



The Future of Refugee Welcome in the United States



*5-year-old Jori, a refugee from Syria, starting her first week of kindergarten in Dallas, Texas
Credit: Andrew Oberstadt/IRC*

WHAT'S AT STAKE: our founding values, national security, and economic strength

The case for admitting at least 75,000 refugees in 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most powerful country on earth should not be afraid of the world's most vulnerable. The global community is facing the largest refugee crisis on record, with 22.5 million lives in limbo worldwide. The U.S. has long been a leader in offering safe haven to those fleeing violence, tyranny, and persecution—safely resettling over 3 million refugees since the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act. This legacy is core to American values and has enriched our economy. Resettlement is also a strategic necessity: to maintain stability in critical regions, support American allies, and support the success of U.S. military operations overseas.

Now, as the Trump Administration considers its refugee policy for 2018, American values, tradition, and interests are at stake. In the wake of Executive Order 13769, which capped refugee admissions at 50,000 in 2017 and disrupted thousands of lives with a 120-day pause of the resettlement program, the Administration has signaled an intent to set a refugee admissions ceiling far lower—*the lowest ever on record*. No U.S. president, not even in the wake of 9/11, has so turned their back on refugees, and therefore on American democratic values, humanitarian tradition, and global leadership.

Setting a refugee admissions ceiling of no less than 75,000 refugees in 2018 is both the right thing and the smart thing to do. Here's why:

- 1. Refugee resettlement is a humanitarian imperative at a time when needs have never been greater.**

 - Of the world's 22.5 million refugees, 1.2 million face extreme vulnerabilities or family reunification needs for which they are in *critical need* of resettlement in 2018.
 - Resettlement is a lifeline available only to these most at-risk refugees, whose safety cannot be assured no matter how much aid is provided overseas.
 - 72 percent of refugees that came to the U.S. in 2016 are women and children. Refugees are widows, orphans, victims of rape, torture, religious persecution, political oppression, and terror.
 - Resettled refugees also include those whose lives are at risk because they served alongside American troops, diplomats, and intelligence services including as interpreters.
- 2. Refugee resettlement is a strong bipartisan tradition that reflects American values.**

 - Presidents of both parties have ensured that America leads in times of crisis: The average annual refugee ceiling since the 1980 Refugee Act exceeds 95,000.
 - Successive presidents have used refugee admissions to support those who seek liberty and reject ideologies antithetical to American values. Republicans and Democrats have raised refugee admissions for populations fleeing communist uprisings, religious persecution and tyranny in countries like Vietnam, Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Myanmar, and Iran.
 - Today, the U.S. must provide unwavering welcome for those fleeing terrorist ideologies: People who put their lives at risk by refusing to be conscripted into terrorist groups, militias or state security forces persecuting fellow citizens; families who refused to live under terrorist regimes; and individuals who spoke out against extremism.

The U.S. retreat from resettlement has had grave global consequences, with refugee admissions plummeting nearly 60 percent as of June 2017.

The average annual refugee admissions ceiling since 1980 exceeds 95,000.

3. Refugee resettlement advances American strategic interests abroad.

- Welcoming refugees offers critical support to our allies, hosting more than their fair share of refugees. Just 10 countries, with 2.5 percent of global GDP, host over half of all refugees; the 6 wealthiest countries host fewer than 9 percent.
- In Jordan, a critical ally amidst the turmoil in the Middle East, 1 of every 11 residents is a refugee. In 2016, over 19,300 refugees in Jordan were resettled to other countries, providing tangible relief to an overburdened ally.
- The U.S. refusal to do its fair share risks a global retreat from humanitarian obligations, with countries closing their borders, shutting down camps and forcing refugees to return to unsafe and unstable regions. These actions have catastrophic consequences for regional stability and security.
- U.S. leadership on resettlement encourages others to do more. Last year, anchored by U.S. commitments, wealthy nations agreed to double resettlement slots globally. Conversely, the U.S. retreat from resettlement in 2017 has prompted a nearly 60 percent decline in global resettlement as of June 2017.
- Safe haven for those who assist U.S. troops, diplomats and intelligence services helps ensure that U.S. agencies receive the support they need, and that U.S. troops are safe.

The U.S. commitment to the men and women who assisted U.S. troops is at risk: 60,000 U.S.-affiliated Iraqis await resettlement. If the U.S. accepts these refugees at the current rate, it would take at least 17 years to resettle the 60,000 already waiting. This is manifestly contrary to the U.S. military's commitment to leave no one behind.

