yearly compensations for the heads of these organizations range from a low of \$151,666 to a high of \$911,796.

All have been very critical of the Trump administration's migration and refugee policies, many even going as far as suing the Trump administration and lobbying against many of its rulings.

The nine resettlement agencies are:

1. Church World Service (CWS; religious);
2. Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM; religious);
3. Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC);
4. HIAS (founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; religious);
5. International Rescue Committee (IRC);
6. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS; religious);
7. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI);
8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB; religious); and
9. World Relief Corporation (WR; religious).¹⁹

Church World Service (CWS)

Form 990, 2019:

- Contributions and grants: \$46,286,783
- Government grants (contributions): \$72,239,249 (**64.1 percent**)

- Compensation: Rev. John L. McCullough, president and CEO: reportable compensation from the organization: \$289,156; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$97,071; **total: \$386,227**

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and grants: \$39,424,221
- Government grants (contributions): \$63,241,414 (**62.3 percent**)
- Compensation: Rev. John L. McCullough, president and CEO: reportable compensation from the organization: \$272,131; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$81,095; **total: \$353,226**

On May 29, 2020, CWS²⁰ announced that McCullough “will be stepping down from his post as President and CEO in June 2021. ... The CWS Board of Directors has begun its search for an experienced and inspiring leader to serve as the organization’s next President and CEO and lead the organization into the next decade.”²¹

Financial data from their website for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019:

- Total support, revenues, gains, and other income: \$ 76,580,400
- Government support: 46,286,783 (**60.4 percent**)

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018:

- Total support, revenues, gains and other income: \$ 66,496,191
- Government support: \$39,424,221 (**59.3 percent**)²²

About Rev. John L. McCullough:

An ordained minister in The United Methodist Church, he has served pastorates in the United States and Kenya and has held leadership positions at the denomination’s global mission agency before joining CWS in 2000.

As architect of the CWS Africa Initiative, he presented to members of the United Nations HABITAT community his vision to guide the establishment of School Safe Zones.

McCullough has overseen the agency’s concentration on sustainable access to food and water in the face of climate change.

*McCullough has remained outspoken in support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, DREAMers, and the rights of the displaced.*²³

In April 2019, McCullough wrote: “Trump Wants More Cruelty at the Border” following Kirstjen Nielsen’s resignation from her post as Homeland Security secretary. Accusing President Trump of pursuing his “anti-immigrant agenda”, McCullough stated: “We know that President Trump forced Secretary Nielsen to resign to find someone willing to enforce even more cruelty at the border.”²⁴

On October 15, 2019, McCullough was “one of 18 leaders arrested ... on the Capitol steps *while protesting the destruction of the U.S. refugee resettlement program.*”²⁵ (Emphasis added.) He was also very vocal against President Trump’s plan to set FY 2020 refugee admissions at 18,000:

*With one final blow, the Trump administration has snuffed out Lady Liberty's torch and ended our nation's legacy of compassion and welcome. The darkness of this day will extend for years, if not decades, to come. ... It will destabilize key allies and destroy what is left of our nation's moral example. ... Congress must not continue to stand by as the Trump administration systematically blocks all vulnerable people from accessing protection in our country. ... Congress should support the GRACE Act (S.1088 and H.R.2146), which would set a minimum refugee admissions goal at 95,000 and restore the resettlement program to historic norms. [Emphasis added.]*²⁶

On November 21, 2019, CWS, along with HIAS and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, filed a lawsuit against President Trump's executive order that gives state and local authorities the option to pull out from the refugee resettlement program altogether.²⁷

Here's McCullough's statement on that issue:

*This executive order is a thinly veiled attempt to play political games with the lives of the most vulnerable. ... Local support for newly arriving refugees in the communities where we work is already robust and clear. ... There is no justification for allowing local officials to shut down a proven program and block these faith communities from carrying out their mission to welcome the stranger. [Emphasis added.]*²⁸

Following reports stating that President Trump was about to announce new border controls because of the coronavirus,²⁹ McCullough issued the following statement in response to what he called "reports that *the administration seeks to violate U.S. and international law* by turning back all asylum seekers at the southern border" (emphasis added):

The administration's decision is wrong and immoral and will endanger more lives. Closing our southern border to people asking for protection from persecution is about President Trump's nativist policy goals — not public health. [Emphasis added.]³⁰

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)

Churches do not have to file 990 forms; there were none filed for this resettlement agency³¹ and no financial data is available on its website.

