

# Refugee Council USA

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA), a coalition of 22 leading organizations dedicated to refugee protection, welcome and excellence in the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), looks forward to working with the Trump Administration to continue to welcome refugees to the United States each year.

Welcoming refugees shines a light on Americans' most cherished common values. The tens of thousands of volunteers, members of community groups and religious congregations that support and engage in welcoming refugees come from across the political spectrum. Most support refugees due to deeply-held religious, moral or ethical convictions. The U.S. resettlement program indeed has its historical underpinnings in the actions of faith communities. Churches, synagogues and other communities of faith continue to stand in partnership to help refugees of all faiths find safety and hope as they start their lives as new Americans. Refugee resettlement is the living embodiment of the religious commitment to "welcome the stranger," a bedrock upon which much of America's strength rests.

This strong partnership has also historically extended to bi-partisan Congressional backing, as well as support from both Democratic and Republican administrations. For example, under the Reagan Administration, the United States welcomed refugees who supported U.S. troops in Vietnam and Laos, and it was under Republican administrations that we opened our doors to those fleeing communism in the former Soviet Union and Cuba. In fact, since the passage of the Refugee Act in 1980, the two years which saw the highest numbers of refugees welcomed to the U.S. were under Republican administrations: President Reagan's Administration welcomed almost 160,000 refugees in FY 1981, while President Bush's Administration welcomed more than 132,000 refugees in 1992. The United States now continues this proud tradition by welcoming refugees from more than 60 countries around the world, including Iraqi and Afghan individuals who worked with U.S. forces and risked their lives to protect Americans, as well as those who are seeking safety after fleeing from ISIS and the instability and horrors they have inflicted upon innocent civilians.

This history of bi-partisan support is one recognition that the USRAP is not just about offering the opportunity for refugees to live in freedom in welcoming communities around the country. It is also a key component of our foreign policy and national security priorities. The U.S. refugee resettlement program makes America safer and stronger by helping to stabilize countries and regions faced with large-scale forced displacement spilling into their territories. Strategic investments in refugee resettlement and targeted humanitarian support help to bolster key allies, such as Jordan and Turkey, by increasing regional stability as they work hand-in-hand with the United States to defeat forces that wish to cause harm to the United States and the principles that we hold dear. Continuing to welcome refugees from around the world sends a strong message to groups that want to sow havoc and fear that the United States remains a leading force for stability and liberty in the world.

This document provides details about the USRAP and how it operates. For more examples that highlight the secure nature of the program, how resettlement makes the U.S. safer, and the deep faith support for the program, please also refer to these additional included resources:

- Statement of Principles on America's Commitment to Refugees from Former National Security Officials
- Department of Homeland Security Refugee Processing and Security Screening Fact Sheet
- Department of Homeland Security USRAP Flow Chart
- Letter from the Evangelical Immigration Table in support of refugee resettlement
- Letter from more than 1,000 rabbis calling on elected leadership to support refugee resettlement

## **Who is a Refugee**

Under U.S. law, a refugee is a person forced to seek protection outside his or her own country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, and/or their political opinion. At the end of 2015 there were 21.3 million refugees around the world and an estimated 44 million people who were forced to flee their homes, but have not crossed an international border.

The U.S. codified its participation in national and international refugee protection systems when it enacted the Refugee Act of 1980. The Refugee Act established the statutory basis for much of current U.S. refugee law that provides for the admission and resettlement of the small number of the world's refugees who the United States resettles each year.

## **The History of U.S. Assistance to Refugees**

The United States has a long history of providing protection and assistance to persons facing persecution and fleeing violence. In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. led the humanitarian assistance and reconstruction effort to help displaced persons, including resettling to the U.S. hundreds of thousands of Europeans displaced from the war, including Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. expanded its commitment to protect vulnerable and displaced persons by funding programs such as those that helped victims of gender based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, provided educational opportunities for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, and helped hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees to return home. The U.S. also airlifted thousands of Kosovar refugees to safety in the late 1990s. In recent years, the U.S. has resettled Darfuri refugees fleeing genocide and violence, refugees from Myanmar forced out of their country by ethnic and religious persecution, Iraqi and Afghan refugees who served the U.S. military and government, and many other populations in need of lifesaving protection.

