

Programming Content Resource for HIAS Refugee Shabbat March 4-5, 2022



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Introduction

Participation in Refugee Shabbat can be as multifaceted as you would like.

Whether you signed up to participate on behalf of your congregation, an organization, or as an individual, there are many options for how your Refugee Shabbat can take shape:

For congregations, you might consider including a liturgical reading on the theme of the refugee crisis in Shabbat services and/or dedicating a sermon or text study to the topic. If you have a relationship with a refugee, asylum seeker, or refugee agency professional in your local community, consider respectfully inviting that person to speak during services. You could also reach out to Refugee Congress (more information on page 6). In mid-February, HIAS will also provide a set of pre-recorded remarks from Senior Vice President for Programs, Raphael Marcus.

In addition, you might plan a Shabbat dinner program after Friday evening services or a Shabbat lunch program after Saturday morning services on Zoom – it could be a film or book discussion or an educational program about the various contours of the global refugee crisis. We also encourage you to invite your community to the HIAS-led event on Sunday, March 6th (more information on page 3).

In this document you will find useful resources for building out your participation in HIAS Refugee Shabbat, including:

- sermon talking points
- a selection of text studies to use during Torah study, Shabbat services, or as a stand-alone post-services program

We encourage you to think through which of these options would be the most appealing to you and/or your community.

For everyone – individuals and congregations alike, in this document, on pages 3-4, you will find a list of ideas for how anyone can take action on Refugee Shabbat.

Safety and Security

As you design your participation in Refugee Shabbat, HIAS would like to take this opportunity to remind you to incorporate safety and security management into your planning process. In this era of heightened antisemitic, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic violence, it is prudent to reflect on your community's approach to safety and security. We encourage you to consider which best practices are applicable to your congregation and facilities. [Secure Community Network](#) (SCN) is the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America working to strengthen safety and security at Jewish institutions around the country. Working in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, SCN has created and curated several useful resources: several are shared here for your consideration as you prepare for Refugee Shabbat.

[Cybersecurity resources](#)

[Facility Security Guidance](#)

[Low-Cost Security Measures for Jewish Facilities](#)

[Video Conference Best Practices](#)

[Active Shooter Attacks: Security Awareness for Soft Targets and Crowded Places](#)

[Mass Gatherings: Take Charge of Your Personal Safety](#)

COVID-19

As we are all so well aware, the Omicron variant is extremely transmissible and requires continued precaution. Please revisit the safety guidelines and COVID-19 resources available nationally and in your community for further reference on necessary adaptations for any Refugee Shabbat programming you undertake during the evolving pandemic.

Publicity and Social Media

HIAS Refugee Shabbat is an opportunity for the Jewish community to communicate our strong, shared support for refugees and asylum seekers. HIAS headquarters will be working to tell the story of the Jewish community's participation in Refugee Shabbat, and we hope that you will do so too by contacting local media about your programming, inviting local elected officials to attend and/or speak at your programs, and/or writing op-eds about your participation for local news outlets. Please also consider writing about your participation on social media and in your community's newsletter or bulletin. Suggested language and logos for this can be found [here](#).

HIAS-Led Events

This year, HIAS is leading one program during Refugee Shabbat! We hope you will join us.

On **Sunday, March 6th at 1:30pm ET**, join us for *Refugee Shabbat: Exploring Jewish Values in Action Across the Globe*, an international educational program on Zoom. On this call you will hear from HIAS

and JIAS leadership from the U.S., Canada, and Europe about the ways that the global Jewish community is rising to meet the challenges of this unprecedented moment in the refugee crisis by advocating for more humane asylum and refugee policies; through direct actions to support and sponsor refugee newcomers in their communities; and by tackling the ever-present shadow of xenophobia.

More information and a form to register can be found [here](#).

We invite you to consider weaving this program into your community's Refugee Shabbat plans. Please share the link and encourage people to attend!

Action Items for Everyone

Here is a list of 13 ways that anyone can take action for refugees and asylum seekers in the week leading up to and following Refugee Shabbat, as well as on the actual Shabbat itself.¹ If you are participating in Refugee Shabbat as a community, consider selecting one of the items on this list to encourage all community members to do in observance of Refugee Shabbat.

1. **Bless with Intention** – As you welcome Shabbat on March 4th (or the date of your choosing), use [this reading](#) before reciting Kiddush (the blessing over the Shabbat wine) to set an intention to act in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers around the globe.
2. **Volunteer** – There are countless ways to volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers today. If you are located near one of [HIAS' local resettlement partners](#), many need individuals to help as skilled volunteers as well as congregations and organizations to assist in welcoming new neighbors to their communities. If you are not near a HIAS partner, there are a network of organizations around the country that you can find [on this map](#) who do similar work. Congregations and organizations interested in serving as private sponsors (supporting your new neighbors independently) can explore the opportunity to become a [HIAS Welcome Circle](#). And you can explore other ways to volunteer on the HIAS website [here](#).
3. **Find the Facts** – Check out this [list of articles and videos](#) to learn more about the global refugee and asylum crisis and share these resources with family and friends. Discuss what you've learned with them!
4. **Advocate to your Elected Officials** – The United States can and must welcome refugees and asylum seekers in a fair and compassionate way. Send a message to the Biden administration and/or your Member of Congress using the links on [this page](#).

