



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

2016 Year End Report

In the U.S. and Around the World, We're Helping Refugees Find Safety, Welcome, and Freedom ...

Around the world, and right here at home, HIAS works to protect the most vulnerable refugees, helping them build new lives and reuniting them with their families in safety and freedom. We also advocate for the protection of refugees and assure that displaced people are treated with the dignity they deserve.

The worldwide need for our services continues to grow:

- By the end of 2016, with your help, HIAS will have supported over 350,000 refugees and asylum seekers globally, and resettled 4,200 refugees in the U.S. That's a nearly 20% increase year-to-year over 2015. The need is great, and together we're responding.

We fulfill our mission to welcome the stranger and protect the refugee in a number of important ways around the world and across the U.S. ...



Protecting Refugees Around the World

Increasing the Resilience of Refugees in Africa, the Middle East, and Eurasia, HIAS' global work targets refugees in Chad, Kenya, Uganda, Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama, Austria, Israel, Ukraine, and Greece.



When most people think of protecting refugees, they think primarily of addressing immediate needs: getting refugees into safe places and providing food and shelter.

Meeting needs like these is critical. But it only begins to describe the range of services that are needed — and that HIAS offers — to help people who are displaced, who are vulnerable, who are traumatized — and who, in many cases, are children.

In short, a refugee camp or shelter must do much more than shelter. It must provide a safe environment in which vulnerable people can heal, stabilize, and begin to rebuild their lives.

Our International Efforts Have an Impact in Three Main Areas:

LEGAL SERVICES: In 1938, as the Nazis began the transition from discrimination to genocide, there was no concept of international protection for refugees. Today the U.S. and the international community recognize that refugees have rights, including preserving family unity in refuge and the rights to work, to medical attention, and for children to attend school.

At HIAS we are dedicated to ensuring that refugees know those rights and have access to legal aid; and that their host countries ensure refugees' security, safety and dignity.

TRAUMA COUNSELING: HIAS' programs help refugees address the fear, isolation, and depression that can result from forced flight, surviving or witnessing violence, loss or separation from family, and the daily stress of living on the margins of foreign cities or in refugee camps.

While all refugees are in need of psychological support, HIAS specializes in aiding the most vulnerable — those who might otherwise fall through the cracks — orphaned children, women and girls, minorities, the disabled, the elderly, survivors of torture, and others.

Providing such a pathway to healing is crucial if refugees are to establish new lives built on dignity and self-sufficiency. *Together, we work to prevent further exploitation, provide safe environments, offer individual and group counseling, and give hope and healing to those who have been through trauma.*

PROTECT

LIVELIHOODS: Because many refugees are away from their homes for long periods of time, their ability to become self-sufficient is crucial. This is not always easy, however, because skills and licenses are often not transferable. For these reasons, developing new livelihood skills can be one of the most effective ways for a refugee to regain dignity, heal from trauma, and integrate into the host community.

In 2016 HIAS expanded our global programs to help refugees identify opportunities for entrepreneurship, vocational training, and employment to help them regain control of their lives. Programs such as these are particularly important to refugee women who serve as heads of households in cultures where men have traditionally fulfilled this role. Other vulnerable populations we serve in this capacity include persons with disabilities, older and homebound individuals, at-risk youth, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.



Mamer (not her real name) was in her home in South Sudan one day when soldiers arrived.

They demanded to know where her husband was. When she wouldn't tell them they beat her with the butts of their guns, threatened to kill her, and hauled her off to jail. After five days of brutal torture and beatings she was finally freed and fled to Kenya. But how to support herself as a refugee in an unfamiliar country, with no job? HIAS helped provide the answer. Mamer took the financial assistance she received and started her own small business selling okra. Inspired by her own success she started another small business sewing designs on bedcovers. *Today she is financially independent, and even employs a family member. You have helped her not only to overcome her pain, but to build new opportunities in a new country!*

HIAS protects the most vulnerable refugees by helping them build new lives with their families in safety and freedom. Since our founding, we've helped more than 4.5 million refugees start new lives in new homelands.

Resettling Refugees

HIAS works to ensure America continues to be a safe and welcoming home to refugee families.



Most refugees dream of returning home, but due to the protracted nature of many conflicts, the majority never will. While many refugees rebuild their lives in their first country of asylum, some refugees simply cannot safely integrate into their first country of refuge. For them, the only way forward is resettlement in a third welcoming country, but the odds are not good. Only 1% of refugees will ever be able to avail themselves of this option — there are simply not enough resettlement slots available.