## **The U.S. Offers Protection and Assistance for Refugees in Three Essential Ways:**

***Overseas Assistance:*** The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) administers the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA) accounts. Through these channels, the U.S. can provide life-saving assistance and protection to refugees in both camp and urban settings and can provide stabilizing support to refugee host countries that are often key strategic partners of the United States. The U.S. also provides humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people (IDPs). Funding for IDP programs is mainly facilitated through the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

***Refugee Resettlement:*** Every year, the President, working through the U.S. Department of State, assesses the global projected resettlement needs for refugees and then consults with Congress to determine the number of refugees from each region around the world that will be resettled to the U.S. in the coming fiscal year. This assessment and consultation results in the issuance prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year of a Presidential Determination on the number of refugees to be admitted in the year, which serves as a target for refugee admissions to the United States. Refugees identified for resettlement to the U.S. are the most vulnerable, including survivors of torture, women-at-risk, children-at-risk, and targeted religious minorities. While the U.S. welcomed 85,000 refugees in FY 2016, of the millions of refugees around the world, those resettled globally constitute less than one percent each year of the total number of refugees.

***Asylum:*** While refugees are processed and admitted to the U.S. from abroad, a separate process is included within the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as amended by the Refugee Act, for the granting of asylum on a case-by-case basis to those physically present in the U.S. or at a land border or port of entry and who otherwise meet the definition of a refugee. Asylum seekers are interviewed by trained asylum officers or immigration judges to determine if they meet the refugee definition and are admissible to the United States. Individuals that meet all criteria are afforded asylum and provided access to refugee services and may apply for lawful permanent residency after one year. In FY 2014, the U.S. granted asylum to 23,533 individuals seeking protection.

## **How the U.S. Resettlement Program Works**

The United States decides which refugees to resettle within our borders. The State Department oversees the admission of each refugee to the U.S. after they have been granted refugee status following individual interviews by Department of Homeland Security DHS officials, have passed extensive inter-agency security background checks with multiple national security and intelligence agencies, and have passed health screenings.

**Refugee Selection and Security Screening Process:** According to national security experts, refugees are the most thoroughly vetted, rigorously screened people to come to the United States. Security screenings involve the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and multiple intelligence agencies. Department of Homeland Security officials interview each refugee to determine whether they meet the refugee definition and whether they are admissible to the United States. Refugees undergo a series of biometric and investigatory background checks, including collection and analysis of personal data, fingerprints, photographs, and other background information, all of which is checked against forensic testing, government databases and other extensive information gathered by U.S. government agencies. The entire process typically takes 18-24 months, and sometimes longer, before a refugee even steps foot on U.S. soil. Once they arrive in the U.S. they are still subjected to additional screening by Customs and Border Protection officers at the port of entry

**Services to refugees in the U.S.:** Among the many reasons that the USRAP is successful is because it is a public-private model. Direct services are provided by a nation-wide network of community-based organizations that are affiliated with nine, national non-governmental resettlement agencies, six of which are faith-based. The resettlement agencies also utilize and help coordinate tremendous support from volunteers, faith groups, small and large businesses, non-profit agencies, community donors, and more in their local communities. These agencies enter into cooperative agreements with the U.S. State Department to provide refugees initial services in carefully selected communities, and agencies convene regular meetings with community stakeholders to discuss upcoming arrivals and service provision. Initial services include locating and setting up housing, airport pickup, orientation to the community, facilitation of health screenings and follow-up, enrollment of children in school, enrollment in limited public services, and support in finding employment and English language programs.

Services to resettled refugees are designed to help them adjust to their new communities and achieve self-sufficiency and are funded by the Refugee and Entrant Assistance (REA) account which funds the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services. Refugees receive limited cash assistance through various programs. The main objective of these programs is for refugees to obtain self-sufficiency in a short period of time and foster their ability to contribute to their new communities and begin to feel integrated into American society and culture. ORR also provides funding to state governments, local educational entities and non-profit organizations to support communities that welcome refugees. Research shows that refugee resettlement economically revitalizes communities, creates jobs, and fosters purchasing power – a few of the reasons why it is so strongly supported by the private sector. Resettlement not only saves lives, but it uniquely aligns with American identity and values, benefits our national security and foreign policy, and provides benefits to American communities and economy.

## **STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ON AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO REFUGEES**

The world today is gripped by the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Some sixty million people - half of them children - have fled persecution and violence, the highest number ever recorded. From Syria to Burma to Eritrea, desperate people are seeking freedom from brutal regimes, lawless militias, and genocidal terrorist groups. Thousands have died trying to find safety and millions are struggling to survive.

