Abstract

This past summer, I worked at Jesuit Refugee Service/USA as an Advocacy & Policy Intern. Over the course of eight weeks, I assisted JRS/USA with research on refugees and detention, congressional advocacy, and collaboration with other organizations and nonprofits. I also supported JRS outreach by attending events around D.C. on migration policy and updating outreach materials and communication databases. As I interned, I participated in the CSJ online course ‘Intersections of Social Justice’ through which I was able to reflect on the work of my organization in the broader context of social justice. As an immigrant myself, interning at JRS has allowed me to broaden my understanding of global migration and its limitless implications for our future. In the face of overwhelming refugee numbers and situations of protracted crises, my internship experience allowed me to reflect on avenues towards better multilateral solutions that support the dignity for all refugees and asylum seekers.

About Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

The mission of JRS is to accompany, serve, and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

JRS works in 52 countries to provide important services for refugees:
- Educational Opportunities
- Emergency Relief
- Pastoral and Social Services
- Livelihoods
- Detention Chaplaincy (U.S. program)

Advocacy Priorities

More than 68 million individuals are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution or conflict including over 25 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced persons, and 3 million asylum seekers.²

1. **Increasing funding for global refugee education:** There are currently an estimated 4 million refugee children who are out of formal educational systems.³ JRS is working towards filling the gap in educational opportunity for refugees through the Global Education Initiative.

2. **Increasing the Presidential Determination for refugee resettlement in the United States:** Increasing the PD to 75,000 refugees for FY2019.

3. **Resisting family separation as a deterrence strategy:** Protecting asylum seekers in times of vulnerability is a more compassionate and just response.

4. **Advocating against the Trump’s administration’s travel bans:** The ban limits the abilities of vulnerable refugees to safely resettle in the United States.

Projects

World Refugee Day Petition: On World Refugee Day (June 20), JRS delivered a petition signed by 800 supporters from all 50 states advocating for support for displaced Syrians through resettlement, Federal funding for humanitarian aid, and providing education for displaced Syrian children.

Any Refugee postcards: The Any Refugee project enables people from around the world to create messages of friendship and hope and send them to refugee schoolchildren around the world. I sorted hundreds of these postcards this summer, which will be distributed to children by JRS/USA staff.

Congressional Advocacy: JRS works with other organizations and partners to advocate for legislation and government measures that support refugees. Examples include supporting the creation of a House Refugee Caucus and increasing appropriations for humanitarian aid.

Future Directions

After a summer of advocacy work, I decided to continue interning at JRS/USA for the fall semester. I am now interested in pursuing further research into urban migration as it relates to sustainability and urban planning, and analysis of global faith-based interventions to reduce animosity towards refugee and immigrant communities.

References


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