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March 6, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Attorney General and Secretary of Homeland Security, we are concerned about weaknesses in our immigration system that pose a risk to our Nation's security. Our concerns are particularly acute as we evaluate certain countries that are unable or unwilling to provide the United States with adequate information about their nationals, as well as individuals from nations that have been designated as "state sponsors of terrorism," and with which we have no significant diplomatic presence. We therefore urge you to take measures—pursuant to your inherent authority under the Constitution and as authorized by Congress—to diminish those risks by directing a temporary pause in entry from these countries.

Since the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, a substantial majority of those convicted in U.S. courts for international terrorism-related activities were foreign-born. Moreover, senior government officials have expressed concerns that foreign nationals who seek to aid, support, or commit acts of terrorism will seek to infiltrate the United States through our immigration benefits programs such as the Refugee Admissions Program. At present, more than 300 persons who came to the United States as refugees are under FBI investigation for potential terrorism-related activities. There are currently approximately 1000 pending domestic terrorism-related investigations, and it is believed that a majority of those subjects are inspired, at least in part, by ISIS.

We expend enormous manpower and resources investigating terrorism-related activities of foreign nationals admitted to the United States, as well as extremists within the United States inspired by terrorist organizations such as ISIS and core al-Qa'ida, which have strongholds in certain areas of these countries, and which use widespread and broad-based social-media strategies for recruiting. Preventing and responding to terrorism at home encompasses thousands of national security personnel across the federal government—in effect, we admit individuals at risk for terrorism and then try to identify and stop them from carrying out their terrorist

activities. This places unacceptable stress on our law enforcement resources, which could be better spent on other efforts to weaken those terrorist organizations, protect the homeland, and safeguard our national security.

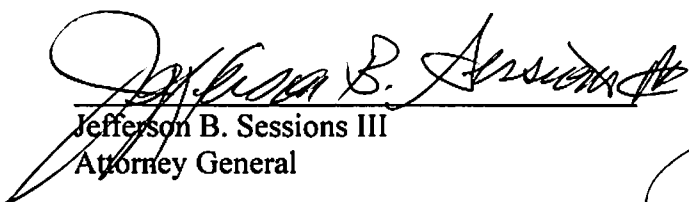
Although the convictions and investigations involve individuals from countries around the world, we have particular concerns about our current screening and vetting processes for nationals of certain countries that are either state sponsors of terrorism, or that have active conflict zones in which the central government has lost control of territory to terrorists or terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, core al-Qa'ida, and their regional affiliates. This increases the risk that nationals of these countries (or those purporting to be nationals) may be members of terrorist or extremist groups, or may have been radicalized by hostile governments or terrorist organizations.

This danger to our national security is heightened by the fact that effective collaboration on counter-terrorism, including in the visa issuance and refugee vetting processes, requires adequate information sharing. To the extent a government is a state sponsor of terrorism and hostile to the United States, or lacks control over territory, its passport issuances, and thus over the records of its citizens in such territory, there is a greater risk that the United States will not have access to necessary records to be able to verify important information about individuals seeking to travel from that country to the United States. Furthermore, based on DHS data and the experience of its operators, nationals from these countries are more likely to overstay their visas and are harder to remove to their home countries.

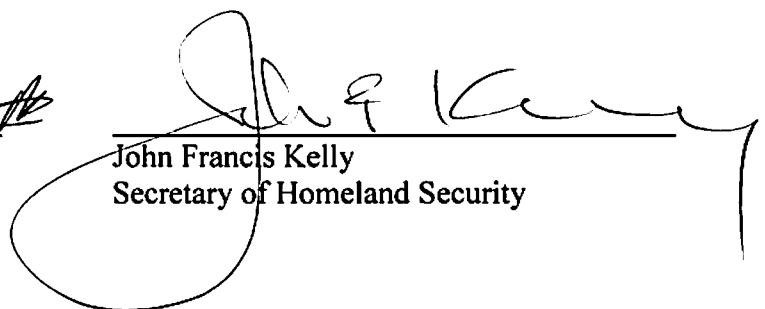
The Executive Branch, under your leadership, should complete a thorough and fresh review of the particular risks to our Nation's security from our immigration system. Therefore, we believe that it is imperative that we have a temporary pause on the entry of nationals from certain countries to allow this review to take place—a temporary pause that will immediately diminish the risk we face from application of our current vetting and screening programs for individuals seeking entry to the United States from these countries.

We stand prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to address this situation.

Sincerely,



Jefferson B. Sessions III
Attorney General



John Francis Kelly
Secretary of Homeland Security