In September 2019, the administration announced two drastic shifts for FY2020’s Presidential Determination (PD) for refugees: the admissions goal has been slashed to an all time low of 18,000 and the categories used to admit refugees have been fundamentally restructured. Now, instead of refugees being admitted based on their region of origin, they are to be admitted based on four priorities as determined by the administration:

- Refugees who faced religious persecution (5,000)
- Iraqis who had assisted US missions abroad (4,000)
- Refugees who were from, or were habitual residents of the "Northern Triangle" - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras (1,500)
- All others (7,500)

In Q2, USRAP welcomed a total of 4,163 refugees including:
- 1,911 refugees who faced religious persecution,
- 63 Iraqi P-2s,
- 94 refugees from the Northern Triangle,
- and 2,095 refugees who did not meet one of the aforementioned categories.

By this point in the fiscal year, 9,000 refugees should have been admitted in order to be on track to meet the full 18,000. The US has only resettled 2% of the allotted places for Iraqi P-2s, and 13% of the allotted places for those from the Northern Triangle. Even with the arrivals pace of those facing religious persecution and "others," the US is not on pace to welcome the full 18,000 refugees in FY2020.

Refugee Admissions & COVID-19

As governments have grappled this quarter with how to respond to COVID-19, refugee populations have largely been excluded from comprehensive planning and relief efforts. On March 11th, President Trump began issuing a series of proclamations serving to effectively shutter US borders with the exception of minimal, critically necessary travel. The following week, IOM and UNHCR announced they would be suspending resettlement-related travel, with very limited exceptions. Refugees awaiting resettlement need ongoing protection, and those already resettled need continued support that recognizes the new threats to their health and well being caused by COVID-19. Meanwhile, refugee crises for groups and individuals continue even as countries restrict border movements; indeed, the challenges facing refugees abroad and in the US become even greater. This global health crisis poses yet another threat to the already strained US resettlement program. Officials must ensure the safe, efficient resumption of resettlement, work to adjust the admissions categories to admit the full 18,000 refugees allotted for FY2020, and otherwise to allow any shortfall in FY2020 refugee admissions to be resettled in FY2021 and counted as FY2020 arrivals.

Go to rcusa.org/covid-19 to find resources and information about refugees and COVID-19.