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***STATEMENT ON EXECUTIVE ORDER “PROTECTING THE NATION...”***

WASHINGTON, DC – On January 27, President Donald J. Trump signed an Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States,” that suspends refugee admissions for 120 days, bars all Syrian refugees indefinitely, dramatically reduces the number of refugees allowed to enter the United States in 2017, and severely restricts immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries, including Iraq. **While it may have been President Trump’s intent to make America safer, his Executive Order does precisely the opposite.**

Unlawfully discriminating against immigrants on the basis of religion or country-of-origin and shutting the door on refugees – who already undergo “extreme” vetting – does not make America safe. It damages our national security by attacking our long-standing values, undermining and endangering our allies, and delivering a propaganda victory to ISIS and other terrorists. By betraying what makes America exceptional and respected around the world, we undermine our moral leadership.

**For Iraq – one of America’s strongest allies in the fight against ISIS – and for individual friends and colleagues there, the repercussions of the EO have been swift and severe.** Our Iraq-based colleagues who bravely carry out our *Soccer Salam* program – which delivers lifesaving aid to displaced Iraqis fleeing ISIS – are among those affected by the travel ban, along with America’s Iraqi allies who have honorably served alongside U.S. troops. The EO also has repercussions for EPIC’s friends and supporters across the United States (including past and present board members and employees of Iraqi origin) and undermines the ability of U.S. agencies, partners, and charities to respond to Iraq’s humanitarian needs at a time when over 3 million Iraqis are displaced, and millions more are in need of emergency assistance.

To truly eliminate the threat of ISIS and enhance our national security, **President Trump and his White House staff should work to facilitate – not obstruct – a stronger U.S.-led effort to drive ISIS out of Iraq and support Iraq’s recovery and stabilization;** this effort would prevent violent extremism from ever taking root or finding sanctuary in Iraq again.

As so many of our Iraqi friends know firsthand, the actions of the U.S. government do not always reflect the popular will of the American people. EPIC will fight this Executive Order – and continue to fight it – until it is either rescinded or fundamentally changed to uphold, rather than attack, our long-standing values, and to serve the best interests of the United States of America and our friends and allies around the world.

*The Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that works one-on-one with young people and civil society leaders in Iraq to carry out effective programs, monitor the crisis and inform public policy, enhance understanding of Iraq’s story, and advocate for peaceful change. EPIC was founded in 1998 by veterans of the Gulf War who believe that youth empowerment and a human security approach can make Iraq safe and prosperous again. Visit our website at [www.epic-usa.org](http://www.epic-usa.org)*

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