4. Refugee resettlement is secure.

- The integrity of security procedures in the U.S. resettlement program is evidenced by the fact that of the over 3 million refugees admitted to the U.S. since 1980, not a single refugee has committed a lethal terrorist attack on U.S. soil.
- Every refugee is hand-selected for admission by the Department of Homeland Security after extensive security checks by all relevant U.S. intelligence, law enforcement and security agencies. U.S. agencies admit no one about whom there are doubts.
- U.S. resettlement is planned and predictable. It is incomparable to large-scale, spontaneous arrivals of refugees and migrants to Europe.

Refugee admissions are the most secure of immigration pathways, with every refugee hand selected for resettlement by security agencies in a process that can take up to three years.

5. Refugees are welcomed by American communities and contribute positively to the economy.

- Over 350 communities across the country welcome refugees with open arms. Thousands of volunteers from faith and community groups help refugees adapt to the American way of life.
- Private support for refugees dwarfs public financing. One study found that 61 percent of the costs of resettlement are borne by private contributions.
- Refugees are entrepreneurs, consumers, and taxpayers, contributing to economic growth and creating jobs. Entrepreneurship among refugees is nearly 50 percent higher than among U.S.-born populations.

Refugees pay on average \$21,000 more in taxes than they receive in government benefits.

An admissions level of at least 75,000 is a critical signal to the world that the United States remains a safe haven for those fleeing persecution, terror and ideologies antithetical to American democratic values. Anything less would be to turn our backs on the United States' humanitarian tradition and global leadership.

THE FUTURE OF REFUGEE WELCOME IN THE UNITED STATES

What's at stake: our founding values, national security, and economic strength

The United States has long been a global leader in refugee resettlement, offering safe haven to those fleeing persecution and oppressive ideologies. In 2016 the U.S. welcomed more than half of all refugees resettled worldwide, providing a new start to nearly 85,000 people.

The U.S. should set a refugee admissions ceiling of at least 75,000 refugees in 2018.

As mandated by the 1980 Refugee Act, the president sets the annual refugee admissions ceiling, known as the Presidential Determination, before the start of the new fiscal year (October 1st) and following a required consultation with Congress. This process is typically a transparent and consultative process that is led by the State Department, and includes the full range of national security agencies as well as the humanitarian community. Traditionally, the U.S. admissions ceiling has been set commensurate with global humanitarian need, capacity of the resettlement program, and U.S. strategic interests. The 1980 Refugee Act stipulates that the president must address these factors in a Report to Congress when setting the admissions ceiling. As stated by law, the ceiling shall be “justified by humanitarian concern or otherwise in national interest.”¹

This year, as the Administration nears its decision-making deadline, American values, tradition, and interests are in jeopardy. Global humanitarian need, historic precedent, and strategic interests all necessitate a refugee admissions ceiling well above 75,000 refugees. But the Trump Administration has signaled a refugee admissions ceiling far lower—the lowest since the passage of the 1980 Refugee Act.

An admissions ceiling of no less than 75,000 for 2018 is a pragmatic policy recommendation. It takes into consideration the significant disruptions to resettlement operations over the past 9 months resulting from the president's Executive Order² and subsequent legal challenges. This recommendation

What's required by law in the Report to Congress?

- Description of the nature of the refugee situation.
- The number of refugees to be admitted, by region.
- Analysis of the impact of resettlement on U.S. foreign policy interests.
- Estimated costs of resettlement.
- Analysis of the anticipated impact of refugee admissions on the U.S.
- A description of what other countries are doing to resettle refugees.

¹ U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212).

² White House. “Executive Order 13769: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” January 2017.

is also consistent with congressional appropriations over the past several years, and would not require additional resources beyond existing levels. While falling short of global humanitarian needs, a ceiling of no less than 75,000 would embody U.S. leadership, preserve American interests, and save lives.

The consequences—measured in human lives, moral standing, global leadership, and security threats—of anything less would be devastating. This policy brief provides the data, analysis, and historical perspective that should be considered in establishing the U.S. refugee admissions ceiling for 2018.

Five core arguments support an admissions ceiling of no fewer than 75,000 refugees in 2018:

1. Refugee resettlement is a humanitarian imperative at a time when needs have never been greater.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented global humanitarian crisis. All around the world, people are fleeing war-torn countries at record levels—22.5 million, the highest number of refugees ever recorded. This crisis shows no signs of abating as the civil war in Syria, the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the conflict-induced famines in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, and northeast Nigeria continue to deteriorate.

