



MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

400 Main Street, Suite 615, Knoxville, TN 37902

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2019

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Mayor's Statement on Refugee Resettlement

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—Today Governor Bill Lee announced his consent to initial refugee resettlement in Tennessee in response to Executive Order 13888 issued by President Donald J. Trump in September. This Executive Order requires consent from both local and state governments to allow refugee resettlement.

Gov. Lee said, "The United States and Tennessee have always been, since the very founding of our nation, a shining beacon of freedom and opportunity for the persecuted and oppressed, particularly those suffering religious persecution." He also expressed his consent to working with President Trump and his administration to responsibly resettle refugees.

A refugee is a person who has fled their country of origin specifically because of past persecution or a fear of future persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. A refugee *does not* include a person who has left their home country solely to seek a more prosperous life here.

Knox County has been welcoming refugees through Bridge Refugee Services since 1982. Ninety-nine refugees were resettled in Knox County in fiscal year 2018.

Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs said, "I have found, overwhelmingly, the people in this program come here to be contributors to society, to breathe the air of the greatest nation on the planet as free men and women. Some of them have already been in service to our nation by working with our military in places like Iraq and Syria."

Yassin Terou relocated to Knoxville from Syria in 2011 but spoke no English and could find no work. He began selling homemade falafel sandwiches and juices at the local mosque. He would sell out every week, making no money, but happy to be working. With the help of Nadeem Saddiqi, an imam at the mosque and a Knoxville native, he found a restaurant space downtown and Yassin's Falafel House was born. Yassin's gained national recognition being named Reader's Digest's Nicest Place in America in October 2018.

"We could all learn something from Yassin's motto: *welcome all sizes, all colors, all ages, all sexes, all cultures, all religions, all types, all beliefs, all people*. Yassin is a perfect example of how communities like ours can benefit from supporting refugee resettlement and serving as a beacon for the American dream. I strongly agree with Governor Lee's decision and thank him for his leadership on this issue," Jacobs continued.

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December 18, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

RE: Executive Order 13888

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

This letter is in reference to Executive Order 13888, "On Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Resettlement."

I would like to thank the Administration for consulting with state and local governments to ensure the process of resettling refugees who are fleeing persecution and have been prioritized by the Administration is successful. With the Tenth Amendment in mind, I believe this consultation is appropriate. Requiring state and local governments to participate without their consent would be overstepping the federal government's constitutional authority.

In addition to the safeguards the Administration has put in place, Tennessee has a well-managed process administrated by experienced and competent non-profit agencies. In my own experience, I have found, overwhelmingly, the people who are in this program come here to be contributors to society. They come here to breathe the air of the greatest nation on the planet as free men and women. We should also note that some of them have already been in service to our nation by working with our military in places like Iraq and Syria.

Therefore, as Mayor of Knox County, Tennessee, I consent to initial refugee resettlement in Knox County, Tennessee as per the terms of the Executive Order.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Glenn Jacobs".

Glenn Jacobs
Mayor, Knox County, Tennessee

cc: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol T. O'Connell
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U. S. Department of State
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