The United States has long been a refuge for those seeking safety and freedom, and for a simple reason: Americans believe their compassion and openness are sources not of weakness but strength. The demonstration of these qualities accords with the core ideals on which our nation was founded, and on which our greatness rests. For more than two centuries, the idea of America has pulled toward our shores those seeking liberty, and it has ensured that they arrive in the open arms of our citizens. That is why the Statue of Liberty welcomes the world's "huddled masses yearning to breathe free," and why President Reagan stressed the United States as "a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness."

Today there are many hurtling through that darkness.

Yet despite America's role as the global leader in resettling refugees, many voices call for closed doors rather than open arms. To give in to such impulses would represent a mistake of historic proportions. Now is the time for the United States to reaffirm its commitment to protecting refugees.

Americans are rightly concerned not only for the security of refugees but their own as well. For this reason, refugees are vetted more thoroughly than any other category of traveler seeking to arrive in the United States. The security process includes screenings by national and international intelligence agencies, fingerprint and other biometric data checks against terrorist and criminal databases, and multiple rounds of interviews.

As we ensure the safety of our own citizens, we should recognize that refugees serve as a source of national renewal. Fleeing horrors today, they will tomorrow emerge as patriotic citizens who give back to the country that welcomed them in their time of desperation. And accepting refugees demonstrates, at a time when it is so sorely needed, that America leads the world in marching toward a better future.

We believe:

- The United States should provide refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution, consistent with our nation's founding ideals.
- Accepting refugees, and encouraging other countries to do so, advances U.S. interests by supporting the stability of our allies struggling to host large numbers on their own.
- Welcoming refugees, regardless of their religion or race, exposes the falseness of terrorist propaganda and counters the warped vision of extremists.
- The United States must not abandon those targeted by terrorists because they worked with American troops and diplomats in support of our missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Religious bans and tests are un-American and have no place in our immigration and refugee policies.
- American leadership is essential in addressing the global refugee crisis.

Sincerely,

(Names in alphabetical order)

**Madeleine K. Albright**  
Former Secretary of State

**William J. Burns**  
Former Deputy Secretary of State

**Michael Chertoff**  
Former Secretary of Homeland Security

**Derek Chollet**  
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

**Henry Cisneros**  
Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

**William S. Cohen**  
Former Secretary of Defense and U.S. Senator

**Ryan C. Crocker**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon

**Tom Daschle**  
Former U.S. Senator

**Michele A. Flournoy**  
Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

**Richard Fontaine**  
President, Center for a New American Security

**Robert S. Ford**  
Former Ambassador to Syria and Algeria

**Stephen J. Hadley**  
Former National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush

**Chuck Hagel**  
Former Secretary of Defense and U.S. Senator

**General Michael V. Hayden, U.S. Air Force, (Ret.)**  
Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency

**Fred C. Hof**  
Former U.S. Ambassador & Special Advisor for transition in Syria

**Robert Kagan**  
Co-Founder, Project for the New American Century

**David J. Kramer**  
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

**Mark Lagon**  
President, Freedom House  
Former Ambassador at Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

**Michael E. Leiter**  
Former Director, National Counterterrorism Center

**Carl M. Levin**  
Former U.S. Senator

**General David M. Maddox, U.S. Army (Ret.)**  
Former Commander in Chief, U.S. Army Europe

**Matthew G. Olsen**  
Former Director, National Counterterrorism Center

**Leon E. Panetta**  
Former Secretary of Defense and Director, Central Intelligence Agency

**William J. Perry**  
Former Secretary of Defense

**Thomas R. Pickering**  
Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs

**Kori N. Schake**  
Former Deputy Director for Policy Planning, U.S. State Department

**Randy Scheunemann**  
Former Director, Project for the New American Century

**Eric Schwartz**  
Former Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration

**John Shattuck**  
Former Assistance Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and U.S. Ambassador to Czech Republic

**Admiral James G. Stavridis, U.S. Navy (Ret.)**  
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander  
Former Commander, U.S. Southern Command

**Frances F. Townsend**  
Former Homeland Security Advisor to President George W. Bush

**Paul D. Wolfowitz**  
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense



# Fact Sheet

Dec. 3, 2015

## Refugee Security Screening

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is deeply committed to safeguarding the American public from threats to public safety and national security, just as we are committed to providing refuge to some of the world's most vulnerable people. We do not believe these goals are mutually exclusive, or that either has to be pursued at the expense of the other.

This fact sheet provides information about the security screening and background checks required by the [U.S. Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#). The USRAP is an interagency effort involving a number of governmental and non-governmental partners both overseas and in the United States. Applicants for refugee resettlement are subject to the highest degree of security screening and background checks for any category of traveler to the United States.

