

# Refugee Resettlement 101



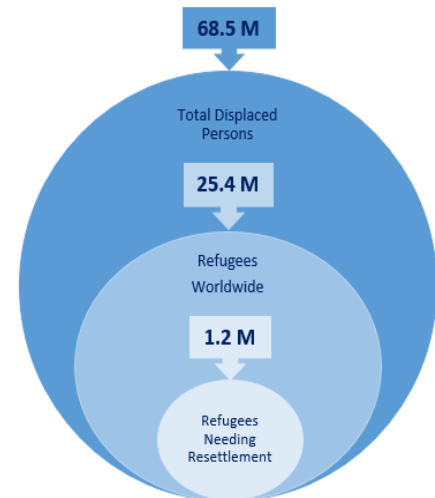
Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

**A REFUGEE** is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.<sup>1</sup>

## Global Refugee Numbers

The world is facing the worst refugee crisis in global history. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are **68.5 million** forcibly displaced people worldwide. Of that, **25.4 million are refugees**, about half of whom are children under the age of 18.<sup>2</sup> UNHCR estimates that 40 million are internally displaced people, meaning they have been forced from their homes but have not crossed an international border, while 3.1 million have been identified as asylum seekers.<sup>3</sup> In 2018, 44,400 people per day were forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution - a rate of 1 person every two seconds.<sup>4</sup>

Displaced Persons Worldwide (Millions)



## Durable solutions for refugees

There are three recognized durable solutions for refugees: integration into local host communities; voluntary repatriation to an individual's country of origin; and, resettlement to a third country. Fewer than **1 percent** of the world's refugees will ever be considered for resettlement. Resettlement is only an option for those who are unable to return home or integrate into local communities. In 2018, UNHCR identified **1.2 million people** for third-country resettlement.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 OPTIONS FOR REFUGEES WHO HAVE FLED THEIR HOME COUNTRY



- ✓ **1. Voluntary Repatriation:** A refugee family or individual returns safely to their country of origin
- ✓ **2. Integration:** A refugee integrates into their country of first asylum, or host country
- ✓ **3. Resettlement:** A refugee is transferred from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit and grant them permanent settlement

## The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)

Following the refugee crisis after World War II, the international community designed and agreed to a basic set of principles outlining the expected treatment of refugees, and others seeking asylum or other forms of international protection. As a signatory to the 1967 Protocol, which updated and outlined the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the U.S. joined the international community in agreeing to basic laws of protection and asylum, and the treatment of people who arrive at our borders seeking protection.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2018). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

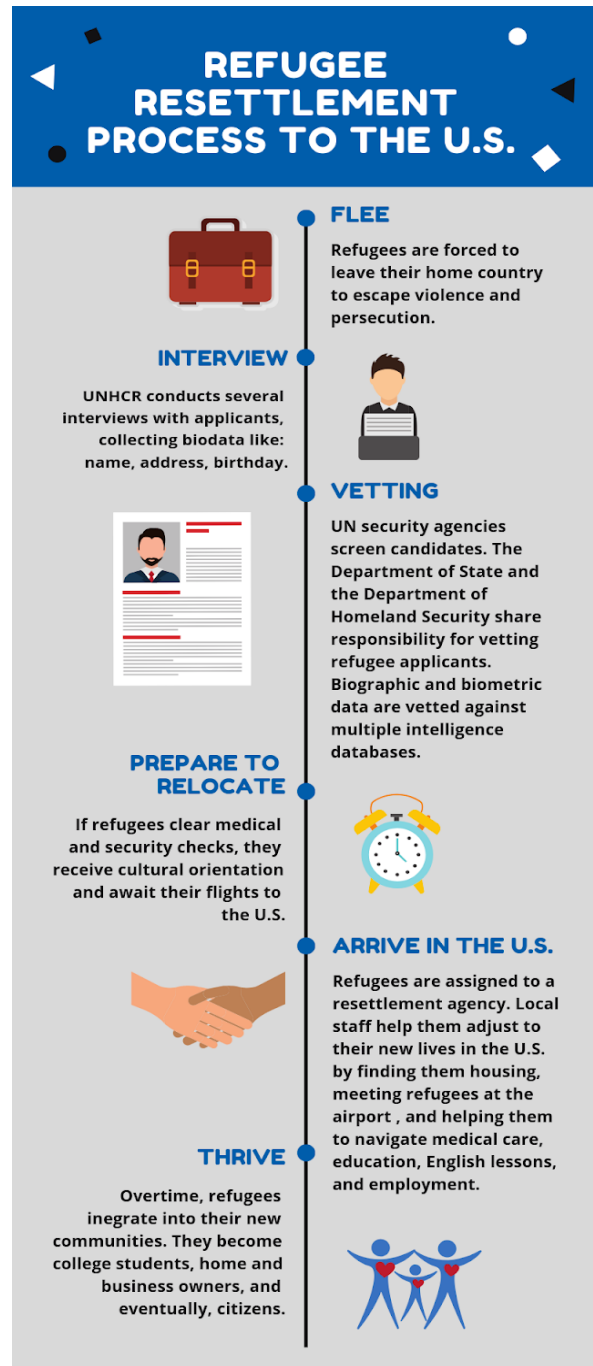
<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2017). *UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs*. Geneva, Switzerland.

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) was created by the Refugee Act of 1980. Since its inception, the U.S. has welcomed more than 3 million refugees.<sup>6</sup> The USRAP is a public/private partnership that includes **nine resettlement agencies** that hold cooperative agreements with the State Department to resettle and assist refugees in communities across the country. HIAS is one of these partners

At the end of each fiscal year, the President announces the refugee admissions ceiling, or the Presidential Determination (PD), establishing the maximum number of refugees that will be allowed to resettle in the U.S. over the course of the upcoming fiscal year. In the 38-years since the USRAP's inception, there has been an average PD of 95,000 per year, and an average of 80,000 refugees admitted each year. Since FY2017, the PD has averaged 41,000 and the number of refugee admissions has continued to decline to historic lows.<sup>7</sup> In FY2019 PD was set at 30,000, the lowest in the history of the program.

### Refugee Resettlement Process

After fleeing their homes and being identified by UNHCR, refugees who are selected for referral to the U.S. are vetted by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS). On average, the screening process can take anywhere from 18-24 months (and sometimes longer) depending on a refugee's region of origin. For example, refugees from the Middle East are required to go through additional screening. After being approved, one of the nine national refugee resettlement agencies works with their local network of resettlement affiliates to place a refugee in their community.



*Founded in the 1880s to help resettle Jews fleeing persecution, HIAS is the world's oldest refugee agency. Today, guided by our Jewish values and history, we bring more than 130 years of expertise to our work providing services to all refugees in need of assistance, regardless of their national, ethnic, or religious background. To learn more about our work visit us at [HIAS.org](https://www.hias.org)*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/>

<sup>7</sup> International Rescue Committee (2017). *The Future of Refugee Welcome in the United States*. Washington, DC.