

July 13, 2023

The Honorable Christopher Coons  
Chairman  
Senate Subcommittee on State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on State,  
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Graham,

We, the 52 undersigned organizations, urge you to safeguard and invest in critical funding for peacebuilding, human rights, humanitarian aid, migration, foreign climate aid, poverty-focused development assistance and related accounts in the Fiscal Year 2024 State Department, Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPs) appropriations bill.

As organizations committed to promoting peace, advancing and protecting human rights, and supporting human dignity, we are gravely concerned by the House Appropriations SFOPs Subcommittee's proposed cuts. Thoughtful and measured spending prioritizes programs that prevent and ameliorate international crises and safeguard civilian lives. The House bill takes the opposite approach, undermining the United States' legacy of compassionate aid.

The bill features untenable cuts to consequential peacebuilding programs, such as the Complex Crises Fund, at a time when the world is facing some of its highest levels of violence and conflict since the end of World War II.<sup>i</sup> Rather than abandon U.S. leadership on critical peacebuilding and conflict prevention work, we urge you to invest fully in these accounts.

As the climate crisis continues to drive poverty, violent conflict, and migration, the House proposal also prohibits any funding to be used for the Green Climate Fund and severely limits funding available for climate-related bilateral programs. As one of the leading historical emitters of greenhouse gases, the United States has a moral responsibility to address the global climate crisis. We urge the Senate to instead fulfill the United States' international commitments and support strong investments in climate adaptation and mitigation for the Global South, which bears the worst impacts of increasing storms, floods, and drought with fewer resources to respond.

The United States' deepest values instruct investment in life-sustaining humanitarian aid that also uplifts global stability. Accounts such as Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) enable the United States to aid forcibly displaced communities seeking refuge from life-threatening situations and respond to sudden humanitarian needs. Irresponsibly, the House bill excludes ERMA and cuts MRA funding by more than 40 percent. ERMA is a critical emergency draw-down that was recently used to support the Afghan evacuation, the response to the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, and rising forced migration in the Western Hemisphere; the fund has now been depleted and without additional funding the United States will be unable to respond to unforeseen crises.

Similarly, to ensure continued support for some of the world's most vulnerable people as they seek refuge from natural disasters, conflict, and other unforeseen tragedies, we encourage robust funding for International Disaster Assistance. Since its foundation, the United States has seen itself as a haven for those fleeing persecution and seeking a better life—we urge you not to reject this value and fully fund this necessary aid.

The House proposal would also eliminate funding for the United Nations' (U.N.) regular budget and several U.N. bodies, including the U.N. Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the U.N. Environment Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). These cuts would dramatically diminish the United States' global standing and diplomatic influence. Now is a time when collective action is critical to addressing global challenges. We urge Congress to fully fund U.S. commitments to the U.N., to enable the United States to strengthen its credibility and goodwill at the U.N. by uplifting its diplomatic goals—rather than relying on threats and coercion. In particular, Congress should sustain UNRWA's vital work as a lifeline to Palestinian refugees by increasing, rather than reducing, levels of support by imposing unrealistic reporting requirements and drastically reducing key accounts that sustain its work in the FY24 budget and beyond.

Congress must strengthen global security through proven preventive means. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres succinctly stated<sup>ii</sup>, "Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention. Prevention works saves lives and is cost-effective." The United States must continue to lead globally in these efforts.

We greatly appreciate the Senate Appropriations Committee vote to maintain the budget levels agreed to in the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (P.L. 118-5). We urge you to invest the funds made available to the SFOPs subcommittee by the Committee's 302(b) allocations to support peacebuilding, human rights, migration, humanitarian aid, climate assistance, poverty-focused development assistance, and related accounts.

The challenges of our time are interconnected—none of this work can be done alone. Collectively, these accounts invest in and bolster our nation's values, global leadership, and security. Several undersigned organizations have requested a meeting with your subcommittee staff and offices to continue this conversation. We look forward to meaningfully addressing these concerns. Thank you for your leadership and continuing support for the vital work of the State Department and USAID.

Sincerely,

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow  
American Friends Service Committee  
Better World Campaign  
Bread for the World  
Bridges Faith Initiative  
Christian Connections for International Health  
Church World Service  
Churches for Middle East Peace  
Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)  
Code Pink  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces  
Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services Inc  
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC  
Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR)  
The Episcopal Church  
Faiths for Safe Water  
Franciscan Action Network  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
HIAS

Human Rights First  
Immigration Hub  
Interfaith Welcome Coalition  
Interfaith Welcome Coalition - San Antonio  
Invisible Children  
Islamic Relief USA  
JAMAAT - Jews and Muslims and Allies Acting Together  
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA  
Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA  
Justice in Motion  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.  
Mercy Corps  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Partnership for New Americans  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Nonviolent Peaceforce  
Oxfam America  
Peace Direct  
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness  
Refugees International  
Saferworld (US)  
Search for Common Ground  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
UNRWA USA National Committee  
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center  
Women's Refugee Commission  
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation

*\*The signatories have various mandates that may not cover the full scope of the recommendations*

CC: Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins

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<sup>i</sup> Our World in Data. (n.d.). *State-based conflicts, World, 1946 to 2020*. Our World in Data.

<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/the-number-of-active-state-based-conflicts>

<sup>ii</sup> UN News Centre. (n.d.). *“Instead of responding to crises, we need to invest far more in prevention,” says UN chief*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/%E2%80%98instead-responding-crises-we-need-invest-far-more-prevention%E2%80%99-says-un-chief>  
<https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/'instead-responding-crises-we-need-invest-far-more-prevention'-says-un-chief>