

Policy Matters: Executive Order Establishing a War Refugee Board

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EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 9417

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ESTABLISHING A WAR REFUGEE BOARD

WHEREAS it is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war;

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, as President of the United States and as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, and in order to effectuate with all possible speed the rescue and relief of such victims of enemy oppression, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. There is established in the Executive Office of the President a War Refugee Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board). The Board shall consist of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War. The Board may request the heads of other agencies or departments to participate in its deliberations whenever matters specially affecting such agencies or departments are under consideration.

2. The Board shall be charged with the responsibility for seeing that the policy of the Government, as stated in the Preamble, is carried out. The functions of the Board shall include without limitation the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for (a) the rescue, transportation, maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and (b) the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims. To this end the Board, through appropriate channels, shall take the necessary steps to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments and obtain their participation in the execution of such plans and programs.

3. It shall be the duty of the State, Treasury and War Departments, within their respective spheres, to execute at the request of the Board, the plans and programs so developed and the measures so inaugurated. It shall be the duty of the heads of all agencies and departments to supply or obtain for the Board such information and to extend to the Board such supplies, shipping and other specified assistance and facilities as the Board may require in carrying out the provisions of this Order. The State Department shall appoint special attaches with diplomatic status, on the recommendation of the Board, to be stationed abroad in places where it is likely that assistance can be rendered to war refugees, the duties and responsibilities of such attaches to be defined by the Board in consultation with the State Department.

4. The Board and the State, Treasury and War Departments are authorized to accept the services or contributions of any private persons, private organizations, State agencies, or agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of this Order. The Board shall cooperate with all existing and future international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement.

5. To the extent possible the Board shall utilize the personnel, supplies, facilities and services of the State, Treasury and War Departments. In addition the Board, within the limits of funds which may be made available, may employ necessary personnel without regard for the Civil Service laws and regulations and the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, and make provisions for supplies, facilities and services necessary to discharge its responsibilities. The Board shall appoint an Executive Director who shall serve as its principal executive officer. It shall be the duty of the Executive Director to arrange for the prompt execution of the plans and programs developed and the measures inaugurated by the Board, to supervise the activities of the special attaches and to submit frequent reports to the Board on the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees.

6. The Board shall be directly responsible to the President in carrying out the policy of this Government, as stated in the Preamble, and the Board shall report to him at frequent intervals concerning the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees and shall make such recommendations as the Board may deem appropriate for further action to overcome any difficulties encountered in the rescue and relief of war refugees.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE  
January 22, 1944.

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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CAUTION: The following MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release is for ALL REGULAR EDITIONS of MORNING NEWSPAPERS of Sunday, January twenty-third, 1944.

Release by radio commentators, newscasters, etc., NOT EARLIER THAN 9:00 P.M., E.W.T., Saturday, January 22, 1944.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

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The President today, by Executive Order, set up a War Refugee Board consisting of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War, to take action for the immediate rescue from the Nazis of as many as possible of the persecuted minorities of Europe -- racial, religious or political -- all civilian victims of enemy savagery.

The Executive Order declares that "it is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war".

The Board is charged with direct responsibility to the President in seeing that the announced policy is carried out. The President indicated that while he would look directly to the Board for the successful execution of this policy, the Board, of course, would cooperate fully with the Intergovernmental Committee, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and other interested international organizations.

The President stated that he expected to obtain the cooperation of all members of the United Nations and other foreign governments in carrying out this difficult but important task. He stated that the existing facilities of the State, Treasury and War Departments would be employed to aid Axis victims to the fullest extent possible. He stressed that it was urgent that action be taken at once to forestall the plan of the Nazis to exterminate all the Jews and other persecuted minorities in Europe.

It will be the duty of a full-time Executive Director of the Board to arrange for the prompt execution of the plans and programs developed and the measures inaugurated by the Board.

