



Backgrounder

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The Global Refugee Crisis: Forced Displacement on a Massive Scale

Today, the world is facing the largest forced displacement crisis it has ever known: more than 65.6 million people have been forced to flee their homes, 22.5 million of whom are refugees.¹ Half of all refugees are children. Every minute, twenty new people are forcibly displaced², largely driven by war, violent conflict, extremist and terrorist groups, religious persecution, and political unrest.³

Displaced Persons: Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, and Internally Displaced Persons

Persons forced to flee their homes fall into three different legal categories: refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons.

Refugees are people forced to flee their homelands on account of persecution and violence because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group or political opinion.⁴ They've crossed a border to seek safety in another country because their home government is unwilling or unable to protect them. Oftentimes, it is their home government that forced them to flee.

Refugees may receive official refugee status on a group or *prima facie* basis, especially in cases of mass flight, or they may receive status after going through a process of individual Refugee Status Determination. Status is determined by the governments of the countries to which refugees have fled seeking safety, or by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR).⁵

Before a person receives official refugee status, they are known as an asylum-seeker. Asylum-seekers enter the individual Refugee Status Determination process and may be conferred refugee status once their asylum claim has been adjudicated by the UNHCR or by the country of first asylum.

What refugees and asylum-seekers have in common, and what makes them distinct from other vulnerable migrant populations, is that they have *crossed an international border* seeking protection. When individuals are displaced by conflict and violence within the boundaries of their home country, they are known as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The United Nations Refugee Agency, or UNHCR, is the international body charged with protecting the forcibly displaced as well as other populations of concern. The UNHCR works with the governments of UN member states to secure durable solutions that will allow the forcibly displaced to live in safety, peace, and with dignity.

The Burden of Displacement

With respect to the displacement crisis, countries are grouped into three rough categories: refugee-producing countries, refugee-hosting countries, and refugee resettlement countries.

Refugee-producing countries: The majority – 55% – of the world's refugees are fleeing from just three countries: Syria (5.5 million), Afghanistan (2.5 million), South Sudan (1.4 million).

People are also fleeing in large numbers from Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar (Burma), Eritrea, and Burundi.

Refugee-hosting countries: In 2016, nine of the top ten refugee-hosting countries were in developing regions, with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Uganda classified as “least developed countries” facing “severe structural impediments to sustainable development in addition to the challenges of large refugee flows.”⁶ Developing countries continue to bear the greatest burden of the global refugee crisis.

¹ UNHCR Global Trends Report 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>, 31 August 2017.

² <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

³ *What's Driving the Global Refugee Crisis?* Report from International Crisis Group, <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/what-s-driving-global-refugee-crisis>, 15 September 2016.

⁴ 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>, accessed 31 August 2017.

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

The top refugee hosting countries in 2016 were⁷:

Turkey	2.9 million	Uganda	940,800	DR of the Congo	452,000
Pakistan	1.4 million	Ethiopia	791,600	Kenya	451,100
Lebanon	1.0 million	Jordan	685,200		
Iran	979,400	Germany	669,500		

Refugee resettlement countries: In 2016, only 37 countries participated in the UN's refugee resettlement program or offered humanitarian admission.⁸ Resettlement is a life-saving option of last resort only available to refugees who qualify.

Resettlement countries in 2016:

Argentina	Chile	France	Latvia	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Australia	Croatia	Germany	Liechtenstein	Norway	Uruguay
Austria	Czechia	Hungary	Lithuania	Portugal	United States
Belgium	Denmark	Iceland	Luxembourg	Rep. of Korea	
Brazil	Estonia	Italy	Monaco	Romania Spain	
Bulgaria	Finland	Ireland	Netherlands	Sweden	
Canada		Japan		Switzerland	

Durable solutions

Just as there are three 'categories' of countries with respect to the refugee crisis (refugee-producing, refugee –hosting, and refugee resettlement countries), there are three durable solutions that will allow the refugee to rebuild his or her life in peace and dignity:

- Voluntary repatriation to his/her home country;
- Local integration into the country of first asylum (the host country); or,
- Resettlement to a third country.

Resettlement is the third and last option for any refugee, when it is not possible for the refugee to return home or to integrate into the country that first offered asylum. Resettlement is a long and arduous process, an opportunity available to only a tiny fraction of refugees who fall into one of the following eligibility categories⁹:

- Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs
- Survivors of Torture and/or Violence
- Pressing Medical Needs
- Women or girls who are at risk of gender-based violence
- Families separated due to forced displacement where resettlement will help them reunite
- Children and Adolescents at Risk.

There is a great disparity between the global need for resettlement and the number of resettlement spots available in the 37 resettlement countries. The UN estimates that in 2018, 1.2 million refugees will be in need of resettlement.¹⁰ In 2016, only 189,300 were resettled to resettlement countries. At current rates of resettlement, less than 1/100 of all refugees will ever be resettled.

