

REFUGEE Resettlement in the US



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



MYTH BUSTERS

Refugees resettled into the United States (US) are men, women and children who are seeking refuge from war, environmental disaster, or persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Their lives and freedom are at risk. As the number of displaced persons in need of resettlement continues to increase globally, it is important to dispel myths about refugees and refugee resettlement in the US.

MYTH: “The refugee resettlement process is not secure and terrorists can easily enter the country.”

NOT SO: The most difficult way to enter the US legally is as a refugee. No other category of traveler to the US undergoes such a rigorous and detailed screening process. The screening process takes years in many instances and involves numerous federal intelligence and security agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Fewer than 1% of all refugees are even considered for resettlement. If referred to the US program, refugees undergo biographic and fingerprint security checks to confirm their identity. They are also extensively interviewed by specially trained DHS’ US Citizenship and Immigration Services officers. The vetting process is designed to ensure that each incoming refugee is not a public safety or national security risk.

MYTH: “The US is the only country that takes in refugees. We do more than our share to help refugees.”

NOT SO: While the US has the largest resettlement program, refugee admissions have been steadily declining, both in terms of the ceilings as well as the actual number of persons admitted. Thirty-six other countries, including Canada, Australia and Norway, are also engaged in refugee resettlement.

The refugee crisis is a global crisis and one in which US leadership is crucial. In addition to providing aid and resettlement to refugees for humanitarian reasons, US involvement is key to facilitating the stability of the regions where these crises are occurring.

MYTH: “Refugees are a burden on receiving communities.”

NOT SO: The primary goal of any refugee resettlement agency in the US is to help provide protection to refugees and help them become self-sufficient in their new homes. Blessed with extraordinary resilience and courage, resettled refugees quickly become self-reliant and productive members of the community. Within a relatively short period of time post-arrival most refugees manage to find a stable job, send their children to school and pay taxes.

Refugees compete in the labor market on the same terms as any other US citizen. One study of refugees living in the Cleveland, Ohio, area found that the fiscal impact of refugees was an estimated \$2.7 million in tax revenue and a total economic benefit of \$48 million in 2012 alone. In addition to contributing economically, refugees culturally enrich communities and parishes with new perspectives, histories and cultures.

Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.

Pope Francis, Message for the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees