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IRAP CONDEMNS TEXAS GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT’S WITHDRAWAL FROM REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

MCEACHIN: “On this critical veterans issue, Gov. Abbott has completely failed to lead.”

New York, NY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016 – The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) at the Urban Justice Center spoke out today against Texas Governor Greg Abbott’s decision to withdraw the state from the U.S. refugee resettlement program. While refugees will still be resettled and welcomed in Texas, the state will no longer administer Texas’ refugee resettlement program. Gov. Abbott’s decision vilifies not only Syrian refugees, who were named in Abbott’s press release, but also human trafficking victims and Afghan and Iraqi interpreters who worked with the U.S. military.

“It’s truly unfortunate that Gov. Abbott has decided to take advantage of the election season to play politics,” said IRAP National Security Policy Associate Mac McEachin, “when he’s well-aware of the extraordinary screening processes that refugees undergo before ever setting foot in the United States. To announce Texas’ withdrawal while the United States is hosting an international summit about solving the refugee crisis makes the governor seem hopelessly out of touch. Furthermore, it is reprehensible that he would dishonor the commitment that the United States made to the Iraqi and Afghan allies who served alongside our troops. Texas veterans care passionately about the safety of their interpreters, many of whom are IRAP clients who were promised safe passage to the United States given the retaliation they face because of their service. On this critical veterans issue, Gov. Abbott has completely failed to lead.”

More than 80,000 refugees have been safely resettled to the United States in the past year, from countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Congo, Eritrea, and Syria. The United States has the most stringent screening process in the world, and refugees receive the most vetting of any travelers to the United States. Last week, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, formerly a vocal opponent of refugee resettlement, announced his support for the program after learning how rigorous the vetting process is.

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