

San Diego Refugee Forum

Minutes

Tuesday, January 16, 2018 – 10:30 am to 12:00 pm
IRC – 5348 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92105

1. Call to order at 10:30 am

Present: Abdi Abdillahi, Awichu Akwaya, Sheila Mitra-Sarkar, Elizabeth Lou, Rita Shamoan, Mejgan Afshan, Sarah Carreira, Rebecca Miranda, Hafifa Siddiq, Patricia Ramirez, Maria Kelly Hersley, Anne Hoiberg, Ann Vilmeney, Michele Silverthorn, Lejla Voloder, William Amove, Rebecca Paida, Madelyne Wagner, David Huchez, Lagina Scott, Christine Murto, Angel Carretero, Ali Alsaadi, Deona Dorsey, Juan Estrada, Kristin Lowther, Brittney Willis, Emily Brown, David Robertson, Kim Thornes, Jane Joey, Madelyne Kristoff, Brandon Scott, Lucia Aceredo, Andrea Frost, Justin Mudekereza, Ricardo Moran, Mary Vilgera, Joel Day, Dilkhwaz Ahmed, Joshua Zhang, Eric Miller

2. Executive Committee Announcements and Participate Introductions

- a. Rebecca Paida acknowledged the group of attendees for their work with refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants and being a champion and lending their voices to some of the most vulnerable populations.
- b. Rebecca Paida also acknowledged the group of delegates from MENA (Middle East/North Africa Region) that were in attendance.
 - i. The group is visiting the United States via a Department of State sponsored program for human and civil rights advocacy and awareness.
- c. Membership and Financials
 - i. Membership forms have been distributed to all participants at the meeting. Membership is good for one calendar year.
 - ii. Membership dues have increased to \$35 for individual/ECBO members and \$70 for organizations.
- d. Refugee Forum Officers Rebecca Paida (Chair), Mejgan Afshan (Vice Chair) and Abdi Abdillahi (ex-offio) were in attendance.

3. Task Force Updates

- a. **Advocacy Task Force:** The Advocacy Task Force will meet on February 13th at 12 PM. This year they are hoping to host a screening of the new Ai Weiwei documentary Human Flow.
- b. **Asylee/Asylum Seeker Task Force:** *On hiatus – if you have any interest in joining the Asylum Seeker Task Force please contact Rebecca Paida or Mejgan Afshan.*
- c. **Domestic Violence Task Force:** No update
- d. **Employment Task Force:** The Employment Task Force will meet on January 22nd at 3:30 PM at San Diego Metro Career Centers. Participants will get a tour of the facility and the opportunity to learn about the resources that are available. The Employment Task Force plans on hosting a job fair on March 16th.
- e. **Health Task Force:** The Health Task Force will meet on Tuesday, February 13, 2018 at Molina Healthcare.
- f. **World Refugee Day:** The World Refugee Day Task Force will meet in the next few weeks to begin planning for the World Refugee Day Event in June.

4. Resettlement Agencies (formerly VOLAGs) Arrival Data and Updates

- a. **Alliance for African Assistance:** *No representative present.*
- b. **Catholic Charities:** Catholic Charities had 5 arrivals from Afghanistan and 5 arrivals from Haiti. They anticipate 11 arrivals for the month of January.
- c. **International Rescue Committee:** *No representative present.*
- d. **Jewish Family Services:** *No representative present.*

5. County Agencies and Committees

- a. **County (Abdi Abdillahi):**

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- i. The County of San Diego had 52 arrivals for the month of December, which is a particularly low arrival number for the county (39 Afghan, 1 Cuban, 3 Haitian, 8 Iraqi, and 1 Mexican).
 - ii. The total number of arrivals for San Diego County for the federal fiscal year (October 2017-December 2017) is 251 (71% Afghan, 10% Iraqi, 7% Haitian and 13% other).
 - b. **State Advisory Committee (Mohammed Tuama and Kathi Anderson):** No representative present.
 - c. **Refugee Health (Christine Murto):** The County Refugee Health program is looking to develop a policy brief on migrant health and ways public health can ensure health of our immigrant populations in San Diego County in light of recent immigration policy changes. The project is in partnership with Public Health Alliance, a collaboration of public health agencies in Southern California. If you have any contribution on how migrant and refugee health in San Diego may be influenced by immigration policy, please contact Christine Murto at Christine.Murto@sdcounty.ca.gov
6. *Focus Presentation: A Qualitative Assessment of the Psychological Well Being of Asylum Seekers Prior to their Multi-Modal Journey to the United States presented by Dr. Sheila Mitra-Sarkar, Ph.D*
- a. Presentation available at sdrefugeeforum.org
7. *Spotlight Presentation: Basis International University presented by William Amake, Chancellor*
- a. Presentation available at sdrefugeeforum.org
8. *Community Updates:*
- a. Welcoming San Diego Initiative
 - i. The Welcoming San Diego Initiative website will go live later today – welcomingsd.org
 - ii. The City of San Diego will be hosting a Kickoff Summit on February 2, 2018. This is an all-day and free event to craft San Diego's strategic plan on refugee and immigrant integration. For more information and to register, please go to: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/welcoming-san-diego-kickoff-summit-integrating-new-americans-tickets-41351245689>
 - b. United Women of East Africa will be participating in the annual Love Your Heart event on February 14, 2018.
 - c. The Women's March is this Saturday, January 20th from 10 AM to 1 PM at the Waterfront Park.

Adjournment: 12:00 pm

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at the International Rescue Committee.