According to an Episcopal News Service 2017 blog post, "EMM receives very little money from the church-wide budget, instead receiving 99.5 percent of its funding from the federal government. Its main office is housed at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. Stevenson [Mark Stevenson, EMM's director at the time] has said that 90 percent of the contract money directly goes to resettling refugees. EMM retains about \$2 million for administrative costs, including all national staff salaries. Any unused money goes back to the government." (Emphasis added.)³²

Stevenson, who served as the director of Episcopal Migration Ministries since May 2016, was named in August 2018 as canon to the presiding bishop for ministry within the Episcopal Church. The agency was "searching for a new director, as the incumbent has been promoted to a senior position on the presiding bishop's staff."³³

Demetrio Alvero, Stevenson's deputy director, was named interim director of EMM.

On January 23, 2019, Alvero, a veteran staff member of Episcopal Migration Ministries, was appointed director of operations for the refugee resettlement area.³⁴

Alvero "began his career with EMM in 2005 as grants and compliance manager and was appointed deputy director in 2010. His knowledge and experience in the areas of refugee and migration matters spans over 40 years in the United States and abroad, working primarily in Kenya, Guatemala, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Costa Rica."³⁵

Alvero was the Costa Rica representative of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in the mid 1980s.³⁶

No data is available regarding the financial compensation of Stevenson or Alvero.

Stevenson has been quite vocal against President Trump’s migration and refugee policies. In 2017, “Rev. E. Mark Stevenson, director of Episcopal Migration Ministries, issued the following statement in response to two federal judges’ actions to block President Donald Trump’s travel ban limiting entry to people from six Muslim countries”:

*On behalf of Episcopal Migration Ministries, I give thanks that the courts have once again acted in defense of refugees and immigrants by restraining the implementation of the recent executive order to ban certain nationalities, cultures and religions from entering this country. ... We recognize that the **struggle to walk the moral path is far from over**, but for today we rejoice that America will continue to welcome those in great need to a place of safety and opportunity. [Emphasis added.]³⁷*

On September 26, 2019, following President Trump’s proposed FY 2020 refugee ceiling of 18,000, EMM released a statement on the “White House Decision to Reduce the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program”. Excerpts below:

*The Episcopal Church condemns the administration’s decision to reduce the number of refugees and further dismantle the refugee resettlement program. **We also strongly condemn the decision to allow states and localities to reject refugees.** The historic average for annual refugee admissions has been 95,000. The FY2020 determination of 18,000 refugees is the lowest in the forty year history of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.*

...

*“**This decision will substantially hamper the vital work of Episcopal Migration Ministries to show the love of Christ to some of the most vulnerable people in the world**” said The Rev. Dr. C.K. Robertson, canon to the presiding bishop for ministry beyond The Episcopal Church. ...*

*Communities wholeheartedly value the opportunity to welcome refugees. **Allowing states and localities to ban resettlement robs them of the myriad of benefits refugees bring wherever they go.** It sends the wrong message to turn our backs on refugees who could enrich, strengthen, and revitalize our cities and towns.*

***We urge Congress, and all people of goodwill, to make their voices heard in opposition to this decision.**” [Emphasis added.]³⁸*

Another statement, released on January 11, 2020, “condemns [Texas] Gov. [Greg] Abbott’s decision to reject refugee resettlement in 2020.”³⁹

Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and Grants: \$13,302,014
- Government grants (contributions): \$12,273,728 (**92.3 percent**)
- Compensation: Tsehaye Teferra, PhD, president:⁴⁰ reportable compensation from the organization: \$183,141; reportable compensation from related organizations: \$76,350; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$32,500; **total: \$291,991**

About Tsehaye Teferra:

A native of Ethiopia, he came to the United States in 1972. His commitment to helping refugees adjust to their new homeland in the United States spans close to two decades. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1977 and earned a doctorate in social linguistics. Before starting ECDC, Mr. Teferra worked at Georgetown University and Howard University as a researcher in linguistics and African studies.⁴¹

Teferra was designated by the Obama administration as one of many “Champions of Change”, “people doing extraordinary things to make a difference in their communities”.⁴²

In September 2017, ECDC responded to the Trump administration rescinding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and called on Congress to find a permanent solution.

