

Q: Why do so many countries decide not to help refugees?

Fear of refugees is, unfortunately, a long-standing human failing. In 1939, the United States refused entry to Jews fleeing Hitler's Germany, because of concerns that some might be Communists or Nazi collaborators, or that they might bear diseases. Many of those refugees were sent back to die in the Holocaust.

We see many of the same instincts today, with many U.S. politicians—and the public—fearing terrorist attacks. But compassion and security can coexist. Since 2001, more than 800,000 refugees have been resettled in the United States, and none have been convicted of an act of terrorism.

The United States takes in less than half of one percent of the world's refugees, and under the Trump administration, is considering cutting even that number to almost none.

Q: What do refugees add to our economy and culture?

It is never a good idea to generalize, but many refugees yearn to come to the U.S. because of its entrepreneurial spirit and promise. For example, in the 1980s, the U.S. resettled more than 700,000 refugees from Asia, most of whom were from Vietnam. Today, Vietnamese Americans are seen as a resounding successful integration of people fleeing horror to start a new life.

HOW TO HELP

Q: What is the best way for me to support refugees?

There are myriad ways to support refugees, depending on your time and inclination. With so much suspicion of "the other" in our modern society, though, the best thing you can do is to **speak out and declare your support for our country's tradition of welcoming** those oppressed by other governments. This means:

- Contacting your elected representatives whenever a refugee-related issue arises
- Talking with your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues, especially when they express anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments.
- Host a conversation to help inform your circle and allow them to see refugees for who they are: aspiring Americans, just like our ancestors were not so long ago.
- See our Take Action flyer for more ways to help!

JOIN PANA's efforts to engage in these conversations.

<http://newcomer.life> <https://www.panasd.org>
619.732.6793
info@panasd.org



Partnership for the
Advancement of
New Americans

Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans is building a local political power base to bring local refugees into San Diego's political, cultural and economic mainstream.

@PANASanDiego #ShowUp4Refugees
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Sharing our arrival stories with each other can have a powerful, life-changing impact.

People who seek refuge in America follow in the traditions of our ancestors, yearning to realize our country's core ideal: That equality, liberty, and justice EXIST FOR ALL.



THE BASICS

Q: Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who is forced to leave their home due to the **fear of war, persecution, or a natural disaster**. All refugees coming to the United States are referred by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), which guides families through the registration process.

Q: How do refugees get to the U.S.?

Refugees first flee to camps run by the United Nations. These camps often resemble concentration camps because they are heavily guarded and surrounded by barbed wire. Some people live in these for decades. Fewer than one percent of refugees worldwide are ever resettled to a third country. Once an applicant is verified as a "refugee," they are assigned to a U.S. resettlement agency. Agency staff meets the refugees at the airport, and helps them with basic needs for up to 90 days.

Q: How securely are refugees screened?

When a refugee family arrives at a refugee camp, UNHCR staff interview everyone, and only those who can prove they are facing persecution and cannot return to their home country are registered as "refugees." Refugees are interviewed again by U.S. State Department staff multiple times. Their story is vetted, they complete biographical screenings, and multiple U.S. intelligence agencies work together to create a full background check on each applicant, multiple times. Refugees also go through a thorough health screening.

Q: What happens once a refugee arrives here in the U.S.?

Refugees are authorized to work, and are expected to find employment immediately within 90 days of resettlement. After one year, refugees are required to apply to become legal permanent residents (green card holders). After five years, they are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship—and most do.

THE WHYS

Q: Why should the United States take in refugees?

America was founded on the ideal of refuge; indeed, it was its founding vision. For generations, the United States has shone as a beacon of hope and freedom for people across the globe undergoing crises. While the U.S. cannot take in everyone who seeks safe haven here, it is vital that we continue to open our arms and hearts to people with a well-founded fear of persecution.

Additionally, the U.S. is blessed with some of the globe's largest bounty of natural resources. Today, the countries taking in the most refugees per capita are Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, Germany, and Chad. Because so many of these countries are poor themselves, the system is unsustainable, which will lead to millions fleeing war and persecution to suffer intolerable suffering and hardship.

Q: How bad is the refugee crisis?

The United Nations Refugee Agency reports that in 2017, "We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record." More than 65.6 million people around the globe have been forced from their homes by the end of 2016. Every minute, 20 people are forcibly displaced from their home because of conflict or persecution.

Q: Are there other causes besides persecution and conflict?

The 21st century has seen enormous increases in natural disaster, likely due to climate change. Disasters, like floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and mudslides, are increasing in frequency and intensity. Even with vastly growing numbers of such disasters, there are no international or regional refugee laws that address the plight of people affected by these catastrophes.

There are other human-made disasters that do not qualify people for refugee status. Millions of people across the planet lack food, water, education, health care, and employment opportunities.

Anne Frank's family sought refuge in the U.S. but restrictive American immigration policies kept them out. She died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945.



KEY TALKING POINTS

- **Historical lessons.** America's founding vision was the ideal of refuge. For generations, our ancestors sought out a new life here, welcomed by the Statue of Liberty. But in the 1930s, the U.S. was faced with a moral imperative: should we grant safe haven to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror and death camps? We chose wrong then; we can't now.
- **"To whom much is given, much will be required."** (Luke 12:48) The U.S. is blessed with some of the globe's largest bounty of resources. Many poor countries are taking in the majority of refugees. This is unsustainable given the state of the world.
- **Depth of crisis.** In 2017, the United Nations recorded the highest ever level of displacement of refugees. More than 65 million people have been forced from their homes because of conflict or persecution.
- **Natural disasters are increasing.** Disasters like hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes are increasing in intensity and frequency, likely due to climate change.
- **Fear of "the other."** Many U.S. politicians—and the public—fearing terrorist attacks, support restrictive immigration policies. But compassion and security can coexist, and refugees undergo intense vetting. More than 800,000 refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since 2001; none have committed an act of terror.
- **"What if...?"** A refugee is someone who is forced to leave their home because of a fear of war, persecution, or natural disaster. What if our loved ones were faced with one of these situations? How would we hope and pray strangers would respond?