These upheavals share a common element: the shocking disregard for the safety and wellbeing of ordinary civilians—men, women, and children—as despotic regimes, extremist groups, terrorists, and other perpetrators of violence pursue their aims at any cost. Violence against civilians, destruction of schools and hospitals, denial of food and medicine, and besiegement of whole communities are now weapons of war. As a result, individuals and families worldwide are abandoning their homes at the rate of 20 people every minute. Refugees now spend an average of 10 years away from their homes; for those displaced more than five years, the average soars to an astonishing 21 years.³ Yet, in the face of this tremendous need, fewer than 1 percent of refugees have access to resettlement.

1.2 million refugees will be in critical need of resettlement in 2018,⁴ yet in 2016 just over 189,000 refugees worldwide were welcomed by resettlement countries.⁵

Refugee resettlement is a lifesaving solution available only to those whose protection needs or special situations cannot be resolved in their current host country, regardless of how much humanitarian aid is provided locally. Refugees in need of resettlement typically have certain safety, medical, or family reunification concerns that cannot be addressed in the region, making resettlement to a third country their only option.

What is refugee resettlement?

- Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from a host country where they sought safety (typically a country neighboring their own) to a third country that has agreed to admit them, usually on a permanent basis.
- Resettlement is a solution only for the most at-risk refugees whose needs cannot be met in the region.

³ World Bank. Policy Research Working Paper Series. "How Many Years Have Refugees Been in Exile?" September 2016. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/1813-9450-7810>

⁴ UNHCR. "Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018." <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/resettlement/593a88f27/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2018.html>

⁵ UNHCR. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016." <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

Resettled refugees are selected because they are most at risk.

For example:

- Afghan and Iraqi men and women targeted by terrorists because they assisted U.S. troops.
- A refugee family with a young child with severe autism.
- An orphaned refugee child reunified with an adult sibling.
- A family with a daughter who was raped and needs special psychosocial care.
- A refugee father in need of lifesaving surgery.
- A refugee seriously threatened due to his or her LGBT status.

In 2016, over 72 percent of refugees resettled to the U.S. were women and children.⁶ Many are single mothers, survivors of torture, or in need of urgent medical treatment. Women and girls are subject to heinous forms of persecution in wartime (such as gang rape) and suffer severe trauma that cannot be addressed in camps or difficult urban environments. Survivors of rape are often ostracized in their host countries, making them priorities for resettlement. For these women, resettlement is the only solution. No amount of aid could guarantee their safety and psychosocial recovery.

Humanitarian aid is not a substitute for refugee resettlement. Together humanitarian aid and resettlement are critical components of a comprehensive humanitarian response; it is not an either-or. Whereas refugee resettlement offers a life-saving solution for those who cannot be helped in the region, humanitarian aid

offers temporary assistance for the majority who will never be resettled. For most refugees in situations of protracted displacement, the reality is that "temporary" assistance can last for decades. In contrast, refugee resettlement is a solution with one-time, up-front costs. There is no evidence to suggest that long-term aid is more cost-effective than resettlement.

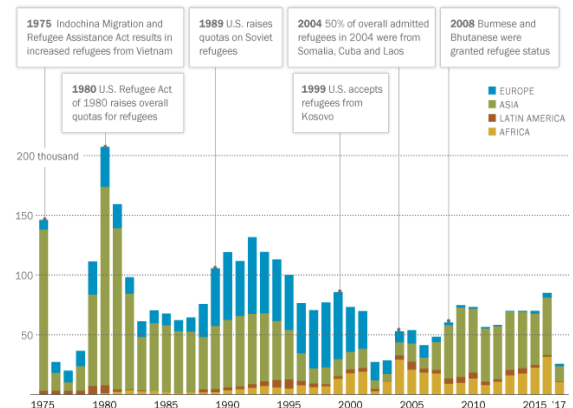
Retreating from resettlement as a critical component of a larger humanitarian strategy would be the equivalent of eliminating the hospital emergency room in order to fund only primary care clinics. No matter how well-funded primary care is, an ER is still necessary for emergency situations.