Teferra said, “We recognize the strength, resilience and contributions of immigrants to the United States, and we count among these contributors the nearly 800,000 individuals who have accessed DACA since the inception of the program. ... *Ending this program without a replacement action threatens the future of young undocumented immigrants brought to America as children.* ... ECDC urges Congress to follow through with its commitment to govern by passing legislation to help create a permanent solution for DACA recipients.” (Emphasis added.)⁴³

In 2019, ECDC called the decision of the Trump administration to set the FY 2020 refugee admissions ceiling at 18,000 “a clear abandonment of the world’s most vulnerable people”, while Teferra defined resettlement as “*a life-saving program that contributes toward making the United States a powerful nation.*”⁴⁴ (Emphasis added.)

HIAS (founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and grants: \$46,527,210
- Government grants (contributions): \$19,138,737 (**41.1 percent**)
- Compensation: Mark Hetfield, president and CEO: reportable compensation from the organization: \$301,333; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$28,896; **total: \$330,229**

Financial data from their 2018 annual report on their website:⁴⁵

- Total contributions: \$50,167,033
- Government contributions: \$19,138,737 (**38.1 percent**)⁴⁶

Mark Hetfield, originally from Watchung, N.J., was named president and CEO of HIAS, the Jewish immigration group on February 4, 2013:

Hetfield succeeded Gideon Aronoff, a South Orange resident who led HIAS for six years until his resignation at the end of May [2012]. Hetfield has been leading HIAS on an interim basis since June [2012].

*An expert in the field of refugee protection, Hetfield has experience at many levels of HIAS, where he has worked on and off since graduating from Georgetown University [in 1988]. ... He has worked in Rome and Haiti, as an immigration attorney, as an officer with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and with the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. He worked for HIAS four times in three different cities, including a stint in the New York office.*⁴⁷

On February 7, 2017, HIAS and the International Refugee Assistance Project, with legal representation from the ACLU and the National Immigration Law Center, filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of President Trump’s executive order on “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” that ordered a review of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and halted the issuance of visas from many countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) citing national security concerns.⁴⁸ The temporary “travel ban” was denounced by many as being nothing short of a “Muslim ban”. The HIAS president and CEO explained why they were suing the Trump administration:

*We cannot remain silent as Muslim refugees are turned away just for being Muslim, just as we could not stand idly by when the U.S. turned away Jewish refugees fleeing Germany during the 1930s and 40s. ... Our history and our values, as Jews and as Americans, require us to **fight this illegal and immoral new policy** with every tool at our disposal — including litigation. [Emphasis added.]⁴⁹*

On January 30, 2017, three days after President Trump signed the executive order mentioned above, Hetfield told MSNBC: “What we saw unfold on Friday [January 27] was the *most vile thing I’ve ever seen come out of the White House* in my 28 years of working in this field. This executive order which was so *un-American* by slamming the door in the face of refugees when they need it the most.” (Emphasis added.)⁵⁰

In February 2020, HIAS announced that “the U.S. government entered into a major settlement with plaintiffs in *Jewish Family Service v. Trump*, a lawsuit filed in 2017 that challenged the third version of a ban on certain refugees entering the United States. The ban set back scores of refugees who were on the brink of resettlement to the United States, mirroring their cases in delays for more than two years. This settlement requires the government to expedite the refugee resettlement applications of over 300 refugees who were affected by the ban.”⁵¹

HIAS is also one of the three resettlement agencies that filed a lawsuit in 2019 challenging the “Trump administration executive order allowing state and local officials to block refugee resettlement.”