All refugee applicants receive a standard suite of biographic and biometric security checks. Through close coordination with the federal law enforcement and intelligence communities, these checks are continually reviewed to identify potential enhancements and to develop approaches for specific populations that may pose particular threats. All case members included on a refugee application must clear security checks for that application to be approved.

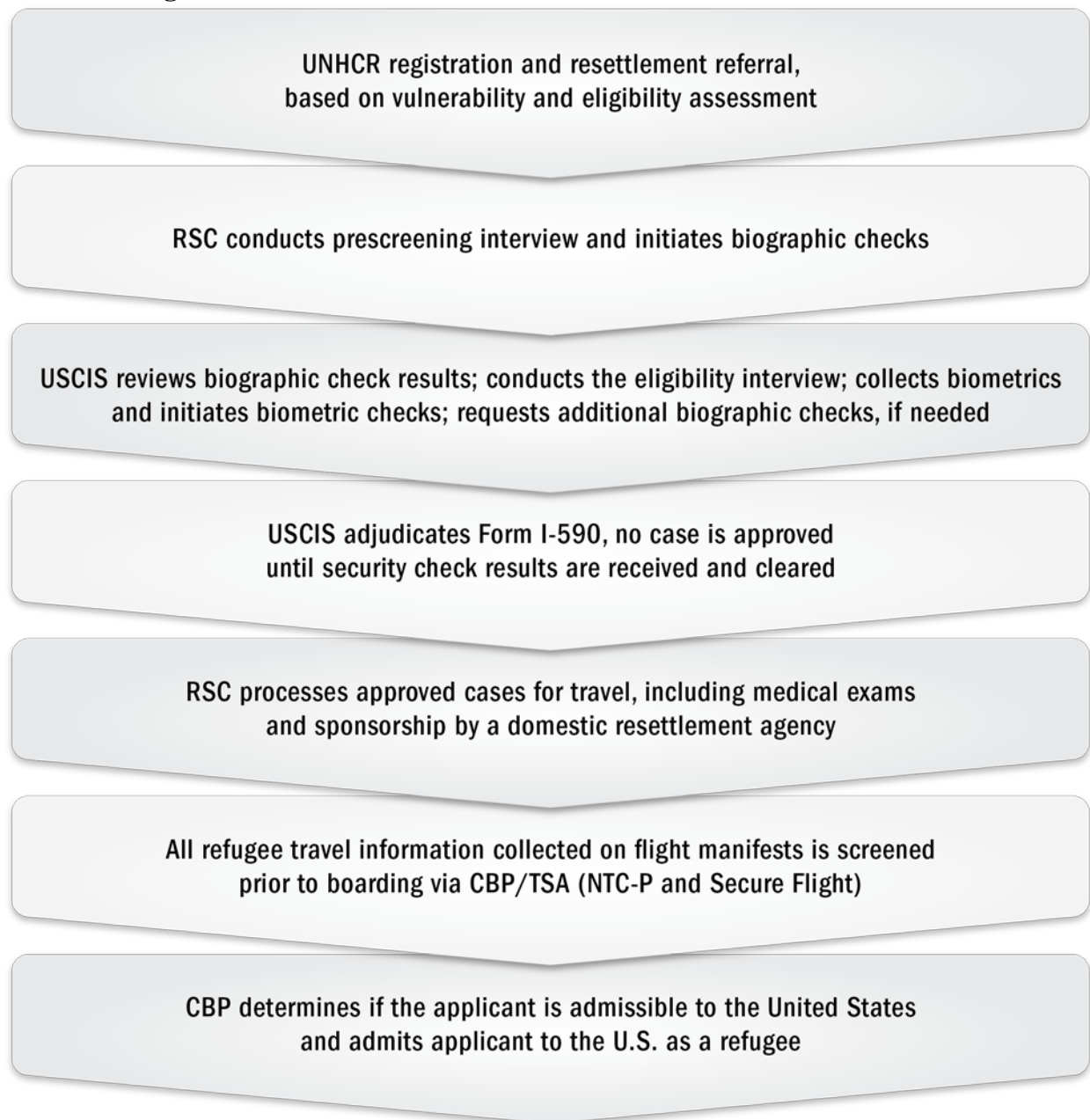
**Processing priorities** are established annually that determine which of the world's refugees are "of special humanitarian concern to the United States," i.e., eligible to be considered for possible resettlement in the United States. Fitting into a processing priority gives a refugee applicant the opportunity for an interview with a USCIS officer but does not guarantee approval. The priorities currently in use are:

- **Priority 1:** UN High Commissioner for Refugees, U.S. Embassy, or specially-trained non-governmental organization (NGO) identified cases, including persons facing compelling security concerns, women-at-risk, victims of torture or violence and others in need of resettlement
- **Priority 2:** Groups of special concern identified by the U.S. refugee program (e.g., Bhutanese in Nepal)
- **Priority 3:** Family reunification cases (i.e., spouses, unmarried children under 21, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the U.S. as refugees or asylees or persons who are legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens who previously had refugee or asylum status)

USCIS' adjudication of Form I-590, Registration for Classification as a Refugee, is only one part of the broader USRAP:

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identifies and refers certain cases to the USRAP for resettlement and provides important information about the worldwide refugee situation. Department of State (State) has overall coordination and management responsibility for the USRAP and has the lead in proposing admissions ceilings and processing priorities.
- Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs), under cooperative agreements with State, carry out administrative and processing functions, such as file preparation and storage, data collection, and out-processing activities.
- USCIS is responsible for conducting individual interviews with applicants to determine their eligibility for refugee status, including whether they meet the refugee definition and are otherwise admissible to the United States under U.S. law.

### **General Refugee Process**



## **USRAP Screening**

USRAP screening includes both biometric and biographic checks, which occur at multiple stages throughout the process, including immediately before a refugee's departure to the United States as well as upon arrival in the United States.

The screening of refugee applicants involves numerous biographic checks that are initiated by the RSCs and reviewed/resolved by USCIS. These include:

- **Department of State Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS)<sup>1</sup>**  
CLASS name checks are initiated by State for all refugee applicants at the time of pre-screening by State's contractor — the RSC. Name checks are conducted on the applicant's primary names as well as any variations used by the applicant. Responses are received prior to interview and possible matches to applicants are reviewed and adjudicated by USCIS Headquarters. Evidence of the response is forwarded for inclusion in the case file. If there is a new name or variation developed or identified at the interview, USCIS requests another CLASS name check on the new name, and the case is placed on hold until that response is received.
- **Security Advisory Opinion (SAO)<sup>2</sup>**  
The SAO is a State-initiated biographic check conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and intelligence community partners. SAO name checks are initiated at the time of pre-screening by the RSC for the groups and nationalities designated by the U.S. government as requiring this higher level check. SAOs are processed, and a response must be received prior to finalizing the decision. If there is a new name or variation developed at the interview, USCIS requests that another SAO be conducted on the new name, and the case is placed on hold until that response is received.
- **Interagency Check (IAC)**  
The IAC screens biographic data, including names, dates of birth and other data points of all refugee applicants within designated age ranges. This information is captured at the time of pre-screening and is provided to intelligence community partners. This screening procedure was initiated in 2008 and has expanded over time to include a broader range of applicants and records. These checks occur throughout the process.

At the time of USCIS interview, USCIS staff collects fingerprints and initiates biometric checks. The biometric checks initiated by USCIS for refugee applicants include:

- **FBI Fingerprint Check through Next Generation Identification (NGI)**

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<sup>1</sup> CLASS is a State name-check database that posts use to access critical information for adjudicating immigration applications.. The system contains records provided by numerous agencies and includes information on persons with visa refusals, immigration violations, criminal histories, and terrorism concerns, as well as intelligence information and child support enforcement data. In addition to containing information from State sources, sources for information in CLASS includes NCTC/TSC (terrorist watch lists), TECS, Interpol, DEA, HHS and FBI (extracts of the NCIC Wanted Person, Immigration Violator, Foreign Fugitive Files, VGTOF, and the Interstate Identification Index).

<sup>2</sup> The Security Advisory Opinion process was implemented after September 11, 2001, to provide a mechanism for additional scrutiny to certain higher-risk categories of individuals seeking to enter the United States through a variety of means, including refugee applicants.



Recurring biometric record checks pertaining to criminal history and previous immigration data.

- **DHS Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT - f/n/a US-VISIT)**  
A biometric record check related to travel and immigration history for non-U.S. citizens as well as immigration violations, and law enforcement and national security concerns. Enrollment in IDENT also allows CBP to confirm identity at the port of entry.
- **DOD Defense Forensics and Biometrics Agency (DFBA)'s Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS)i**  
A biometric record check of DOD holdings collected in areas of conflict (predominantly Iraq and Afghanistan). DOD screening began in 2007 for Iraqi applicants and was incrementally expanded to all nationalities by 2013. CBP's National Targeting Center-Passenger (NTC-P) conducts biographic vetting of all ABIS biometric matches (both derogatory and benign) against various classified and unclassified U.S. government databases.

