**Minutes of the San Diego Refugee Forum Meeting**

**Date**: Tuesday, November 17, 2020

**Location**: Zoom meeting

**Time**: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Attendees:**

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| Aaron Menz, SD County Epidemiology Services  Abdi Abdillahi, SD County Refugee Coordinator  Afrah Abdulkader, IRC Survivor Advocate  Alexis Burnstan, UCSD TASET project  Ann Vilmenay, COSD-HHSA-BHS-AOA  Awichu Akwanya, United Women of East Africa  Bob Walsh, SDRF Vice Chair  Carol Crisp, PCG  Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative  Case Myers, One Digital World  Chris Williams, Catholic Charities  Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl  Cyrus Weigand, Alliance for African Assistance  Dilkhwaz Ahmed, License to Freedom  Elizabeth Jackson, A Better Life Together  Frantz St. Phat, The Voice of Refugees  Giselle Barajas, Jewish Family Service  Hassan A, Somali Family Service  Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl | Jane Register, World Relief SoCal  Jessica Hernandez, East Region Adult Education  Jessica Mier, Off. of Congresswoman Susan Davis  Kim Thomas  Lauren Kocher, CA Refugee Progams Bureau  Lilian Matingkwony, SAY San Diego  Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services  Mejgan Afshan, Borderlands for Equity  Melissa Casanova, First 5 First Steps, Home Start  Mohammed Tuama, SDRF Chair  Monica Melgoza, SD County Off. Refugee Coord.  Nadia Moshirian Binderup, Sheriff’s Department  Nao Kabashima, Karen Organization of San Diego  Officer Nabizadeh, SDPD Community Relations  Ross Fackrell, SDRF Treasurer, IRC San Diego  Shlyn Guarian, COSD Child Welfare Services  Vernita Gutierrez, Planned Parenthood Pacific SW  Yasmeen Obeid, Majdal Center |

**1.** **Welcome and Introductions**: Bob Walsh, Vice Chair

**2.** **Task Force Updates**

Domestic Violence – Dilkhwaz Ahmed of License to Freedom reported that no meetings have been held during the Covid crisis. Employment, Advocacy, Health, Asylum Seekers - no updates were given.

**3.** **Membership and Financials**: Ross Fackrell, Treasurer

30 total members wrapping up FY2020. A new membership form with 2021 info will be uploaded to the Forum website in December. Membership dues for 2021 can be paid after 1/1/21; online payments are strongly preferred, though traditional check payments can be sent (expect processing delay due to office closures).

**4.** **Resettlement Update**: Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

For the 2019-2020 FFY that has just ended (October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020), San Diego County resettled a total of 771. These include refugees, SIVs, Trafficking, Secondary Immigration, Asylees, and Cuban/Haitians. The top three are: Afghanistan 40%, Haiti 38%, Iraq 7%, with Other 16%. Nationally, out of the 18,000 refugees the president established last year for FFY 2019-2020, only 11,814 have been resettled as of September 30, 2020. This was due to the COVID-19 flight restrictions that was in place and for some other reasons.

For the current 2020-2021 FFY, San Diego County resettled a total of 20 for the month of October 2020, 5 Afghans and 15 Haitians.

Nationally: There was only 1 refugee resettled for the month of October 2020, and 445 SIVs. The top three SIVs recipients are: California with 163, Texas 110, and WA 44. For the 2020-2021 FFY, the president determined the CAP to be 15,000. This is 3,000 less than what the CAP was for 2019-2020 FFY. The expectation is that the new Biden administration will change that figure and has already hinted the CAP to be around 125,000. However, it will be a while before large numbers come through.

San Diego resettlement agencies:

* Alliance for African Assistance – Not expecting any refugees
* Catholic Charities – November: 1 walk-in Afghan family of 4; Haitians still coming in slowly
* IRC – October: 0 arrivals; November 10 arrivals; December: 5 arrivals
* Jewish Family Services – October: 1 Afghan SIV family of 5; November: 2 Iraqi refugee families

**5.** **SDRF Election:** Bob Walsh, Vice Chair; Monica Melgoza, Nominating Committee

Voting ended with several members who the Committee had not been able to contact submitting votes. Three positions are being filled: Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer. Bob Walsh has one more year of service and will fill the Secretary position next year.

Bob and Abdi explained that, according to Forum procedures, candidates run for office in general, not for a specific office. The candidate receiving the most votes is offered the Chair position, the candidate with the second-most votes the Vice-Chair position, and the candidate with the third-most votes the remaining position. However, if the top vote-getter does not want to be the Chair, the three elected candidates can decide among themselves who will take which position. Officers hold their positions for two years.