Hetfield had this to say on this issue:

*It was not that long ago that Jews and African-Americans were banned from living in certain neighborhoods and towns. We fought to end that discrimination and humiliation. Now the Trump Administration has issued an executive order which **allows states and localities to ban resettled refugees? We won’t tolerate such intolerance. We are, once again, suing the federal government to end this unlawful and immoral state and local refugee ban.** After all, Jewish tradition, and American tradition, compel us to welcome the stranger. [Emphasis added.]⁵²*

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and Grants: \$711,075,998
- Government grants (contributions): \$422,902,511 (**59.5 percent**)
- Compensation: David Miliband, director, CEO, president: reportable compensation from the organization: \$861,209; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$50,587; **total: \$911,796**

David Miliband, a former British Labour Party politician, walked away from British politics in March 2013. He became the president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee on September 1, 2013.⁵³ Today, according to the New York Times, he “works to bring food, aid and education to refugees around the world.”⁵⁴

Born in London, Miliband is the “eldest son of immigrant parents, Belgian-born Marxist sociologist Ralph Miliband and Polish-born Marion Kozak, both from Polish Jewish families. He was given the middle name of “Wright” after the American sociologist C. Wright Mills.”⁵⁵

According to IRC, “Miliband’s parents fled to Britain from continental Europe during World War II and its aftermath. As the son of refugees, he brings a personal commitment to the IRC’s work.”⁵⁶

IRC has been an outspoken critic of President Trump’s efforts to pause the refugee resettlement program for assessment. In January 2017 it called on its supporters to: “Oppose President’s Trump’s ban on refugees” because “[t]hese changes fly in the face of our country’s best values of freedom, fairness and compassion. ... *Slam the door on hate. Oppose President Trump’s unjust refugee Executive Order.* ... Take Action. Call your members of Congress.” (Emphasis added.)⁵⁷

IRC later issued a press release applauding the Fourth Circuit ruling against the travel ban:

*We are very pleased that the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to reinstate the Trump Administration's harmful order banning Muslims — including refugees — from seeking entry and protection in America, because it is **blatantly unconstitutional**. The courts have been key to **preventing the enforcement of President Trump's hasty and harmful executive order**. [Emphasis added.]⁵⁸*

In 2019, Miliband issued a “scathing critique of the Trump administration’s handling of border issues”. President Trump, alarmed by what he viewed as a border crisis with increasing numbers of illegal crossings from Mexico into the United States, called for emergency funds toward the border wall. Miliband said: “*The US government is failing in its most basic responsibilities, never mind as a global leader but as a local example of how a civilized country should behave*”. He called “the national emergency declared by the US president in February to bolster his plans for a border wall a “*manufactured crisis*”. He added: “By no standards of national or international precedent would you describe it as a crisis, even in the communities affected in the southern US.” (Emphasis added.)⁵⁹

On the decision of the Trump administration to set the FY 2020 refugee admissions ceiling at 18,000, Miliband said: “This is a very sad day for America.”⁶⁰

In a January 20, 2020, op-ed titled “The Legality of Trump’s Assault on Refugees”, Miliband wrote:

*Refugee resettlement has traditionally been a bipartisan issue. ... Refugees are referred first by the United Nations to identify their vulnerable refugee status, for example victims of torture or those with urgent medical issues. ... **The Trump administration, however, has upended that commitment in three ways. First, it has reduced the number of refugees to be admitted to 18,000, a dramatic departure from historic norms. Furthermore, it has halted U.N. referrals — all but eliminating the needs-based bias of the program. Lastly, it has tried to give localities a choice about whether they want to be part of the federal system.** [Emphasis added.]⁶¹*

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and Grants: \$47,840,400
- Government grants (contributions): \$41,631,070 (**87 percent**)
- Compensation: Linda Hartke, CEO:⁶² reportable compensation from the organization: \$376,928; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$26,643; **total: \$403,571** (Hartke was fired by the board of directors in February 2018 after eight years of service.)
- Compensation: William P. Nichols, interim CEO starting April 13, 2018: reportable compensation from the organization: \$200,947; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$10,047; **total: \$210,994**

Krish O’Mara Vignarajah is the current president and CEO; she was appointed to the post on February 13, 2019.