2. A refugee admissions ceiling below 75,000 would be an unprecedented departure from U.S. history and American values, as demonstrated under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Throughout the twentieth century, the U.S. stepped up as a leader in times of crisis. Doing so was—and continues to be—both a moral necessity and strategic imperative. The U.S. offered refuge to displaced Europeans after World War II, to Hungarians after the 1956 uprising, to Indochinese in the 1970s, and to those fleeing the former Soviet Union and the conflict in Kosovo in the 1990s. Retreating from our historic leadership role on resettlement sends the signal that America is no longer a beacon of hope for those fleeing the very terror and ideologies that the U.S. rejects.

The shifting origins of refugees to the U.S. over time

Number of refugees admitted to the U.S., by region of origin of principal applicant and fiscal year



Source: Refugee Processing Center, 1975-2016.
 Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Does not include refugees admitted under the Private Sector Initiative. Europe includes former Soviet Union states. Asia includes Middle Eastern and North African countries. Africa includes sub-Saharan Africa, but also Sudan and South Sudan. Latin America includes Caribbean. Data for fiscal 2017 are through Dec. 31, 2016; fiscal 2017 began Oct. 1, 2016.

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⁶ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. "Fact Sheet: Fiscal Year 2016 Refugee Admissions." January 2017. <https://www.state.gov/i/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266365.htm>

Historically, the average annual refugee admissions ceiling since 1980 has exceeded 95,000.

Even in the face of the worst terrorist attack on our nation's soil on Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush set an admissions ceiling of 70,000 refugees and continued to do so in the years that followed. In fact, in the past two decades the refugee admissions ceiling has never fallen below 70,000.

Yet despite overwhelming humanitarian need and historic precedent, the United States is retreating from its longstanding role as the global humanitarian leader.

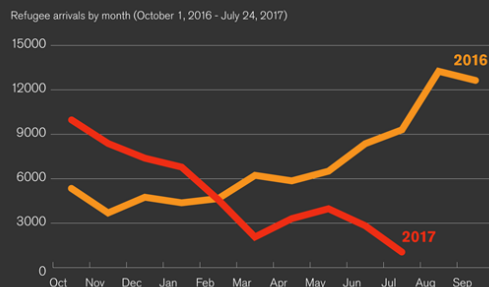
In the six months following the president's January 2017 Executive Order (which lowered the existing annual refugee admissions level from 110,000 to 50,000 and halted the resettlement program for 120 days), the U.S. has seen a 53 percent drop in overall refugee admissions and an 80 percent drop in Syrian refugee admissions.

Strong bipartisan record on refugee admissions

HIGHEST ANNUAL ADMISSIONS CEILINGS SET BY PAST PRESIDENTS

Ronald Reagan	140,000
George H. W. Bush	142,000
Bill Clinton	121,000
George W. Bush	80,000
Barack Obama	110,000

Refugee admissions plummet in 2017



Source: U.S. Department of State
Refugee ceiling FY16: 85,000 / arrivals: 84,994 | FY17: 110,000 / arrivals: 50,343

The U.S. retreat from its leadership on resettlement has global consequences, with worldwide resettlement admissions plummeting by 59 percent as of June 1.⁷ Current U.S. resettlement policies are a historic departure from America's humanitarian leadership, values, and longstanding bipartisan consensus on refugee admissions. Republicans as well as Democrats have recognized refugee resettlement as both the right and the smart thing to do.

Consistent with the 1980 Refugee Act, refugee resettlement signals support for those who seek liberty and reject ideologies antithetical to American values. Just as the U.S. offered refuge to those fleeing communist regimes during the Cold War, so too must the U.S. open its arms to those standing

against terrorist ideologies, many of whom refused to join or be conscripted into terrorist groups, militias, and state security forces persecuting fellow citizens.

For example, men, women, and children living under ISIS occupation face harrowing terror on a daily basis. Organizations have documented ISIS' practice of forcing young women into marriage with militants, who treat them as sex slaves. Men face forced conscription and residents are targeted for violence if they attempt to flee the community. Those accused of denouncing ISIS are brutally executed: Militants sew dissenters' mouths shut and cage them in town squares where they slowly starve to death in front of their families and communities. **The men and women who have risked their lives—and the lives of their children—to cross the border and reject terror must receive our unwavering support and welcome.** Closing the door on these refugees—and worse, labeling them potential terrorists when they themselves have experienced unconscionable terror—emboldens the anti-American narratives of the extremists they have fled.

⁷ Human Rights First. "U.S. leadership forsaken: six months of the Trump refugee bans." July 2017. <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/us-leadership-forsaken-six-months-trump-refugee-bans>

The U.S. is now facing an unprecedented moment in history where President Reagan's vision of this nation as a beacon of hope and a land of welcome for those fleeing tyranny and oppression is in jeopardy.