### **USCIS Interview**

The USCIS refugee interview itself, though not a traditional system check, is also a vital part of the refugee screening process. Highly trained USCIS officers conduct extensive interviews with each refugee applicant to elicit information about the applicant's claim for refugee status and admissibility. During the interview, the officer:

- Confirms the basic biographical data of the applicant;
- Verifies that the applicant was properly given access to the USRAP;
- Determines whether the applicant has suffered past persecution or has a well-founded fear of future persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion in his or her home country; and
- Determines whether the applicant is admissible to the United States and whether he or she has been firmly resettled in another country.

The officer develops lines of questioning to elicit information regarding any involvement in terrorist activity, criminal activity or the persecution/torture of others, and conducts a credibility assessment on each applicant. USCIS officers receive training on country-specific issues for populations they interview, including briefings from outside experts from the intelligence, policy and academic communities.

### **Controlled Application Review and Resolution Process (CARRP)**

During the routine process of adjudicating any USCIS benefit, if any national security concerns are raised, either based on security and background checks or personal interviews or testimony, USCIS conducts an additional review through the internal CARRP process.

### **Syria Enhanced Review**

USCIS' Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate and Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) have collaborated to provide for enhanced review of certain Syrian cases. This review involves FDNS providing intelligence-driven support to refugee adjudicators, including threat identification, and suggesting topics for questioning. FDNS also monitors terrorist watch lists and disseminates intelligence information reports on any applicants who are determined to present a national security threat.

### **CBP Screening**

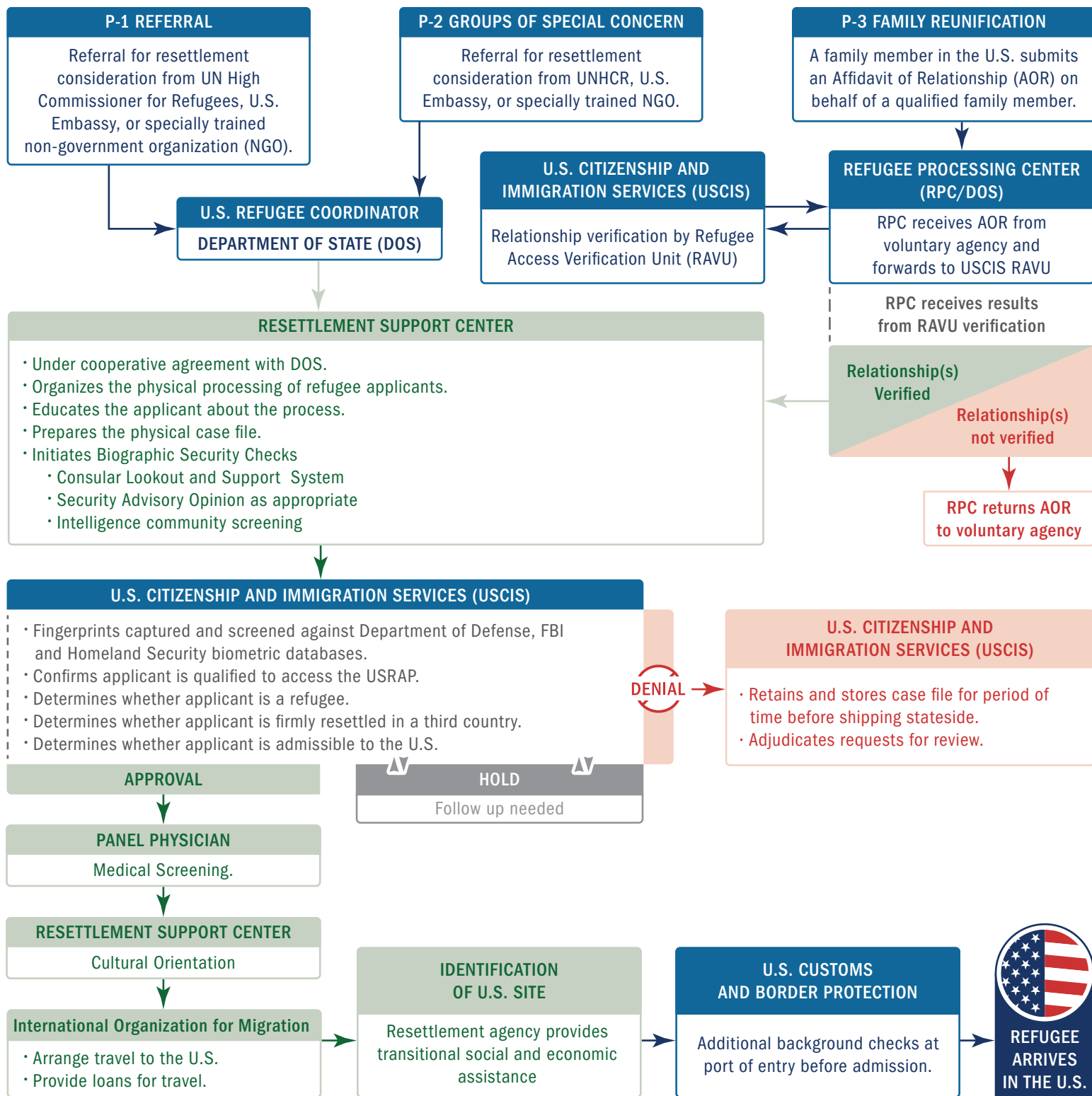
An applicant with a USCIS-approved Form I-590, Registration for Classification as a Refugee, must be found admissible to the United States by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) before receiving refugee status. CBP receives a manifest of all individuals who have approved Forms I-590 and have been booked for travel to the United States by air. CBP receives this manifest eight days before the scheduled travel. CBP performs initial vetting of the individuals before they arrive at a U.S. airport and conducts additional background checks of these individuals upon arrival at a U.S. airport.