Financial data from their website for the year ended December 31, 2018:

- Total support and revenue: \$ 50,706,000
- U.S. government and state contributions: \$41,631,000 (**82.1 percent**)⁶³

Reports of financial mismanagement, fraud, and harassment led to the departure of Linda Hartke and calls for an external investigation. According to Breitbart news, the board of directors fired Hartke in early February 2018 after eight years of

service, a “consequence of the findings of the internal investigation into her tenure as CEO”. A source familiar with the operations of the refugee resettlement industry told Breitbart that issues related to LIRS “are widespread but are rooted in the main areas of financial mismanagement and the incompetence of leadership.” Other “key areas” were the focus of the internal investigation: “Financial mismanagement, failure to address financial irregularities discovered by independent audits, wasteful spending, concealment of taxable income, timesheet fraud, budget grant fraud, large severance and settlement payouts to avoid public and board reporting.”⁶⁴

On January 25, 2017, LIRS released a statement condemning the Trump administration’s actions “against refugees and migrants”. Linda Hartke, LIRS president and CEO at the time said: “As the world has its eyes on us, it is imperative that President Trump *uphold the values that America has always lived by*: compassion, empathy, family, human rights, and protection for those seeking a safe haven from danger and persecution.” (Emphasis added.)⁶⁵

Vignarajah has served as LIRS president and CEO since February 13, 2019. According to LIRS, this choice “represents a new generation of leadership”. She is “the second refugee and first non-Lutheran in its 80-year history” to lead the organization. Vignarajah “previously served in the Obama White House as Policy Director for First Lady Michelle Obama and at the State Department as Senior Advisor under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of State John Kerry.”⁶⁶

On January 8, 2020, Vignarajah wrote an op-ed for the Baltimore Sun titled: “The courts should declare Trump’s refugee order unconstitutional”. She denounced President Trump’s executive order enhancing state and local involvement in refugee resettlement, from her position as “the leader of one of the country’s largest faith-based nonprofits, which works with religious communities in every state — and as someone who, as a nine-month-old, fled violence and persecution in Sri Lanka with my parents and brother to find refuge in a welcoming America”. Vignarajah said:

*The president’s executive order, however, is **simply illegal and unconstitutional** — and that’s why, this week, we went to court. In November, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration regarding the very executive order. ... The president’s executive order undermines the Refugee Act of 1980. ... The act established clear rules for state and federal cooperation on refugee resettlement, including allowing states to opt out of the program. **This doesn’t mean states can block resettlement. Instead, private nonprofit organizations handle all services the state would normally deliver.** [Emphasis added.]⁶⁷*

In a 2019 public statement announcing the lawsuit filed by LIRS, CWS, and HIAS against President Trump’s executive order, Vignarajah stated the following:

*Imagine coming to this country after years of violence, persecution and desperation, only to be told you cannot join your family because the state or city must clear new political hurdles in order to welcome you. Imagine being part of a welcoming community — **where both the local economy and its cultural heritage are bolstered by the presence of refugees** — only to have the door slammed shut by **xenophobic and bureaucratic confusion**. This dystopian vision could become our American reality if this **unconstitutional executive order** is allowed to stand. We will not allow **this Administration to further endanger children and families** by exploiting fears and **stoking nationalism**. [Emphasis added.]⁶⁸*

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and Grants: \$52,515,578
- Government Grants: \$50,461,476 (**96.1 percent**)
- Compensation: Lavinia Limon, president and CEO:⁶⁹ reportable compensation from the organization: \$282,757; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$30,008; **total: \$312,765**

Financial data from their website for the year ending September 30, 2018:

- Total Revenue: \$56,832,299
- Government Grants: \$50,580,746 (**89 percent**)⁷⁰

After Lavinia Limon retired as CEO and president of USCRI, effective October 13, 2017, after over four decades of service, the board of directors appointed Eskinder Negash as acting chief executive officer. On April 2018, Negash became the president and chief executive officer of USCRI. Before taking the reins of the organization, Negash was the executive senior VP of USCRI.⁷¹

- Compensation: Eskinder Negash, executive senior VP: reportable Compensation from the organization: \$234,252; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$14,900; **total: \$249,152**

Negash is a “recognized Senior Executive leader and brings nearly 40 years of proven non-profit management experience. He served as Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the largest government funded refugee resettlement organization in the world, from 2009-2015. ... Prior to his appointment by the Obama Administration, he served as the vice president and chief operating officer of USCRI.”⁷² Negash is himself a refugee himself from Ethiopia.⁷³

On April 21, 2010, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) issued a statement in which it “strongly opposes the Administration’s pending announcement that it plans to suspend all immigration into the United States until further notice.”⁷⁴ Negash said:

*It is in the **best interests of our country to restore historic levels of immigration to fuel our economy, enrich our way of life and adhere to the values and principles that have made America a global leader. ... The U.S., a nation built by immigrants, owes much to our immigrant past and present. We should not be shutting the door to our future.*** [Emphasis added.]⁷⁵

