

This pilgrimage and Eid is about sacrifice, almsgiving, and equality. Thousands of Muslims around the world travel to Mecca and Medina, leaving behind all that is valuable and dressed in a simple white cloth, all standing shoulder-to-shoulder and equal before God. This experience signifies that no single person is more worthy than another. It is reminiscent of the principle upon which this country is built: “e pluribus unum”—out of many, one. Regardless of race, religion, and gender we are reminded that our rich diversity is what strengthens our Nation.

Eid is also a time to give food, shelter, and health services to those in need. Muslim Americans have always joined with other faith communities and entities to assist those suffering from hunger and conflict here at home and abroad. Once again, at a time of such desperate need, Muslim American organizations are among those at the forefront of attending to victims in this refugee crisis.

May the prayers for peace from those on pilgrimage as well as those of all beliefs be heard and answered. For all those celebrating, *Eid Mubarak* from my family to yours.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Unit Citation to Members of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps September 24, 2015

Last year, as Ebola spread in West Africa, I said that fighting this disease was more than a national security priority, it was a critical example of American leadership. These professionals from the U.S. Public Health Service were some of the Americans on the frontlines of that effort. And before you came in, I had the opportunity to award them with the Presidential Unit Citation.

Now, understand that this corps of public health professionals are on the front lines all the time. And when you think of some of the most difficult, challenging tragedies or public health challenges that we’ve experienced over the last several decades, these are the folks who’ve been there from the start. After 9/11, after hurricanes, after Sandy Hook, after Deepwater Horizon or the Boston Marathon bombing, they come in to help support, advise, and oftentimes provide direct treatment in some of the most difficult situations imaginable.

But this was a unique deployment by this unit. Like so many others, they signed up to leave their loved ones and head straight into the heart of the Ebola epidemic, understanding that there were significant risks that they themselves would be confronting as a consequence of helping others. Thanks to their skill, thanks to their courage and their dedication,

they not only helped to keep the American people safe, they led a global response. It was not until they arrived that other countries were confident that they could send their own health workers in, because they knew that this outstanding group of individuals and health professionals were there on the job and would provide them the kind of support that could make their own efforts safe.

We’re not yet at absolute zero when it comes to this Ebola epidemic that took place in West Africa, but we have turned the tide on the epidemic. The cases we now see are much more sporadic, and we have, as a consequence of the work that these individuals started, started to build the kind of public health infrastructure in many of these countries that they can prevent an outbreak in the future.

I want to thank Secretary Sylvia Burwell, Surgeon General Murthy, because they were critical in helping to move us to the next phase of the fight: transitioning from a military response to a civilian response. We’re also now better prepared for disease outbreaks like Ebola here at home. Our health care professionals are better trained. Our screening processes have improved. Our hospitals are more capable with new protocols and new protective gear. None of this progress could have been made without America’s public servants like these.

The troops who supported the global response, the CDC experts tracking cases, the HHS scientists testing vaccines, the USAID workers and PHS doctors and nurses who served directly in the field—all of these Americans, not just the ones in this room, but thousands of the Public Health Service individuals, the thousands more who helped support them, they made this progress possible.

His Holiness Pope Francis spoke today in Congress about the need for us to apply the Golden Rule and to have a sense of morality and common humanity at the center of our Government. Well, these are individuals who represent that spirit of that kind of selflessness that ends up helping the most vulnerable, the poorest, the people who are least capable of fending for themselves against invisible killers

like Ebola. So I'm extraordinarily grateful to all of them.

It is a useful occasion for me to note that organizations like the Public Health Service's Commissioned Corps need support from Congress in order to continue to excel at their mission. And so I hope that Congress chooses to keep our Government open and operating so that heroes like this can keep working to extinguish disease and ignite hope wherever it is needed most. That's what America does. That's what these individuals represent. That's why I could not be more incredibly proud of them, but of the American people who support them.

Thank you. Good job. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:46 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Memorandum on Establishment of the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable

September 24, 2015

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Establishment of the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to increase the availability of meaningful access to justice for individuals and families and thereby improve the outcomes of an array of Federal programs, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. This Nation was founded in part on the promise of justice for all. Equal access to justice helps individuals and families receive health services, housing, education, and employment; enhances family stability and public safety; and secures the public's faith in the American justice system. Equal access to justice also advances the missions of an array of Federal programs, particularly those designed to lift Americans out of poverty or to keep them securely in the middle class. But gaps in the availability of legal aid—including legal representation, advice, community education,

and self-help and technology tools—for America's poor and middle class threaten to undermine the promise of justice for all and constitute a crisis worthy of action by the Federal Government.

The majority of Americans who come to court do so without legal aid. They may be left by their economic circumstances to face life-altering events—such as losing a home or custody of children, or escaping domestic violence or elder abuse—on their own. More than 50 million Americans qualify for federally funded civil legal aid, but over half of those who seek assistance are turned away from legal aid organizations, which lack the funds and staff to meet the demand.

When people come into contact with or leave the criminal justice system, they are likely to face a range of legal issues. A victim of abuse may need a protective order, or a formerly incarcerated individual may need a driver's license reinstated in order to get a job. Access to legal aid can help put people on a path to self-sufficiency, lead to better outcomes in the civil and criminal justice systems, and