

Further review is conducted if an individual's application raises safety or national security concerns and, ultimately, he or she will not be resettled in the United States if such concerns are not resolved. Once USCIS conditionally approves the applicant, he or she must complete a medical examination. Those individuals who receive approval for resettlement then undergo a final screening by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection prior to entry into the United States.

Admitted refugees are assigned to one of nine experienced resettlement agencies in the United States prior to arrival to help ensure successful integration into our country. Once in the United States, refugees engage in cultural orientation, English lessons, medical evaluations, and other forms of social support through the resettlement community and other community organizations.

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## WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING ON REFUGEES?

It is a core Catholic teaching that every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore entitled to dignity and respect. The Catholic Church views assisting those in need as a fundamental Christian duty that is derived directly from the words and the life of Christ, who himself was a refugee and part of a refugee family. We as Christians are called to welcome our new neighbors with the same love and compassion we would want to be shown in a time of persecution. We must remember that refugees from all over the world are sent to our communities and are fleeing danger, exploitation, and persecution.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



Office of Human Dignity and Solidarity  
Immigration Ministry  
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# JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS

For more information visit the Justice for Immigrants page at [justiceforimmigrants.org](http://justiceforimmigrants.org) or you can contact them at [JFI@uscgb.org](mailto:JFI@uscgb.org).

To learn more, visit us at [catholicsandimmigrants.org](http://catholicsandimmigrants.org) or at [facebook.com/office.for.immigrant.affairs](https://facebook.com/office.for.immigrant.affairs).

Pastoral Migratoria invites and forms immigrants to be leaders of service, accompaniment and justice actions in their parish communities.

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Pastoral Migratoria Nacional

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S TEACHING ON REFUGEES



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## WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

Under U.S. law, a refugee is a person who is forced to flee his or her home country due to an immediate fear of being persecuted on account of nationality, race, religion, political beliefs, and/or membership in a particular social group — often in the context of civil unrest, armed conflict, human rights violations, or other form of violence.

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## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ASYLEE AND REFUGEE?

Both asylees and refugees must show they meet the same definition of being unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their: 1) race, 2) religion, 3) nationality, 4) political opinions, or 5) membership in a particular social group. The primary difference between an asylee and a refugee is the process through which an individual ultimately attains protection status. Refugees are granted protection when they are abroad and then are resettled into the United States. An asylee applies for protection only once they have entered the United States as an asylum seeker.

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## HOW MANY REFUGEES ARE THERE CURRENTLY?

At the end of **2023**, 117 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes. While most forced migrants remained in their home countries (68.3 million), 43.4 million are refugees. Forty percent of refugees are under the age of 18.

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## HOW DOES THE REFUGEE PROTECTION SYSTEM WORK INTERNATIONALLY?

The international community has traditionally promoted three durable solutions to displacement situations: (1) voluntary repatriation, (2) integration into the country of first asylum, or (3) resettlement into a third country. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works to find the best solution for each displaced person on an individual basis.

UNHCR is generally responsible for identifying and designating individuals as refugees. UNHCR, with support from the international community, assists in ensuring the safety and well-being of refugees as they await a placement determination. Only about 5% of refugees are identified by UNHCR for the third durable solution: resettlement to a third country. Usually less than 1% of all refugees are resettled every year.

Resettlement is generally reserved for people who are not only in danger in their own country but are also in danger in the country where they first take refuge. Since 1980, the United States has resettled over half of these individuals, with the majority in FY 2022 coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

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## HOW DOES REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT WORK IN THE UNITED STATES?

Each year, the President authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This number, described as the “Presidential Determination,” is based on a consultative process between Congress and the President and includes federal agencies, including the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Following the Presidential Determination, qualified refugees are typically referred to the United States by UNHCR, although sometimes by a U.S. embassy, or an authorized non-governmental organization (NGO). Often, a government-funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC) facilitates the refugee’s application process by completing application paperwork and gathering biometric and biographical information needed for the refugee’s status determination and vetting process. The International Catholic Migration Commission is one of several agencies worldwide. During this application process, which can take upwards of a year to complete, the prospective refugee remains outside of the United States.

Prospective refugees to the United States undergo a rigorous and thorough screening process that includes a variety of security screenings with the FBI, the Department of Defense (DOS), the National Counterterrorism Center/ Intelligence Community, and finally the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