"After 200 years, two centuries, [the Statue of Liberty] still stands strong and true on the granite ridge, and her glow has held steady no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the Pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home."
—President Ronald Reagan

Source: "Farewell Address to the Nation." January 11, 1999.

3. Admitting fewer than 75,000 refugees in 2018 jeopardizes American strategic interests.

Refugee resettlement is a strategic imperative that promotes regional stability and global security in some of the most challenging parts of the world. It alleviates pressures on overburdened allies, helps ensure that the international community maintains its humanitarian obligations, and encourages the sharing of responsibility for refugee resettlement. It also spurs cooperation with our military, diplomatic and intelligence operations, and sends an unequivocal message to terrorist groups like ISIS that the U.S. remains a leading force for liberty in the world. As national security leaders serving under both Republican and Democratic administrations have attested, the national security and foreign policy risks associated with *not* resettling refugees are great.⁸ U.S. commitment to refugee resettlement demonstrates the nation's support for those who reject terrorist ideologies.

- Welcoming refugees offers critical support to our allies. Resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees provides tangible support to allies who are currently hosting far more refugees than their fair share. **In 2016, developing and middle-income countries hosted 84 percent of the world's refugees under the U.N. Refugee Agency's mandate; by contrast, the six wealthiest countries hosted fewer than 9 percent of refugees.**⁹

Ten countries, accounting for just 2.5 percent of global GDP, host over half of all refugees. In countries like Jordan, a lynchpin for stability in a region reeling from the consequences of the Syrian civil war and ISIS onslaught, 1 of every 11 residents is a refugee.¹⁰ In 2016, it was estimated to cost Jordan \$2.7 billion to host its refugee population, equivalent to over one quarter of the government's annual revenues and 7 percent of Jordan's GDP.¹¹ The strain on infrastructure, social services (schools in Jordan have moved to double shifts to accommodate refugee children), water supplies, and the economy have, in the words of King Abdullah, pushed the country

"It's ironic, to say the least, that today some politicians are seeking to shut out refugees in the name of national security. The global refugee crisis is straining the resources and infrastructures of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, which are hosting the vast majority of Syrian refugees. By doing more to host and help refugees, the United States would safeguard the stability of these nations and thereby advance its own national security interests."

—Gen. Michael Hayden (retired four-star general and former director of the NSA and CIA) and Adm. James Stavridis, (retired U.S. Navy admiral)

Source: "U.S. Must Lead on Refugee Crisis." *Miami Herald*. July 8, 2016.

⁸ "Statement of Principles on America's Commitment to Refugees." June 2016.

<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/STATEMENT-ON-AMERICAS-COMMITMENT-TO-REFUGEES.pdf>

⁹ UNHCR. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016."

¹⁰ UNHCR. "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016."

¹¹ Middle East Institute. "Jordan looks to donors to ease Syrian refugee burden." 2016. <https://www.mei.edu/content/news/jordan-looks-donors-ease-syria-refugee-burden>

The World Bank. "Data: Jordan." <https://data.worldbank.org/country/jordan>

to the “boiling point.”¹² In 2016, over 19,300 refugees, mostly Syrian, were resettled from Jordan to other countries like the U.S. and Canada, including widowed mothers, orphaned children, and severe medical cases—populations whom Jordan would be challenged to support. In doing so, the U.S. and other resettlement countries have provided critical relief to a strategic ally whose generosity has mitigated the regional and global consequences of the Syrian crisis.

- Welcoming refugees provides the U.S. with critical leverage when asking countries to uphold humanitarian obligations. In areas engulfed by conflict, it is critical for neighboring countries to: 1) allow those fleeing violence to seek refuge within their borders; 2) provide for the safety, security, and well-being of the refugees they host; and 3) refrain from forcibly returning refugees to unsafe and unstable areas.

Upholding our own humanitarian obligations, including refugee resettlement, helps ensure that other countries uphold theirs.

