



# Interfaith Action

## An overview of refugee resettlement

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### Who is a refugee?

A refugee meets a precise international definition through the 1957 International Convention on Refugees and through US Law through the US Refugee Act of 1980.

A “refugee” is a person outside the country of his or her nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

### Foreign Processing

(the entire process typically takes up to 2 years but is expedited in certain emergency situations)

Refugees initially live internationally in host countries or in camp settings outside of their home countries and under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR refers individuals they determine to meet international refugee eligibility requirements to US Resettlement Support Centers, of which there are 9 around the world.

A file on each refugee is created to ensure they meet US geographic and population priorities according to the US Dept of State’s Office of Populations, Refugees and Migration.

The refugee is interviewed by a refugee officer affiliated with the US Dept of State and the US Office of Citizenship and Immigrant Services/ US Department of Homeland Security. The interview determines eligibility under the annual refugee determination numbers and categories issued by the US President.

If the refugee is approved, there is a medical screen under the CDC and there are extensive security screenings by international and US security entities including US Dept of State, US Dept of Homeland Security, US Dept of Defense, FBI, CIA, National Center on Counterterrorism.

The refugee is then given Conditional approval which is sent to a US Refugee Processing Center operated by the US Dept of State.

Nine pre-approved national voluntary agencies (not for profit organizations) decide on which refugee resettlement cases they will accept based on their geographic and population specialization. They agree to receive refugees and make arrangements for the refugees' travel to the US and to the local resettlement site.

Travel is paid through an interest-free loan provided by the International Organization on Migration which is to begin being paid upon arrival and completed within 5 years.

A Cultural Orientation to life in the US is provided to the refugee before travel.

## US Processing

Upon arrival at a US airport, the refugee is met at the airport by local resettlement staff of a Voluntary Agency.

The Agency has a contractual and financial agreement with the US Dept of State to provide assistance to the refugee for 30-90 days. The Agency must provide rental housing, food, clothing, furnishings and must provide staff case management services to assist the refugee in community orientation and in accessing local services.

After 90 days, the US Office of Refugee Resettlement financially contracts with the local Agency to provide about 9 months of funded services to the refugee with a focus on English language training, school enrollment for children, and job training and placement.

Cash assistance and medical assistance through a refugee Medicaid-like program is provided to the refugee during this time-limited period after which the refugee is expected to be self-sufficient.

The refugee is required to apply for a green card after one year. After 5 years, the refugee is eligible to apply for citizenship.