

November 21, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned nearly 200 civil and human rights, civil liberties, education, social justice, and inter-faith organizations write to urge your Administration to take immediate action to rescind the regulatory framework behind the National Security Exit-Entry Registration System (NSEERS). The NSEERS program has been found to be ineffective as a counter-terrorism tool, has resulted in tremendous harm for individuals who were directly affected, and has disrupted relationships with immigrant communities.

Created in the wake of September 11, 2001, NSEERS targeted foreign nationals from 25 countries based on religion, ethnicity, and national origin. NSEERS was a discriminatory policy that ran counter to the fundamental American values of fairness and equal protection. Rescinding the regulatory framework of the program will ensure that our nation does not target communities based on national origin and faith in the future.

NSEERS dealt a significant toll on the families and communities directly affected by it. The “call-in registration” part of the program targeted certain males from 25 primarily Arab, Muslim-majority, African, and South Asian countries, as well as North Korea and Eritrea, and required them to appear at local immigration offices for fingerprinting and interrogations.

In the wake of NSEERS, more than 13,000 men who complied with the program faced deportation charges. Families were torn apart, small businesses in immigrant neighborhoods closed their doors, and students discarded their educational aspirations. One person affected by NSEERS was Mr. D, a 19-year-old athlete from Algeria who came to the United States on a student visa to play tennis at Western Michigan University. As a foreign student, Mr. D was subject to NSEERS as a condition for study in the United States. Due to a car accident, Mr. D complied with NSEERS one day past the deadline. Although medical documents were available to show the circumstances of the one-day delay, the local immigration office charged Mr. D with failure to comply with NSEERS and placed him in removal proceedings. Mr. D’s story is just one of tens of thousands of people affected by NSEERS.

Government officials have questioned whether the NSEERS program was an effective tool to combat terrorism. James W. Ziglar, former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, has asked: “The question was, ‘[w]hat were we going to get for all of this? The people who could be identified as terrorists weren’t going to show up. This project was a huge exercise and caused us to use resources in the field that could have been much better deployed.’”

In April 2011, the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) took a positive step by de-listing the countries under the NSEERS program. This development confirmed that “DHS seeks to identify specific individuals and actions that pose specific threats, rather than focusing on more general designations of groups of individuals, such as country of origin.” Intending to discontinue the NSEERS program, the de-listing notice stated firmly “DHS will no longer register aliens under NSEERS effective on April 28, 2011.”

Nevertheless, the regulatory structure for NSEERS remains intact. As organizations that represent diverse communities and that are committed to civil and immigrant rights, we firmly believe that removal of the NSEERS framework is a necessary imperative. We ask the Administration to immediately take steps to remove the regulatory structure of NSEERS and stop any future use of the program.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to hearing from you. For additional information, or to schedule a meeting, please contact Mr. Abed Ayoub of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), aayoub@adc.org, or at 202-244-2990.

Sincerely,

18 Million Rising
Adelante Alabama Worker Center
Advancement Project
Advocates for Youth
African American Ministers in Action (AAMIA)
African Services Committee, Inc.
Alianza Americas
Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA)
America's Voice Education Fund
American Center for Outreach
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Immigration Council
American Muslim Advisory Council

Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
API Equality - Northern California (APIENC)
Arab American Association of New York (AAANY)
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Arkansas United Community Coalition
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian American Psychological Association
Asian American Writers' Workshop
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice- Asian Law Caucus
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance & Institute for Asian Pacific American
Leadership and Advancement
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Austin Jewish Voice for Peace
Black Alliance for Just Immigration
Brooklyn Defender Services
Casa Esperanza
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
Center for American Progress
Center for APA Women
Center for Community Change
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for New Community
Center for Popular Democracy
Center for Social Inclusion
Center for Sustainable Justice
Chinatown Community Center of Detroit
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Refugee & Immigration Ministries
Church World Service
Common Defense
Communities for Just Schools Fund
Community Health Consulting Services
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC)
Compassionate Fremont
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Council on American-Islamic Relations Greater Los Angeles Area
Dar al Hijrah Islamic Center
DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
DC-Maryland Justice for Our Neighbors

Detention Watch Network
Dreamers Moms
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Durango Unido en Chicago
El CENTRO de Igualdad y Derechos
EmergeUSA
Fair Immigration Reform Movement
Families for freedom
Farmworker Justice
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Florida Coastal School of Law Immigrant and Human Rights Clinic
Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
Franciscan Action Network
Free Migration Project
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of Miami-Dade Detainees
Georgia Muslim Voter Project
Global One to One
Global Ties ABQ
HIAS
HIAS Pennsylvania
Human Rights First
Human Rights Initiative of North Texas
IABAT (Islamic Ahlul Bayt Association of the Triangle)
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
Imam Hussain Islamic Center
Immigrant and Refugee Resource Village of Albuquerque
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Immigrant Rights Clinic of Washington Square Legal Services
Immigration Center for Women and Children
Interfaith Committee for Detained Immigrants
Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity
Iranian American Bar Association
Islamic Education Center, Potomac, MD
Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center
Jakara Movement
Japan America Society of New Mexico, Inc.
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
Justice Strategies

Korean Resource Center
Laotian American National Alliance
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Long Island Immigrant Alliance
Lutheran Family Services
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Make the Road New York
Mi Familia Vota
Military Religious Freedom Foundation
MoveOn Civic Action
MPower Change
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
Muslim Bar Association of Southern California
Muslim Community Center of Chicago
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Justice League
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
(CAPACD)
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Employment Law Project
National Immigrant Justice Center
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center (NILC)
National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild
National Iranian American Council (NIAC)
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance

National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NC Stop Torture Now
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Mexico Asian Family Center
New Mexico Women's Global Pathways
Next Wave Muslim Initiative
North Carolina Justice Center
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
OneAmerica
Pangea Legal Services
Pars Equality Center
Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center
Pioneer Valley Progressive Muslims
Progressive Interfaith Alliance
Project South
Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)
Quaker House of Fayetteville NC
Race Forward
Reformed Church of Highland Park
Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)
Refugee Well-being Project
Restore The Fourth
RootsAction.org
Salvadoran American National Network (SANN)
Service Employees International Union
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
Sisters of Mercy South Central Community
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association
South Asian Network (SAN)
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southeast Immigrant Rights Network
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
STAND: The Student-led Movement to End Mass Atrocities
St. John United Church of Christ
Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social Justice
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition
The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

The Sikh Coalition
Triangle Chapter Women's International League for Peace & Freedom
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois
United Voices for America
UPLIFT
VietUnity - Bay Area
Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights
Washington Peace Center
WeCount!
Women's Refugee Commission
X-Lab

Ms. Margo Schlanger - former DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
(affiliation listed for informational purposes only)
Ms. Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia - Samuel Weiss Faculty Scholar and Clinical
Professor of Law, Penn State Law: University Park (affiliation listed for
informational purposes only)

cc: Jeh Johnson, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

Coalition