

Taking Action For Refugees

A Guide for Congregations and Communities



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The HIAS Welcome Campaign Network publicly demonstrates the Jewish community's strong support for refugees. Synagogues across the U.S. are standing up for the safety and dignity of refugees, and are impacting the public conversation about refugees both nationally and locally. We encourage congregations to take action in an integrated way, through an approach that combines education, advocacy, direct service, and tzedakah.

EDUCATE YOUR COMMUNITY

Community education can energize your congregation and inspire them to take action on one of the most critical humanitarian issues of our time. It can also be a powerful antidote to the fear and outrageous misinformation that pervades the public conversation about refugees. When people better understand who refugees are and how the U.S. refugee admissions program operates, the better able they will be to create welcoming communities.

Consider these ideas for raising awareness and educating your community:

- If you have not done so already, [join the HIAS Welcome Campaign](#), and inform your congregation. The requirements of the campaign are to join a statement of support for welcoming refugees, and to make a commitment to take action for refugees in 2017 through at least one action or program. Once you've signed on, let your community know that your congregation put its values into action!
- Host an educational program to raise awareness of the global refugee crisis and the executive orders barring refugees from entering the U.S. HIAS can provide [do-it-yourself programming resources](#), and may also be able to send a speaker or educator to your community.
- Include HIAS' Jewish holiday [resources](#) in your community observances of Passover, Sukkot, Purim, Hannukah, the High Holidays, and more.
- Broadcast your support for refugees by placing a poster or banner in a prominent location at your synagogue. Posters are available to all Welcome Campaign congregations. [Click here for artwork and step-by-step ordering instructions for the banner](#). Please e-mail [Janna Diamond](#) with any additional questions.

- Disseminate HIAS' educational materials to the congregation. These include opportunities to participate in briefing calls, fact sheets, and critical updates from the Welcome Campaign newsletters.
- Access HIAS' [resources for b'nai mitzvah students](#).
- Join a HIAS briefing call. Briefing calls are a great source of up-to-the-minute information from HIAS staff experts on refugee issues all around the globe.

For more information on these and other opportunities, email [Isabel Burton](#), Program Specialist, Community Engagement.

RAISE YOUR VOICE IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEES

Advocacy on behalf of refugees has never been more important. Welcome Campaign congregations are advocating:

- to protect the U.S. legacy of welcome;
- for the U.S. to protect to refugees around the world; and
- to make our states and local communities more welcoming.

We encourage you to participate in HIAS' grassroots advocacy campaigns and to make sure that elected officials and the press know that your community supports the resettlement and protection of refugees - some of our world's most vulnerable individuals.

- Circulate HIAS' [petitions and action alerts](#) to your congregation.
- Print [signs](#) and bring them with you to rallies and actions in your community.
- Create a public expression of Jewish community support for refugees, by hosting an action, protest, or event.
- Write your own letter (or [use one of HIAS' templates](#)) to circulate amongst synagogue members and recruit as many people as possible to sign.
- Organize a group of synagogue members to meet with your Member of Congress. HIAS can offer trainings and talking points for in-district meetings.

- Attend a townhall meeting with your Member of Congress, using our [guide](#).
- Seek local/Jewish media for the synagogue's involvement in the response to the refugee crisis.
- Join forces with [other local congregations](#) to create local advocacy coalitions.
- Get active on social media. Follow HIAS on [Facebook, Twitter and Instagram](#), and [tag us in relevant posts](#). If you're looking for good stories to raise up, check out the [HIAS blog](#).

There are many tactics that you can use to make sure your support for refugees is heard. HIAS staff are available to help to develop a plan for your congregation to take action. Email [Isabel Burton](#).

PROVIDE SUPPORT TO NEWLY ARRIVING REFUGEES

Congregations can play a major role in welcoming or supporting refugees who are arriving in your local community. Community support can help newcomers to adapt to their new homes more quickly and easily. There are many different ways congregations can support local resettlement:

- If HIAS resettles in your local community (check [here](#) to find out), we invite you to contact our local affiliate partners to explore opportunities to provide direct support and welcome to refugees resettling in your community.
- If HIAS does not operate in your locale, there is likely another resettlement agency in your area who does. Contact us and we can give you information about other resettlement agencies, or make a connection to other synagogues in your area who are already engaged in resettlement efforts.
- If your congregation is already involved in local resettlement, please let us know. We have additional resources to share with you to enhance your efforts, including a detailed guide for aiding in refugee resettlement and integration created by our national resettlement experts.
- Volunteer as a [pro bono lawyer](#) or translator for an asylum seeker, for HIAS' clients in NYC and DC.
- There may be a range of options for direct service in your area, including furniture and clothing drives and creating welcome kits. This will vary greatly depending on the needs of your local resettlement agencies.

TZEDAKAH

Activate a core Jewish value - tzedakah - in support of another central value: welcoming the stranger. Consider a financial contribution to support HIAS' domestic and international work. There are many options available to you from encouraging congregants to make individual contributions to organizing a synagogue-wide fundraising appeal. HIAS staff will work with you to provide educational materials and can even offer technological support if your synagogue would like to create a fundraising page on the HIAS website that will be unique to your efforts.

SPREAD THE WORD

- The [Welcome Campaign newsletter](#) provides urgent action items and opportunities for synagogues, information about what other congregations around the country are doing, breaking news about the refugee issue, and educational resources. When you sign up for the Welcome Campaign, you can add up to 5 people from your congregation to receive the newsletter. We encourage you to have a plan for quickly disseminating this information to others.
- Join the [Jews for Refugees Facebook community](#), to be connected to other Welcome Campaign synagogues - and to HIAS volunteers and supporters throughout the country. This is a great way to receive up-to-the-minute information about how to take action.
- Sign up for the general HIAS listserv at www.hias.org, to receive updates on new developments internationally and here in the U.S., and invitations to events and briefing calls.
- Follow HIAS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) and tag us in refugee-related content.

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