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UDI OFER  
Executive Director

May 3, 2016

Governor Christopher Christie  
Office of the Governor  
New Jersey State House  
125 West State Street  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

RE: Refugee Resettlement in New Jersey

Dear Governor Christie:

On behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey and its tens of thousands of members and supporters across our state, I urge you to reconsider your administration's decision to withdraw from the United States Refugee Resettlement Program.

New Jersey has a long history of welcoming refugees who have escaped persecution, war, and horrific conditions overseas, most recently from places like Cuba, Eritrea, Russia, Vietnam, and Syria. The flight from Syria's civil war has resulted in the largest refugee crisis since World War II.

Toward the end of April, news outlets reported that your administration had given notice to the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, an office of the federal Administration for Children and Families, that the state would withdraw its participation from the resettlement of refugees in New Jersey.

Withdrawing from the resettlement program does not make New Jerseyans safer or accomplish any other public policy goals. It does not block refugees — who are the most heavily scrutinized people entering the United States — from resettling in New Jersey. Instead, it shifts administrative burdens on to nonprofit resettlement agencies. It sends a message that New Jersey is an unwelcoming place for refugees, with leaders who are unwilling to assist vulnerable families forced to flee their homes in search of a new life. This is not who we are.

This decision, coming only months after your efforts to block Syrian refugees from resettling in New Jersey, is difficult to view as anything but political theater, with those fleeing violence and civil war unfairly cast as villains. Please end this scapegoating and restore New Jersey's tradition of welcoming refugees.

Sincerely,

UDI OFER  
Executive Director