The Executive Order follows:

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1. There is established in the Executive Office of the President a War Refugee Board (hereinafter referred to as the Board). The Board shall consist of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War. The Board may request the heads of other agencies or departments to participate in its deliberations whenever matters specially affecting such agencies or departments are under consideration.
2. The Board shall be charged with the responsibility for seeing that the policy of the Government, as stated in the Preamble, is carried out. The functions of the Board shall include without limitation the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for (a) the rescue, transportation, maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and (b) the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims. To this end the Board, through appropriate channels, shall take the necessary steps to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments and obtain their participation in the execution of such plans and programs.
3. It shall be the duty of the State, Treasury and War Departments, within their respective spheres, to execute at the request of the Board, the plans and programs so developed and the measures so inaugurated. It shall be the duty of the heads of all agencies and departments to supply or obtain for the Board such information and to extend to the Board such supplies, shipping and other specified assistance and facilities as the Board may require in carrying out the provisions of this Order. The State Department shall appoint special attaches with diplomatic status, on the recommendation of the Board, to be stationed abroad in places where it is likely that assistance can be rendered to war refugees, the duties and responsibilities of such attaches to be defined by the Board in consultation with the State Department.
4. The Board and the State, Treasury and War Departments are authorized to accept the services or contributions of any private persons, private organizations, State agencies, or agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of this Order. The Board shall cooperate with all existing and future international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement.

5. To the extent possible the Board shall utilize the personnel, supplies, facilities and services of the State, Treasury and War Departments. In addition the Board, within the limits of funds which may be made available, may employ necessary personnel without regard for the Civil Service laws and regulations and the Classification Act of 1923, as amended, and make provisions for supplies, facilities and services necessary to discharge its responsibilities. The Board shall appoint an Executive Director who shall serve as its principal executive officer. It shall be the duty of the Executive Director to arrange for the prompt execution of the plans and programs developed and the measures inaugurated by the Board, to supervise the activities of the special attaches and to submit frequent reports to the Board on the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees.

6. The Board shall be directly responsible to the President in carrying out the policy of this Government, as stated in the Preamble, and the Board shall report to him at frequent intervals concerning the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees and shall make such recommendations as the Board may deem appropriate for further action to overcome any difficulties encountered in the rescue and relief of war refugees.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
January 22, 1944.

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

I have been deeply concerned for a long time with the cowardly persecution of the Jews by the Nazis. I fear that as the war approaches the end Hitler will redouble his efforts to exterminate the remaining Jews in Europe. It is imperative, therefore, that we take vigorous action at once. In view of the growing criticism of our efforts to date, I think it is also important that we let our own people know of our determination to do all that is within our power to save these people.

I have asked the Director of the Budget to prepare for my signature an Executive Order carrying out the proposed course of action outlined in a memorandum which I am enclosing. In order to save time, I would appreciate it if you would take up with me directly any questions which you may have concerning this program. Harold Smith can take care of the details of the Order and can move forward in the meantime with the task of clearing it with the other interested departments and agencies.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUDGET:

I have decided to take the following steps at once:

1. Publicly declare that it is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue those victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and to afford such victims all possible aid and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war.

2. Establish a War Refugee Board consisting of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the ~~Foreign Economic Administrator~~. This Board shall be charged with full responsibility for seeing that this announced policy is carried out with the utmost vigor and directness.

3. Have the Board designate an executive director of capacity, energy, and resourcefulness, known to be sympathetic to war refugees and deeply interested in their rescue and relief.

4. Arrange for the State Department to appoint special attaches with diplomatic status to be selected by the Board and to be stationed at points where they can render the most effective aid to war refugees.

5. Arrange to make available to the Board, <sup>immediately</sup> out of the President's Emergency Fund ~~one~~ million dollars.

I want an Executive Order accomplishing these purposes ready for my signature as soon as possible. <sup>as I</sup> attach a draft Order which will give you the general <sup>best</sup> ideas I have in mind. <sup>as to the</sup> <sup>Responsible to</sup>

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*of the same, in person, full*

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in carrying out the provisions of this Order.

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4. To the extent possible the Board shall utilize the personnel, supplies, facilities and services of the State Department, Treasury Department and Foreign Economic Administration, as well as such other personnel, supplies, facilities, and services as may be made available by other departments and agencies of the Government. In addition the Board, within the limits of funds which may be made available, may employ necessary personnel and make provisions for supplies, facilities and services necessary to discharge its responsibilities. The Board shall appoint an Executive Director who shall serve as its principal executive officer. It shall be the duty of the Executive Director to arrange for the prompt execution of the plans and programs developed and the measures inaugurated by the Board, to supervise the activities of the special attaches and to submit frequent reports to the Board on the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees.

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THE WHITE HOUSE,