Dear Governor Lehman:

A desperately critical situation has arisen in unoccupied France, which affects vitally the fate of all refugees in that region. Acting under German orders, the Vichy Government is rounding up thousands of foreign refugees and handing them over to the Germans on the pretext of returning them to their homelands. In reality, one of two fates awaits them—a German work-camp, or a concentration center in Poland. Our best information indicates that nearly 4,000 men, women, and children have been deported in the past month under this cruel order, and that an additional 25,000 are already under arrest, awaiting transportation to the border. Children under five years of age are left behind, but their parents and older brothers and sisters are being taken.

Of all the crimes against humanity committed by the Nazi Government, this is one of the most terrible. Many of these men and women have led hunted lives for years, or endured the desolation of French internment camps, rather than return to the Nazi-dominated lands from which they fled. They have been existing on the outermost fringe of the democratic world, preserving the tattered shreds of freedom in the passionate hope of the ultimate victory of the democratic cause. Now they are being handed over to enslavement and death.

I believe that we must make immediate representations on their behalf to our own Government, which still maintains formal relations with Vichy, urging the State Department to enter the strongest possible protest against this terrible mass betrayal. Vigorous and persistent pressure from the United States cannot be ignored.

I am, therefore, writing to a few of the leading liberal spirits in this country, asking them to communicate immediately with Secretary Hull. Will you telegraph the Secretary, urging him to instruct our representatives at Vichy to enter a vigorous protest against this frightful new evidence of Hitler-Laval collaboration? Will you further urge him to instruct our consuls in France to do everything in their power to assist and support all American agencies trying to help refugees in these critical weeks, and to do their utmost to protect especially those hundreds of refugees who already hold United States immigration visas?

Please send me a copy of your telegram to the Secretary, and inform me of any supplementary steps you may take. Will you indicate whether I may use your name in a release. I believe you feel as strongly as I do that we cannot allow this terrible crime against freedom-loving men and women to continue without protest. I urge you to act immediately.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Frank Kingdom