

THE PATH OF REFUGEES

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relief

There are an estimated 20.4 million refugees around the world. The United Nations defines a refugee as "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence." In 1980 then-President Jimmy Carter passed legislation for vetting, admitting, and resettling refugees into the United States. The number of refugees that were allocated for admission when the program started was 200,000. That number sharply declined over the last decade, and data shows that in 2018 only 22,500 refugees were allocated for admission to the United States.

The decline of refugee admission began after 9/11. President George W. Bush suspended refugee admission for several months, citing security concerns. Yet after he lifted the suspension, the allowed number of refugees remained low, between 70,000-80,000 per year from the years of 2001-2015, but in most instances those numbers were not reached. President Barack Obama did raise the allowed number to 100,000 during the Syrian conflict. However, when President Donald Trump took office in 2016, the numbers began to decline again: in 2017, 50,000 were allowed; in 2018, 45,000; and in 2019, 30,000, the lowest number recorded since the start of the program in 1980.

According to World Relief, current applicants must go through a long process to gain refugee status, one that can take anywhere from 18 months to 3 years. Once cleared and approved, the refugee is checked again at the airport to ensure the refugee is the same person who went through the initial screening process. Finally, they are flown to the United States.



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