¹ We recognize that HIAS' supporters observe Shabbat in a multiplicity of ways. We encourage you to choose the activities that work best for you and to use the time leading up to Refugee Shabbat and directly after for any of the activities that resonate but are not in line with your personal Shabbat practice.

5. **Join the “Jews for Refugees” Facebook Group** – Joining this group is a great way to connect with thousands of other committed individuals across the United States and around the world, access up-to-the-minute information about the Jewish response to the refugee crisis, and share actions that you are taking. [Click here to join](#).
6. **Shop at Refugee and Immigrant-Owned Businesses** – Consider doing a Google search for refugee-owned restaurants and shops in your local area. Check out lists like [this one](#), [this one](#), or [this one](#) to purchase refugee-made products from around the world.
7. **Learn a Language with Refugees** – Sign up to learn Arabic, Armenian, French, Kurdish, Persian, or Spanish by employing a refugee as a teacher through [NaTakallam](#). You can even purchase “Gift of Conversation” packages for family and friends eager to learn. Professional translation services also available for individuals and organizations worldwide.
8. **Provide Housing** – [Sign up](#) to provide short-term housing for refugees through HIAS’ partnership with Airbnb.org (scroll down to the section labeled “Help HIAS Clients with Housing” for more details).
9. **Volunteer Remotely** – Whether you are an experienced educator or attorney, have language skills, or are interested in sharing what you love about your community with newcomers, we invite you to learn more about [volunteer opportunities near you](#). You can also contact your [local resettlement agency](#) to find out about additional volunteer opportunities.
10. **Donate Goods** – Donate old technology (PCs, printers, tablets or PDAs, mice, sound and video cards, etc.) through [PCs for Refugees](#). Donate new or gently-used baby carriers to refugees through [Carry the Future](#). Your [local resettlement agency](#) likely has other specific needs.
11. **Support Refugees and Asylum Seekers** – In the week leading up to Refugee Shabbat, set up a Facebook fundraiser to benefit HIAS’ work. For assistance setting up a personalized fundraiser page, please email development@hias.org.
12. **Become a Welcome Campaign Congregation** – If you are a member of a synagogue, [check this list to see if your community is part of HIAS’ Welcome Campaign](#), an action network uniting congregations across the United States in response to the largest refugee crisis in history. If your congregation is already signed up, contact synagogue lay leadership and clergy to find out how you can get involved. If not, contact synagogue lay leadership and clergy to encourage them to join.
13. **Donate to a Bond Fund** – Consider [contributing to a bond fund](#) to assist in releasing immigrants from detention.

Sermon Talking Points

[Click here](#) to download sermon talking points.

HIAS will also provide a set of pre-recorded remarks from our Senior Vice President for Programs, Raphael Marcus, which you can show during Shabbat services if that fits with your community's practice, or at a program before or after Shabbat. We will share a private link to this recording with all registered communities during the week of February 20th.

Refugee Congress Speakers

If you are interested in bringing a refugee speaker to your community, consider contacting [Refugee Congress](#).

Refugee Congress is a nonpartisan advocacy organization built and led by former refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants to promote the well-being, integration, and dignity of all vulnerable migrants. With delegates across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, they use their voices and experiences to inform and influence decision makers on critical domestic and international issues that affect their communities.

To inquire about speaker availability, please contact Refugee Congress Communications and Advocacy Associate Dagemawit Kebede at Dagemawit.Kebede@refugeecongress.org.

Text Study: Refugees and Asylum Seekers

HIAS has gathered several texts and prompt questions to spark discussion during Refugee Shabbat. Copies of the text study are available [here](#) to download; we encourage you to share them with participants and community members in advance of your programming.

Previous Resources

If you are interested in exploring resources from previous HIAS Refugee Shabbatot, you can find them [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

You can download and use the Refugee Shabbat 2021-5781 Liturgical Reading [here](#).

You might also consider hosting one of the film discussions on Zoom or providing materials to community members to complete a Tallit for Welcome ([page 23 of this document](#)) in their own homes to be stitched together at a later time. Please note that some of the facts and figures in the various programs may need to be updated to reflect the most recently available numbers, many of which you can find in the latest [UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report](#) – the most recent full year for which there is data available – and the [UNHCR 2021 Mid-Year Trends Report](#).