On January 15, 2020, USCRI issued a statement on President Trump’s executive order “requiring state consent for refugee resettlement”:

*Today, in the case of HIAS, et. al. v. Trump, et. al., Judge Peter Messitte of the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland issued his decision in favor of the plaintiffs, granting a preliminary injunction against the Administration’s Executive Order requiring state consent to resettle refugees. ... In his decision, Judge Messitte concluded that the three refugee agencies [HIAS, CWS, and LIRS] adequately demonstrated that Trump’s order is **unlawful, arbitrary and capricious.** Messitte granted a preliminary injunction to halt enforcement of the order. ... **USCRI believes that not only should this consent requirement be lifted, but that the refugee admissions ceiling should be restored to 95,000 refugees annually.*** [Emphasis added.]⁷⁶

Negash said: “Judge Messitte’s decision is the right one.”

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

No Form 990 could be found. This organization is not required to file an annual return with the IRS because it is a church.⁷⁷

In its latest financial statement (year ended December 31, 2018), it reported :

- Total operating revenues, gains and other support: \$92,399,362
- Government contracts and grants revenue: \$48,482,684 (**52.5 percent**)⁷⁸

The current President of USCCB is José Horacio Gómez, the archbishop of Los Angeles. The strong “supporter of DACA and other pro-immigration issues” was elected on November 2019 to lead the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁷⁹ He

has been vice-president since 2016 and succeeds Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston. He is the first Latino to head this organization.⁸⁰

Gomez is a “native of Monterrey, Mexico, and a naturalized American citizen. Prior to becoming Archbishop of Los Angeles, he served as Archbishop of San Antonio (2005–2010) and Auxiliary Bishop of Denver (2001–2005). For more than a decade, Archbishop Gomez has been a voice of compassion and reason on moral and spiritual issues in American public life and culture. He has played a leading role in the Catholic Church’s efforts to promote immigration reform and is author of the 2013 book, *Immigration and the Next America: Renewing the Soul of Our Nation*.”⁸¹

The vice-president is Archbishop of Detroit Allen Henry Vigneron (elected to this post on November 12, 2019). No data on his or Gomez’s financial compensation is available.

Vigneron has been vocal against some of the Trump administration immigration policies. In June 2018, the Detroit archbishop joined “Catholic leaders in condemning family separation at the border” and “echoed statements from other Catholic leaders that separating children from families is *highly immoral* because of the damage it causes to young children.” (Emphasis added.)⁸²

World Relief (WR)

Form 990, 2018:

- Contributions and Grants: \$61,694,838
- Government Grants: \$41,313,062 (**67 percent**)
- Compensation: Tim Breene, CEO:⁸³ reportable compensation from the organization: \$151,666; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$0; **total: \$151,666**
- Compensation: Scott Arbeiter, president: reportable compensation from the organization: \$120,945; estimated amount of other compensation from the organization and related organizations: \$330; **total: \$121,275**

According to the WR website, Tim Breene’s “international business career spanned 40 years within the consumer goods, retail, advertising and consulting industries. From 1999 to 2011, he was a member of the Executive Leadership Team at Accenture, and he was the founding CEO of that firm’s global digital marketing enterprise, Accenture Interactive. Mr. Breene previously held senior roles at businesses worldwide, including Kingfisher PLC, Guinness PLC, WCRS PLC, and McKinsey. His writing has appeared in the Harvard Business Review, and he is the co-author of *Jumping the S-Curve: How to Beat the Growth Cycle, Get on Top, and Stay There* (2011: Harvard Business Review Press).”⁸⁴

In 2019, WR issued a press release titled “World Relief Strongly Condemns the Trump Administration for its Reported Plan to Abandon Persecuted Christians and Other Refugees”, standing against possible cuts to the number of resettled refugees. Breene responded to what has been reported as the “Trump Plan to Enact a ‘Virtual Shutdown’ of Refugee Admissions” and called the plan an “*attack on Christian values*”. (Emphasis added.) Breene said: “Americans of faith should recognize and respond to this *assault* on our call to protect the ‘least of these’ — especially as a country where most citizens profess to be Christians.” (Emphasis added.)⁸⁵

End Notes

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