

Resolution on Refugee Resettlement in the USA

*An official statement from the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
(formerly the American Orthopsychiatric Association)*

As a global behavioral health organization that embeds its work in principles of human rights and social justice, we are committed to raising awareness about the current status of refugee resettlement into the United States. The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees and, historically, has led the world in the numbers of refugees resettled. Since 1980, when the U.S. Refugee Act was passed by Congress, the U.S. has resettled 3 million of the more than 4 million refugees resettled worldwide.

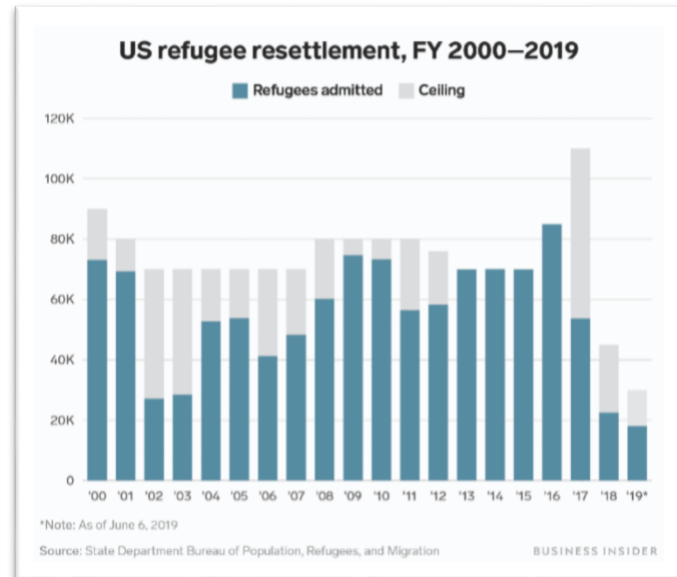
Historically, U.S. policy related to refugee resettlement has reinforced our commitment to human decency in helping those who are forced to flee their home country due to war, violence, or persecution. In post-settlement, the inclusion of refugees in American life has led to greater diversity and social wealth at the community level. American communities have further benefited from the contributions of refugees to the economic climate. As highly motivated individuals, refugees contribute to national well-being and the U.S. economy through consumer spending, business start-ups, and working in needed jobs in the U.S. labor market. In 2015, more than 151,000 refugee entrepreneurs generated \$44.6 billion in business income.

Despite the data demonstrating the contributions of refugees to American life, the numbers of refugees resettled by the U.S. is dramatically declining. Since passage of the 1980 U.S. Refugee Act, the International Rescue Committee reports that the average admissions cap has been 95,000 annually under both Republican and Democratic administrations. President Obama pledged to resettle 110,000 refugees in 2017; however, the Trump Administration reduced that number by more than half during President Trump's first year in office. In 2019, the Administration set the admissions cap at 30,000, a record low for admissions to the U.S. For 2020, the Administration has proposed a cap of 18,000, another record low. Disproportionately affected by the reduction in admissions has been the Muslim population. In the first half of fiscal year 2018, the number of Muslims resettled dropped to 1,800 from 22,900 in all of fiscal year 2017.

In keeping with our values and our commitment to human rights, we strongly urge the Administration to affirm the intent of the 1980 Refugee Act by providing assistance to refugees already in the U.S., and to increase the admissions cap to more closely align with historical trends. We support efforts to

- Raise awareness of the changes in refugee policy in recent years, and
- Implement policies and initiatives to improve human rights protections for refugees.

At a time when the world is in the midst of the largest refugee crisis since World War II, it is more important than ever to recommit ourselves to supporting those who have been forced from their homeland. At least half of these refugees are children. The tradition of refugee resettlement in the USA is being eroded by drastically reduced admissions caps, unfounded security concerns, unjustifiable separation of families, and criminalization of people seeking asylum. In the face of the prejudices, injustices, and inequalities that exist - and that have been exemplified in recent events in the United States - the Global Alliance urges the Administration and all U.S. citizens to treat all peoples with dignity. Refugees are entitled to all human rights and freedoms, and therefore their protection must be understood as an inextricable part of the broader protection of human rights for all.



Additional Resources

Centre for American Progress

<https://www.americanprogress.org>

Migration Policy Institute

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org>

National Immigration Forum

<https://immigrationforum.org/>

Family preparedness plan: <https://www.ilrc.org/family-preparedness-plan> (available in English and Spanish)

Global Alliance Resources- Immigration

<https://www.bhjustice.org/immigration> and Refugees

<https://www.bhjustice.org/refugees>

Immigrant child health toolkit from the American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://bit.ly/1JQOyyR>

Immigrant Legal Resource Center: <http://www.ilrc.org>

Immigrant Rights:

<http://wearecasa.org/resources/know-your-rights/>

(available in English and Spanish)

Pew Research Centre

<https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/immigration/>

Protecting Immigrant Families

<https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/>

The International Rescue Committee

<https://www.rescue.org/>

Relevant Articles in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*

Birman, D., Beehler, S., Harris, E. M., Everson, M. L., Batia, K., Liautaud, J., . . . Cappella, E. (2008). International Family, Adult, and Child Enhancement Services (FACES): A community-based comprehensive services model for refugee children in resettlement. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 78(1), 121-132.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2F00-9432.78.1.121>

McGregor, L. S., Melvin, G. A., & Newman, L. K. (2015). Differential accounts of refugee and resettlement experiences in youth with high and low levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptomatology: A mixed-methods investigation. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 85(4), 371-381.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fort0000076>

Miller, A., Hess, J. M., Bybee, D., & Goodkind, J. R. (2018). Understanding the mental health consequences of family separation for refugees: Implications for policy and practice. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 88(1), 26-37.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fort0000272>

Murray, K. E., Davidson, G. R., & Schweitzer, R. D. (2010). Review of refugee mental health interventions following resettlement: Best practices and recommendations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 80(4), 576-585.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1111%2Fj.1939-0025.2010.01062.x>

How You Can Help

- Join our Immigrants and Displaced Persons Task Force <https://www.bhjustice.org/task-forces-and-committees>
- Raise awareness! #GA4refugeerights
- Donate to an organization that advocates for and/or provides services for refugees and asylees, including mental health and behavioral health services.