For the fortunate few who are recommended to the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, the process can be long and complex. Refugees undergo extensive security vetting by numerous law enforcement agencies, and only after these screenings are they brought to our shores.

Refugee resettlement lies at the heart of HIAS' work in the U.S., and we are the only Jewish organization designated by the federal government to undertake this humanitarian work. Our resettlement clients include some of the world's most vulnerable refugees, including:

- Women heads of households in cultures where men traditionally serve as protectors
- Orphaned and separated children who are vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation
- Persecuted LGBT people

Through partnerships with local agencies in 22 communities around the country, HIAS works to ensure that refugees are welcomed and provided the resources they need to integrate fully into American life. In addition to basics such as housing, access to medical care and schools for children, we help refugees adapt to American culture and find jobs that will enable them to survive and thrive in their new home. In the coming year, we will remind Americans that America has always been at our greatest when we have welcomed and protected refugees, and at our weakest when we have not.

As the oldest resettlement organization in the world, HIAS has seen time and again that when refugees are provided with a welcoming environment and adequate support, they can be tremendous assets to their neighborhoods and societies, boosting local economies, and contributing to the vibrancy of American culture. This is especially true in the U.S., where starting over offers not just safety but promise and opportunity.

RESETTLE

Advocating on Behalf of Refugees:

Primarily in the U.S., but also in countries around the world, HIAS works to raise awareness of — and resources for — refugee families in need.



Guided by our Jewish values and historical experiences of persecution and flight, HIAS strives to ensure the world never turns its back on those who have fled oppression, violence, or genocide. With your support, we advocate both internationally, and here in the U.S., for laws that protect the human rights of all refugees wherever they are.

This past year, refugee resettlement in the U.S. was scrutinized and challenged like never before. Some elected officials proposed policies to restrict, halt, and defund resettlement and asylum, exploiting public fears for political gain; thirty-one governors even called for a ban on refugee resettlement in their states.

At HIAS, we help educate and inform politicians and office holders, supporting those leaders who show compassion to our cause, and encouraging others to honor our nation's history as one that welcomes refugees. Over the past year, we have mobilized the Jewish community, helping them to raise their voices in support of refugees. Our National Letter in Support of Refugees, for example, was signed by over 1,000 rabbis, and was instrumental in helping defeat a bill that would have effectively shut down the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program.

We have grave concerns about the refugee-related policies of the incoming administration, and will continue to hold our government accountable, ensuring that America continues to set the example for other countries when it comes to protecting and welcoming refugees.

Here are the words of Senator Al Franken (D-MN) from September of this year:

"I just think that this is a matter of values when you come right down to it, and I think our country is enriched by refugees like my grandfather. I think we have to do a gut check here, and see who we are as a people. Are we a country that's just terrified ... or are we going to be a bigger people?"

Around the World and Across the U.S. — Together, We Can Make a Difference.

Since our founding 135 years ago, HIAS has helped more than 4.5 million refugees start new lives in new homelands. We do this in a manner consistent with our Jewish history and values. In fact, we are the only Jewish organization in the world helping refugees whoever they are, wherever they are.

You may find it hard to read tragic news articles about refugees today. At HIAS, we certainly do. You may even find it difficult to keep up hope when crises drag on for years with no end in sight. But we know that based on our values, and with ideals rooted in our own history, we have a responsibility to respond, and to do all we can to protect today's refugees.

We are working to strengthen the quality of life for people around the world, and when you support HIAS, you are helping to do this, too. Our programs rely on the generosity of friends like you to bring refugees the support, services and welcome they need to start a new life. *Thank you for your loyal support of our mission, and for your year-end donation.*



HIAS President Mark Hetfield with Syrian refugee Omar and his children, all now resettled in Toledo, Ohio.

A barber. A tailor. A carpenter.

Just a few of the newest residents of Toledo, Ohio — all Syrian refugees, resettled in recent months by HIAS and US Together, our partner in Toledo. All fled unimaginable destruction and chaos. Several were displaced multiple times before arriving in the United States. Most left from Homs in 2012, a city the Russians are now bombing. When asked why they fled, one refugee, shocked by the question, said simply, “Rockets, explosions, and death.” Despite all the horrors they’ve witnessed, these are the lucky ones. The ones who survived. Got out. Today, they are grateful to America for giving them a chance to start over. They are happy, hopeful, and like all parents, thankful that their children can now grow up in safety.



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