Retreat from these obligations can have dramatic consequences for regional stability, prolonging and sometimes reigniting conflict. For example, the current civil war in Burundi can be traced in part to the forced return of thousands of Burundian refugees from Tanzania in 2006 and 2007.¹³ Those refugees returned to homes overtaken by rival factions and they were once again driven away by brutal violence, rekindling a conflict that continues to this day.¹⁴ Today, the risk is in the premature return of Syrian, Afghan, and Somali refugees, which could further destabilize fragile and conflict-ridden countries. Over 600,000 Afghan refugees were induced to return from Pakistan in 2016—a six-fold increase from 2015—as Afghanistan struggles with growing insecurity, instability, and gains by terrorist organizations. Such premature returns come at a time when growing instability in Afghanistan has required an increase in U.S. troop levels to reverse gains by terrorist organizations. Last year, the Kenyan government attempted unilaterally to close the Dadaab refugee camp, a move that would have forced the return of a quarter-million people to a highly unstable Somalia. In a statement justifying the attempted closure, Kenya’s interior minister pointed to developed nations’ failure to do their fair share: “...rich, prosperous and democratic countries are turning away refugees from Syria, one of the worst war zones since World War Two.”¹⁵ Major refugee-hosting nations are increasingly asking why they should continue hosting large refugee populations if wealthy nations will not. The consequences for global security and stability are great.

- When the U.S. leads, others follow. Welcoming refugees promotes global responsibility-sharing for refugees. **Last year, anchored by U.S. commitments, wealthy nations agreed to double the number of refugee admissions.** Many countries opened their doors to refugees for the first time. In addition to the U.S., a record 36 other countries participated in refugee resettlement in 2016.¹⁶ In return, developing and middle-income host nations agreed to increase refugee access to jobs, education, and social integration, making it easier for them to rebuild their lives in countries of first refuge and discouraging onward migration. Conversely, the impact of the U.S. retreat from resettlement was felt around the world. With the Trump administration’s retreat from U.S. resettlement commitments, other countries are also renegeing on their commitments. Overall refugee

¹² BBC News. “Syria Conflict: Jordanians ‘at boiling point’ over refugees.” February 2, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35462698>

¹³ Human Rights Watch. “Tanzania/Uganda: Prevent Forced Return of Refugees.” January 19, 2009. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/19/tanzania/uganda-prevent-forced-return-refugees>

¹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. “Global Conflict Tracker: Political Crisis in Burundi.” Updated August 31, 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/political-crisis-in-burundi>

¹⁵ Henry Wilkins. “We Spoke to Residents Facing Eviction as Kenya Prepares to Close the World’s Largest Refugee Camp.” Vice News. May 23, 2016. <https://news.vice.com/article/we-spoke-to-residents-facing-eviction-as-kenya-prepares-to-close-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp>

¹⁶ UNHCR. “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016.”

resettlement figures for 2017 are predicted to decline by a minimum 30 percent as compared to the previous year.¹⁷

- Welcoming refugees ensures cooperation with U.S. armed forces and other U.S. entities. Maintaining resettlement commitments is critical to the effectiveness of military, diplomatic, and intelligence operations abroad and the safety of U.S. troops.¹⁸ Tens of thousands of Iraqi and Afghan nationals have put their lives on the line to support intelligence gathering, operations planning, and other essential services, especially translation. These individuals and their families are often targeted by terrorist groups as a direct result of their cooperation with Americans. Resettlement is instrumental in ensuring their safety—a testament to the U.S. military's commitment to leave no one behind. As stated by a bipartisan group of former national security officials: "The United States must not abandon those targeted by terrorists because they worked with American troops and diplomats in support of our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan."¹⁹

In recognition of the tremendous risks placed upon Iraqi and Afghan men and women as a direct result of their support of the U.S. military, Congress has passed bipartisan legislation to create pathways to come to the U.S. through a program known as the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). The Iraqi SIV program is no longer accepting new applications, but fortunately—and less well-known—Congress has also established a bipartisan-supported direct access program (P-2) for "U.S.-affiliated Iraqis." U.S.-affiliated Iraqis under the P-2 program are those persons (and their families) who worked for military and nonmilitary U.S. entities, including the State Department and intelligence services.²⁰ Importantly, and unlike the SIV program, Iraqi P-2s come through the U.S. resettlement program and therefore fall under the U.S. refugee admissions ceiling. As of July 2017, there were nearly 60,000 U.S.-affiliated Iraqis awaiting processing for resettlement through the P-2 program.²¹ If the U.S. continues to accept Iraqi P-2s at the Trump Administration's current rate, it would take at least 17 years just to resettle those 60,000 already awaiting resettlement.

Refugee resettlement ensures that American partnerships in Afghanistan and Iraq remain strong, that the U.S. can complete its missions, and that those whose lives are now at risk due to their direct support to the United States have safe haven.