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# UNITED STATES REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM (USRAP)



## REFUGEE IS OVERSEAS AND IN ONE OF 3 PRIORITY GROUPS:



Council for Christian Colleges  
and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty  
Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention

National Association of  
Evangelicals

National Hispanic Christian  
Leadership Conference

World Relief

December 2, 2015

Dear Members of Congress,

With more than 50 million refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people in the world, we are facing the world's worst displacement crisis since World War II. The conflict in Syria alone has forced approximately 4 million individuals to flee the country, with millions more displaced internally. The deliberate, brutal targeting of Christians solely because of their faith is especially alarming.

Since the inception of the modern U.S. refugee resettlement program in 1975, 3 million individuals fleeing violence, conflict and persecution have started their lives anew in the United States. Many of these refugees have been welcomed by local church communities that have helped them get back on their feet. Just last year alone, the United States resettled close to 70,000 refugees. In 1980, the United States received more than 200,000 refugees in one year. Resettlement to the United States is not the sole or primary solution to the displacement crisis, but this important tool in humanitarian protection rescues the most vulnerable refugees and embodies the best of our country's values. It also promotes a positive image of our country abroad and encourages other nations to follow our example.

As Congress considers legislation to reform the program, we ask you to consider the following:

- **Reject damaging changes to the U.S. refugee resettlement system that would cause this life-saving program to grind to a halt.** Adding additional layers of bureaucracy to a proven system will not make us any safer, but it will keep us from providing refuge to people whose lives have already been threatened. The U.S. resettlement program is a life-saving tool that rescues some of the most vulnerable refugees around the world. It is also one of the most secure programs the United States has for allowing anyone to enter the country. While tourists, students and business travelers may undergo minimal security screening, it takes on average 18-24 months for a refugee to be vetted through the security process. Biographic and biometric data is collected and checked against multiple U.S. security and intelligence databases. In addition, each refugee has a face-to-face interview with a trained Department of Homeland Security official as well as a thorough medical screening before they are admitted. This process has worked to exclude individuals who could be a potential threat to our national security.
- **Do not exclude any religion or nationality from the U.S. refugee resettlement program.** The hallmark of our refugee resettlement program is that it accepts refugees based on vulnerability and ties to the United States. Religion and nationality are factors to consider in evaluating the refugee claim, but the program should not exclude a refugee on one of those grounds alone. Each refugee story is unique and as such should be treated on its own merit.
- **Increase the resettlement of Christian refugees.** The persecution of Christians is uniquely severe given their extreme minority status. Christian communities in the Middle East are facing attacks that can only be considered genocidal in intent. The United States must do more to protect them.
- **Do not neglect other vulnerable refugee groups.** We are concerned about the plight of religious minorities in the Middle East, including Christians.