The United States Refugee Admissions Program

The United States Refugee Admissions Program, or USRAP, is a federal interagency program conducted in partnership with international organizations as well as in public-private partnership with nine domestic resettlement agencies, of which Episcopal Migration Ministries is one. The Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has primary responsibility for and oversight of the USRAP. PRM operates overseas Resettlement Support Centers (RSC's) and partners with the nine domestic resettlement agencies to carry out the Reception & Placement (R&P) Program, which provides services and assistance to refugees during their first 30-90 days in the US.¹¹

The R&P Cooperative Agreement that each national resettlement agency, like EMM, holds with PRM details all the services that must be provided to refugees during their first months in the US. The local affiliates or field offices of each national agency carry out these services: reception at the airport and transportation to a furnished apartment, a culturally appropriate meal upon arrival,

⁷ <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>

⁸ UNHCR Resettlement Fact Sheet 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/59364f887/resettlement-fact-sheet-2016.html>, accessed 31 August 2017.

⁹ Frequently Asked Questions about Refugee Resettlement – UNHCR February 2017, <http://www.unhcr.org/56fa35b16>.

¹⁰ UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018 <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/resettlement/593a88f27/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2018.html>

¹¹ <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/index.htm>

climate-appropriate clothing, registering with the social security office, enrolling adults in English classes and children in school, medical appointments, men ages 18-26 registering with selective service, referral to additional services, and more. Each national resettlement agency receives a one-time per capita grant which is passed through to the local agency for provide for these services. Most of that money is spent on rent and other necessities. The expectation of the R&P program is that refugees will be economically self-sufficient within 90 days. To assist in this process, eligible refugees may be enrolled in additional employment readiness or intensive case management programs that last longer.

Many of these additional support services are provided by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is housed within DHHS' Administration for Children and Families. The Office of Refugee Resettlement "helps new populations maximize their potential in the United States by linking them to critical resources that assist them in becoming integrated members of American society."¹² ORR provides grants to national resettlement agencies, states, local resettlement agencies, and other entities to support refugee social services and targeted assistance; early employment for refugees; mental and medical health case management; schools that serve refugees, and microenterprise small loans for refugee entrepreneurs. ORR also provides programs for other vulnerable populations, including unaccompanied refugee minors, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Special Immigrant Visa holders, unaccompanied alien children, and survivors of torture.¹³

In addition to PRM in the Department of State and ORR in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), other departments of the federal government play critical roles in the lengthy and rigorous security screening process, which begins while refugees are still overseas and before they are approved for admission to the US through the USRAP. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Counterterrorism Center all take part in the security screening process.

The security screening process for refugees referred to the USRAP comprises 15 steps, including multiple in-person interviews, biographic, and biometric checks. The whole process takes an average of 18-24 months to complete, without interruptions or expirations of the validity periods for the various checks. Each family member in a refugee "case" is checked separately, and each of the more than a dozen clearances has an expiration date. If one family member's security check expires, they must begin the process over again. Due to these issues, it can often take 3-5 years or more for a family to make it through the security screening and receive approval for travel. In addition to security screening, refugees all must pass a medical exam and go through cultural orientation prior to departing for the US. Upon arrival at a US port of entry, refugees receive security screening before flying to their final destination and to their new home.

Episcopal Migration Ministries

Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the refugee resettlement ministry of The Episcopal Church, is a living example of the Church's commitment to be a presence of hope, comfort, and welcome to refugees. It is one of the nine national resettlement agencies, and an organization that lives into the Church's call to welcome the stranger as Christ himself.

Each year, Episcopal Migration Ministries, through a network of 22 local organizations, provides a wide spectrum of services, including resettlement, employment, intensive medical and mental health services, and volunteer programs to enhance community navigation and integration, to thousands of refugees, asylees, special immigrant visa holders, and Cuban/Haitian entrants.

These new Americans rely upon this assistance and support as they rebuild their lives in security and peace in communities across the United States. In addition to Episcopal Migration Ministries' collaboration with local partner organizations, EMM staff members equip, support, and empower dioceses, congregations, and individuals to learn about and find their own place in the welcoming ministry of refugee resettlement.

How you can help

If you, your congregation, or diocese would like more information about Episcopal Migration Ministries' work and ways you can be involved, please contact Allison Duvall, Manager for Church Relations and Engagement, at aduvall@episcopalchurch.org or (212) 716-6027.

Additional information, videos, and resources about The Episcopal Church's refugee resettlement work through Episcopal Migration Ministries may be found at www.episcopalmigrationministries.org. A list of our resettlement partners may be found at <http://bit.ly/EMMpartners>.

¹² <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>

¹³ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees>