



**Jewish Family Services**  
of silicon valley

## **Why Jewish Family Services is Suing The Trump Administration**

**November 13, 2017**

**Mindy Berkowitz, Executive Director**

At Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley (JFS SV), we proudly protect refugees from all over the world who flee persecution. They flee because they are Christian, Zoroastrian, Bahai, Mandeian, Muslim, – and yes, Jewish. They may be gay or transgendered. The people we help are escaping dire and often violent circumstances. We do this because our Jewish values compel us to do it. The value of “welcoming the stranger” and “treat the stranger as you would be treated” is the commandment mentioned most – no fewer than 36 times in the Torah.

It is out of these deeply held values and unwavering commitment to this lifesaving work that we joined today with Jewish Family Service of Seattle as co-plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit challenging the most recent refugee ban Executive Order, imposed by President Trump on October 24. This latest Executive Order blocks refugee resettlement from eleven countries for at least 90 days and indefinitely pauses the program for refugees already living in the United States to be reunited with their spouses and children. The lawsuit is seeking a nationwide injunction on both restrictions and charges that the order is yet another attempt by the Trump administration to suspend refugee admissions without authority and ban refugees from entering the country.

All of JFS SV’s services to refugees are built around the goal of helping refugee clients become economically self-sufficient, integrated, and civically engaged. In partnership with HIAS, JFS SV serves refugees from the moment they arrive at the airport until after they become naturalized citizens. The relationship that JFS SV staff establishes with our refugee clients continues for years, long after the individuals have transitioned out of refugee status.

The restrictive policies rolled out by the administration last month would destroy our refugee clients’ hope, and endanger their lives.

Let me tell you about a few of our clients.

*In one case, a young mother and her 7-year-old son fled religious persecution in their native Iran seeking refugee status. They have been in transit for over 9 months. The Executive Order prevents them from traveling to the United States to join with their family and find safety. They lack money for basic survival; their family in the United States is very*

*poor and cannot provide for all their needs. The mother is very ill with diabetes, high blood pressure, and a severe anxiety disorder, and her son cannot attend school.*

*Another client of JFS SV has a son currently in Turkey who fled Iran (of which he is a citizen) when he converted from Islam to Christianity. He risks death if he returns to Iran, but his life in Turkey is extremely difficult. He is not permitted to work under Turkish law and he lacks money for basic survival. He suffers from asthma and is unable to seek medical assistance because he lacks health insurance. He has also lost almost all of his teeth because he cannot afford to go to the dentist for care. His family in the United States is economically disadvantaged and only able to send a small amount each month to ensure his continued survival. His family worries constantly about his wellbeing.*

These refugees cannot go back to their home countries for fear of further persecution, and now America is turning its back on them in their time of urgent need. We can and must fulfill our responsibility as a country to provide protection to refugees.

As Elie Wiesel said, “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.” JFS SV is proud to take this stand promoting justice, as our Jewish values command us to do.

In the next few weeks, I look forward to sharing more updates about this litigation as it proceeds through the courts.

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To Learn More:

Frequently Asked Questions About This Litigation ([link to FAQ's](#))

Read the press release ([link to press release](#))

Read the Executive Order ([link to EO](#))

[Support our important work](#) protecting refugees