Vote totals for the five candidates:

Awichu Akwanya 29 votes

Ross Fackrell 27 votes

Mejgan Afshan 26 votes

Rashid Essa 22 votes

Kimberly Keen 7 votes

The top three vote getters were asked to have a conversation and confirm position assignments. The Executive Team intends to send out an email on 11/20 announcing the new officers and their positions.

The current set of officers:

* Mohammed Tuama, Chair (2 years)
* Bob Walsh, Vice Chair (1 year)
* Ross Fackrell (2 years)

were thanked for their service. They will assist the new officers in the transition.

\*\*NOTE\*\*

As of 11/20, the three new officer positions were decided as follows:

Awichu Akwanya Chair

Ross Fackrell Vice Chair

Mejgan Afshan Treasurer

**6. Community Announcements**

- Cyrus Weigand, Alliance for African Assistance: AAA has a program to assist refugees with their utility bills. Contact Cyrus at cyrus@alliance-for-africa.org

- Aaron Menz, SD County Epidemiology and Immunization Services: It’s time for everyone to get a flu shot. Check out the website www.San Diego county.gov/iz. The website has updates with vaccine locations, faqs, resources and materials in several languages, and a flu vs COVID chart.

- Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl.: Survivors is still operating and serving clients, though numbers have dropped. They are also working with UNHCR in Tijuana. ccarney@notorture.org, 619.917.6003

- Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services: They are operating a program Out And About for youth, collaborating with Outdoor Outreach. ljasso@sdyouthservices.org

- Mejgan Afshan, Borderlands for Equity: There have been incidents of harassment by white supremacists in El Cajon related to the election. More such activity may be happening in the coming months. Contact Mejgan to report incidents to her organization for tracking and follo-up with law enforcement. mejgan.afshan@gmail.com, (619) 867-7514

- Dilkhwdaz Ahmed, License to Freedom: There has been a high incidence of domestic violence during the pandemic. LTF is still providing services to clients, coordinating with the San Diego Refugee Community Coalition.

- Afrah Abdulkader, Survivor Advocate, IRC: IRC is working remotely, their Safety and Wellness Unit and Survivors of Crime. IRC been sharing resources on COVID updates, resources, food distributions stations, mental health, employment, rent assistance and many other info to all our clients and other community members through our weekly newsletter, meetings, and announcements. We collaborate with many agencies such as SD County where we receive solid updated resources. Also, I am a board member of the Community Fighting COVID a collaboration between SD County and SDSU where we hired health workers tracers speaking Arabic, Tagalog, Spanish, and also to work with African American community. For programs operating during the holidays, let her know of any programs donating toys, etc. afrah.abdulkader@rescue.org

- Awichu Akwanya, United Women of East Africa: We work with women and youth. We do catering too that is income for the ladies. aawichu@uweast.org 619-278-9545

- Mellissa Casanova, Home Start: First 5 First Steps home visiting program for pregnant women and mothers with children younger than 2 years of age. English, Spanish, Arabic, Chaldean are the languages we have for our home visiting program. mcasanova@home-start.org 619 402 0278

- Nadia Moshirian Binderup, Sheriff’s Department, Community Relations Director. They are trying to stay aware of any dangerous activity, watchful of public safety. They have a document on how to report hate crimes, English and Spanish only, working on other languages. Thanks to IRC for assisting with community collaboration. Nadia.binderup@sdsheriff.org

- Nao Kabashima, Karen Organization of San Diego: They are open, still helping remotely. Working with other agencies to provide services. Karen New Year celebration will be virtual this year, January 15, 2021. nao@karensandiego.org. 619-719-0567

- Vernita Gutierrez, Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest: Last month they launched an online sex education program, 9 courses, for students and parents. Sex Ed To Go: Free sexual health education resources for educators, parents and students. https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-pacific-southwest/campaigns/sex-ed-to-go vgutierrez@planned.org, (619) 881-4607

- Yasmeen Obeid, Coordinator, Majdal Center: They have started a partnership with community workshops in Arabic, and will start a student tutoring program. Reach out if in need of Arabic support. majdalcenter@gmail.com, 619-335-0893

- Shlyn Guarian, COSD Child Welfare Services: They’ve been getting help form License to Freedom, Catholic Charities. Reaching out to collaborate to come out to do trainings to community families, helping them line up community resources. Shlyn.Guarian@sdcounty.ca.gov, 619.917.5481

- Mohammed Tuama, Newcomers Support and Development: He has not found much Arabic language support on the Covid crisis. They do Arabic translation. They have been putting out Arabic resources on their site, 24,000 Arab viewers. They share resources on Covid, small business, support of newcomers, partnered with city of El Cajon for a town hall. They host specialists on Covid, 40,000 views. newcomersd.org Mohammed also requests that the Forum establish a legal assistance task force for conflicts within the refugee community.

**Adjournment**: Mohammed Tuama, Chair 12:05

**Next Meeting**: January 19, 2021

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Vice Chair