

About HIAS

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.

Who is a refugee?

Refugees are people who have a very real fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. They have fled human rights abuse or conflict, and have sought asylum outside their home country. Most of them are women and children.

How many refugees are there?

Refugee resettlement and protection is more important now than ever. According to the UN refugee agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 65 million displaced persons worldwide, of which 22.5 million are refugees. UNHCR identified 1.2 million of those as needing resettlement to a third country. **Resettlement is the last resort for refugees.** Fewer than one percent are ever considered for resettlement. The U.S. historically has resettled the most vulnerable refugees, including female-headed households, victims of torture, LGBT refugees, and people with extreme medical needs.

Why resettle refugees?

The security of the U.S. Refugee Assistance Program is of the utmost importance to all refugee resettlement advocates, including HIAS. We work to continue educating Congress and the public on the already rigorous vetting refugees undergo before arriving to the United States and emphasize the [multitude of national security experts](#) who believe in the security of the Program, including the [former head of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#).

Refugees are [the most vetted population](#) coming to the United States. The Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security share responsibility for screening refugee applicants. Biographic and biometric data are vetted against multiple intelligence databases. The entire process from referral to the United States to completion of security checks takes **18-24 months**, on average.

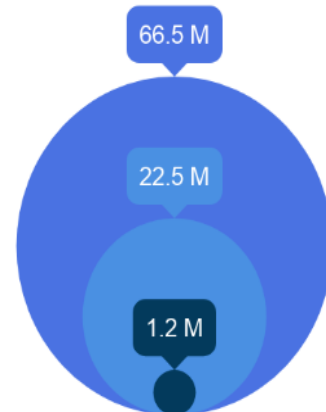
HIAS Fast Facts

In Fiscal Year 2017, HIAS

- resettled 3,299 refugees to the United States
- resettled refugees of 38 nationalities to the United States
- resettled 647 Special Immigrant Visa holders to the United States
- 70 percent of HIAS clients joined a friend or family member in the United States

Displaced Persons Worldwide (Millions)

■ Refugees Needing Resettlement ■ Refugees
■ Total Displaced Persons



Failing to support front-line refugee hosting states contributes to the destabilization of valuable U.S. allies. Countries that are shouldering most of the [refugee flow](#) - like Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon - are already struggling to accommodate them. Accepting more refugees supports the stability of U.S. allies and eases the strain on smaller countries that have welcomed refugees in unprecedented numbers and spent millions caring for them. Respected national security experts like Henry Kissinger, David Patraeus, Michael Hayden, Brent Snowcroft, Steven Hadley, George Shultz, Michael Chertoff, General James Jones, George Casey, Richard Myers, James Stavridis, John Vessey and others [wrote Congress](#) that “*resettlement initiatives help advance U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of our allies and partners that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees.*”

Refugee Resettlement Security Process

1. **Refugee applicants identify themselves to the U.N. Refugee Agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).**
 - a. UNHCR performs an initial assessment, including collecting biographical data.
 - b. UNHCR collects biometrics, including iris scans for populations in the Middle East.
2. **Qualifying refugees are referred to the United States for resettlement.**
3. **Applicants are then vetted by a Resettlement Support Center (RSC).**
 - a. The RSC creates an applicant file, collects important documents, and compiles information to conduct biographic security checks.
4. **Enhanced Interagency Security Checks take place.**
 - a. National security agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the State Department all conduct checks.
 - b. These agencies look for information about the individual, connections to any known bad actors, and outstanding warrants/immigration or criminal violations. DHS conducts an enhanced review of Syrian cases.
 - c. This process is repeated anytime new information is provided.
5. **Department of Homeland Security & United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) interview.**
 - a. In-person interviews are conducted by USCIS officers who are specially trained in interviewing.
 - b. Fingerprints are collected and submitted. These are checked against the FBI, DHS, and Department of Defense biometric databases.
6. **Medical check.**
 - a. Thorough medical screening takes place.
7. **Cultural orientation and assignment to Domestic Resettlement locations.**
 - a. Refugees complete cultural orientation classes, learning about norms in the United States.
 - b. A U.S.-based non-governmental organization determines the best resettlement location for candidates, utilizing determinants such as family ties and health factors.
8. **The International Organization for Migration then books travel.**
 - a. Refugees are then screened by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and The Transportation Security Administration program.
9. **Refugees arrive in the United States and are welcomed by a domestic resettlement agency.**
 - a. After one year, they are required to apply for a green card, which triggers another set of security procedures.