¹⁷ Human Rights First. "U.S. Leadership Forsaken." July 2017.

¹⁸ Statement of National Security leaders supporting refugee resettlement. December 2015. <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/FormerNatSecOfficialsLetterRefugees.pdf>

¹⁹ "Statement of Principles on America's Commitment to Refugees." June 2016.

²⁰ Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. "Refugee Resettlement Program for Iraqis with U.S. affiliation." Updated February 1, 2016.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/580e4274e58c624696efadc6/t/583ceb2fb8a79bc809b1cc32/1480387375511/Direct+Access+Program+for+U.S.-Affiliated+Iraqis.pdf>

²¹ Human Rights First. "President Trump's Executive Order on Refugees Harms our Iraqi Allies." July 18, 2017.

<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/resource/president-trumps-executive-order-refugees-harms-our-iraqi-allies>

4. Refugee resettlement to the U.S. is secure.

In 2016, the U.S. safely resettled nearly 85,000 refugees and was on track to resettle 110,000 refugees in 2017. The resettlement program is sophisticated and secure and there is no more demanding legal immigration path into the United States.

The U.S. resettlement program is planned and predictable, and therefore wholly incomparable to the large-scale and spontaneous arrivals of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to Europe.

The Administration has every reason to be confident in the competency of the world's most sophisticated intelligence and security agencies. Refugee security vetting is so rigorous that the process can take up to three years. Every refugee is hand-selected for admission by the Department of Homeland Security after in-person interviews and extensive security checks conducted in partnership with all relevant U.S. intelligence, law enforcement, and security agencies. For decades, our agencies have successfully validated the histories and identities of refugees whose documentation has been lost or left behind during flight. Before a refugee is approved for resettlement, intelligence and security agencies establish confidence in who refugees are through sophisticated biometrics, forensic document testing, and interagency checks. **If there is any doubt at any point throughout the process, the refugee in question is not admitted to the U.S.**

Refugees are hand selected by the world's most sophisticated intelligence and security agencies.



Who qualifies as a refugee?

An individual must:

- Be outside his or her country of origin or habitual residence.
- Prove that he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution that is tied to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.
- Demonstrate that the home country from which he or she fled is unable or unwilling to protect him or her, often because the country's own government perpetrates or tolerates the persecution or violence.

To ensure public health, refugees are also medically screened, using protocols established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), before they are allowed to travel.

To qualify as a refugee, an individual must meet a high burden of proof. They must provide credible reasons why they would face persecution if returned to their home countries, and that those countries could not or would not protect them. **Refugees by definition are civilians who have not engaged in violence, persecution of others, or serious criminality.** Persons believed to have engaged in war crimes, crimes against humanity, or serious non-political crimes are disqualified from refugee status. People migrating in search of a better life and economic opportunity do not qualify for refugee status; it is a status reserved only for those that have fled conflict in search of safety or otherwise fear persecution.

Once an individual has qualified for refugee status, he or she still must meet additional requirements in order to be considered for resettlement processing. If found to be in need of resettlement, a refugee does not have the choice of which country he or she is resettled to.

The chance of being killed by a refugee in America is

1 in 3.64 billion

The odds of being struck by lightning are far greater at

1 in 1.08 million

Source: CATO Institute and National Weather Service

Critics of resettlement who acknowledge the thoroughness of existing security screening processes argue that refugees, or their children, may radicalize once in the United States. In fact, homegrown radicalization isn't and never was a refugee issue. The profiles of individuals who radicalize vary widely, and there is no clear path to radicalization. Nor is there evidence to suggest that refugees or children of refugees are particularly or disproportionately prone to radicalization as compared to any other category of American citizen or resident.²²

The integrity of security procedures in the U.S. resettlement program is evidenced by the fact that, while over 3 million refugees have been admitted to the U.S. since 1980, not a single refugee has committed a lethal terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

5. Resettled refugees contribute positively to the economy and their communities.

The U.S. refugee resettlement program is designed to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency quickly. In 2016, over 80 percent of refugees in the International Rescue Committee's early employment program were economically self-sufficient within six months. This statistic should not come as a surprise: Refugees who have spent years unable to provide for their families, are eager to work. While refugee resettlement is first and foremost a humanitarian program, its long-term economic benefits are undeniable.

