U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Consultation & Worldwide Processing Priorities

Every year, immigration law requires that Executive Branch officials:

- review the refugee situation or emergency refugee situation.
- project the extent of possible participation of the United States in resettling refugees.
- discuss the reasons for believing that the proposed admission of refugees is justified by humanitarian concerns, grave humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest.

Following consultations (discussions) with cabinet representatives and Congress, a determination is drafted for signature by the President. The Presidential Determination establishes the overall admissions levels and regional allocations of all refugees for the upcoming fiscal year.

No refugees may be admitted in the new fiscal year until the Presidential Determination has been signed.

Annually, processing priorities (for definition see the "Glossary" page) are established to determine which of the world's refugees are of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Fulfilling a processing priority enables a refugee applicant the opportunity to interview with a USCIS officer, but does not guarantee acceptance.

Process Priorities
The priorities currently in use are:

- **Priority 1**: Cases that are identified and referred to the program by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a United States Embassy, or a designated non-governmental organization (NGO).
- **Priority 2**: Groups of special humanitarian concern identified by the U.S. refugee program.
- **Priority 3**: Family reunification cases (spouses, unmarried children under 21, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees or permanent residents (green card holders) or U.S. citizens who previously had refugee or asylum status). For information on the current nationalities eligible for Priority 3 processing, see the "U.S. Department of State" page.

Refugees must generally be outside their country of origin, but we can process some individuals in their home countries if authorized by the President.

United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Partners & their Roles
The USRAP is an interagency effort involving a number of governmental and non-governmental partners both overseas and in the United States.

The following agencies are involved in this effort:

- Department of State/Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) – PRM has overall USRAP management responsibility overseas and has lead in proposing admissions ceilings and processing priorities.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – UNHCR refers cases to the USRAP for resettlement and provides important information with regard to the worldwide refugee situation.
- Resettlement Support Centers (RSC) – Under cooperative agreement with the Department of State, RSCs consist of international organizations or non-governmental organizations that carry out administrative and processing functions, such as file preparation and storage, data collection and out-processing activities.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – Within DHS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has responsibility for adjudicating applications for refugee status and reviewing case decisions; the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) screens arriving refugees for admission at the port of entry.
- Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) – ORR administers domestic resettlement benefits for arriving refugees.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Department of State contractors serve primarily as the travel agent for the USRAP and the OPE in certain locations.
- Non-Governmental Organizations – Provide resettlement assistance and services to arriving refugees.

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