## Evangelical Immigration Table

Council for Christian Colleges  
and Universities

Ethics and Religious Liberty  
Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention

National Association of  
Evangelicals

National Hispanic Christian  
Leadership Conference

World Relief

Resettlement is one tool of protection which can and should be used in cases where refugees cannot return home or locally integrate. The United States should identify and receive a larger number of religious minorities from the Middle East including, but not limited to, Christians. The United States can increase the resettlement of persecuted Christians in addition to other vulnerable religious groups, including Yazidis, Muslims, and others.

- **Address root causes of the conflict so more refugees do not have to flee.** Resettlement is a durable solution of last resort in extreme situations and is not an option for most refugees. Refugees often prefer to return home once conditions in their home countries improve or locally integrate in the countries of asylum. Thus, we urge you to dramatically increase assistance to refugees in places where they seek refuge, while also acknowledging that resettlement is a key durable solution for many refugees who are unable to return home or locally integrate in a country of asylum.
- **Work with governors and local communities to welcome refugees.** The U.S. refugee resettlement program is a federal responsibility that depends on the cooperation of local and state governments, as well as churches and volunteers. We urge you to work with state and local elected officials to ensure that states continue to fulfill their responsibilities. Many businesses and faith communities welcome refugees and work in close partnership with state and local governments to help refugees become self-sufficient, quickly integrated, contributing members of their communities.

The United States resettles less than half of 1% of the world's refugees. At a time when turmoil and war are forcing millions of people to flee their homes, the United States should ensure the refugee resettlement program, a vital lifeline, continues to protect the world's persecuted. As our country does so, many evangelical Christians within local churches and college campuses are eager and willing to volunteer their time and resources to assist in the resettlement and successful integration of refugees.

Our faith inspires us to respond with compassion and hospitality to those fleeing violence and persecution. Jesus himself was a refugee, and he teaches us to do unto others as we would have them do to us. Compassion is not in conflict with national security. The U.S. refugee resettlement program has embodied both values and continues to be a valuable humanitarian tool that should be supported. Our nation has rich history as a beacon of freedom and hope. Please help us as we write the next chapter in this history.

Sincerely,

The Evangelical Immigration Table

# 1000 Rabbis in Support of Welcoming Refugees



December 1, 2015

We, Rabbis from across the country, call on our elected officials to exercise moral leadership for the protection of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Since its founding, the United States has offered refuge and protection to the world's most vulnerable. Time and time again, those refugees were Jews. Whether they were fleeing pogroms in Tzarist Russia, the horrors of the Holocaust or persecution in Soviet Russia or Iran, our relatives and friends found safety on these shores.

We are therefore alarmed to see so many politicians declaring their opposition to welcoming refugees.

Last month's heartbreaking attacks in Paris and Beirut are being cited as reasons to deny entry to people who are themselves victims of terror. And in those comments, we, as Jewish leaders, see one of the darker moments of our history repeating itself.

In 1939, the United States refused to let the S.S. St. Louis dock in our country, sending over 900 Jewish refugees back to Europe, where many died in concentration camps. That moment was a stain on the history of our country – a tragic decision made in a political climate of deep fear, suspicion and antisemitism. The Washington Post released public opinion polling from the early 1940's, showing that the majority of U.S. citizens did not want to welcome Jewish refugees to this country in those years.

In 1939, our country could not tell the difference between an actual enemy and the victims of an enemy. In 2015, let us not make the same mistake.

We therefore urge our elected officials to support refugee resettlement and to oppose any measures that would actually or effectively halt resettlement or prohibit or restrict funding for any groups of refugees.

As Rabbis, we take seriously the biblical mandate to "welcome the stranger." We call on our elected officials to uphold the great legacy of a country that welcomes refugees.

## Signed:

Rabbi Michael Oblath Anchorage, AK  
Rabbi Randall Konigsburg Birmingham, AL  
Rabbi Lynne Goldsmith Dothan, AL  
Rabbi Dr. Steven Leonard Jacobs Tuscaloosa, AL  
Rabbi Barry Block Little Rock, AR  
Rabbi Tracee Rosen Phoenix, AZ  
Rabbi Michael Wasserman Scottsdale, AZ  
Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz Scottsdale, AZ  
Rabbi Dean Shapiro Tempe, AZ  
Rabbi Batsheva Appel Tucson, AZ  
Rabbi Samuel M. Cohon Tucson, AZ

Rabbi Barnett J. Brickner Alameda, CA  
Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs Alameda, CA  
Rabbi Chai Levy Albany, CA  
Rabbi Dorothy A. Richman Albany, CA  
Rabbi Miriam Senturia Albany, CA  
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