Refugees who enter the country between the ages of 18 and 45 pay on average \$21,000 more in taxes to all levels of government than they receive in benefits over a twenty year period.²³

According to research by the bipartisan group New American Economy (NAE), the U.S. was home to more than 180,000 refugee entrepreneurs, 13 percent of the refugee population in 2015. By comparison, only 9 percent of the U.S.-born population are entrepreneurs.²⁴ Refugees have gone on to become CEOs, ambassadors, and influential economic and

Do refugees integrate and adapt in America?

- Both before and after their arrival to their new American homes, refugees receive cultural orientation. Cultural orientation helps refugees to better understand expectations and adapt to life in the United States.
- Refugees begin to learn English their first day in America. Almost 54 percent of refugees speak English "very well or exclusively" within 5 to 16 years of arrival to the U.S. (NAE).
- Refugees put down roots—55 percent are homeowners (NAE).
- Refugees become Americans—73 percent become naturalized citizens and vote at slightly higher rates than the U.S.-born population (NAE).
- The U.S. refugee integration framework is the gold standard around the world and is being looked to by Europe as a model.

²² New America. "Terrorism in America after 9/11." <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/>

²³ William Evans and Daniel Fitzgerald. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series. "The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS." June 2017. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w2349>

²⁴ New American Economy. "From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America." June 19, 2017. <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/from-struggle-to-resilience-the-economic-impact-of-refugees-in-america/>

cultural figures, including Google co-founder Sergey Brin. The notable list also includes former CEO of Intel Andrew Grove, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former CEO of Coca-Cola Roberto Goizueta, and painter Marc Chagall.

Resettled refugees are filling critical gaps in the work force and revitalizing cities and rural communities across the U.S., filling empty jobs in industries such as hospitality, food service, and meat-packing. Demographics indicate at least one reason why this is so: 77 percent of refugees are working age compared to just 50 percent of U.S.-born Americans.²⁵ A recent report released by the office of the chief economist of the Department of State found “robust causal evidence that there is no adverse long-run impact of refugees on the U.S. labor market.”²⁶

Hundreds of employers around the country work closely with resettlement agencies to hire refugees because they are reliable and hard-working. Businesses, faith institutions, and local communities are deeply invested in welcoming refugees and helping them achieve success in their new homes. Private sources contribute \$1 for every \$2 in government grants for early employment programs. More broadly, private contributions—including volunteer hours, in-kind donations and private philanthropic support—account for a significant share of the costs of integrating refugees. One study estimates that 61 percent of the costs were provided by private funds, while only 39 percent were covered by federal dollars.²⁷

In addition to long-term gains refugees provide to the economy, the resettlement program itself benefits entire communities, bringing millions of federal dollars to states, creating jobs and stimulating local business. Moreover, federal funds for resettlement enable health screenings, pay for health coverage, and assist schools with refugee students as they adjust to a new culture.

Do local U.S. communities welcome refugees?

- Over 350 communities across the country welcome refugees with open arms.
- Refugee resettlement exists today because community members, faith congregations, and local officials support it.
- The number of Americans volunteering to assist refugees far exceeds the number of refugees actually arriving.
- Thousands of volunteers and members of congregations donate tens of thousands of hours and in-kind contributions to refugees, lowering costs to the federal government.

The most powerful country on earth should not be afraid of the world's most vulnerable. Setting a Presidential Determination of no less than 75,000 refugees is both the right thing and the smart thing to do. At a moment when the international community faces the largest refugee crisis on record, the need for high levels of refugee resettlement is great. Continuing to be a land of refuge and a place of freedom for those fleeing tyranny is not simply consistent with core American values and tradition, but also a strategic necessity. Resettlement contributes to stability in critical regions, supports our allies, and keeps our troops

²⁵ New American Economy. “From Struggle to Resilience.” June 2017.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Chief Economist. Working Paper 2017-04. “The Labor Market Impact of Refugees: Evidence from the U.S. Resettlement Program.” August 2017. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/273699.pdf>

²⁷ Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service. “The Real Cost of Welcome: A financial analysis of local refugee reception.” 2009. <http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/RPTREALCOSTWELCOME.pdf>

safe. An admissions level at 75,000 or above will allow the U.S. to achieve these national interests and maintain its position of leadership on the world stage, while also enabling Americans and welcoming communities to continue to benefit from the talents of carefully screened refugees and their families. Anything less would be turning our backs on American democratic values, humanitarian tradition, and global leadership.

International Rescue Committee
1730 M Street NW, Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
202 822 0043