PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
TO THE
COMMITTEES ON THE JUDICIARY
UNITED STATES SENATE
AND
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
SECTIONS 207(d)(1) and (e)
OF THE
IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This *Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2018 Report to the Congress* is submitted in compliance with Sections 207(d)(1) and (e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). This report provides you with the following information:

(1) A description of the nature of the refugee situation;
(2) A description of the number and allocation of the refugees to be admitted and an analysis of conditions within the countries from which they came;
(3) A description of the plans for their movement and resettlement and the estimated cost of their movement and resettlement;
(4) An analysis of the anticipated social, economic, and demographic impact of their admission to the United States; [1]
(5) A description of the extent to which other countries will admit and assist in the resettlement of such refugees;
(6) An analysis of the impact of the participation of the United States in the resettlement of such refugees on the foreign policy interests of the United States; and
(7) Such additional information as may be appropriate or requested by such members.

This report contains information as required by Section 602(d) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292, October 27, 1998, 112 Stat. 2787) (IRFA) about religious persecution of refugee populations eligible for consideration for admission to the United States.

Because the United States' humanitarian support for refugees extends beyond refugee resettlement, this report also contains information on requests for protection from asylum seekers domestically. Our nation's humanitarian response includes the work done to provide asylum to tens of thousands of refugees who are already in the United States.

This report meets the reporting requirements of Section 305(b) of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-333, October 18, 2004, 118 Stat. 1287) by providing information about specific measures taken to facilitate access to the United States refugee program for individuals who have fled "countries of particular concern" for violations of religious freedoms, identified pursuant to Section 402(b) of the IRFA.

---

[1] Detailed discussion of the anticipated social and economic impact, including secondary migration, of the admission of refugees to the United States is being provided in the *Report to the Congress* of the Refugee Resettlement Program, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction *i*

I. *OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY* *1*

II. *OVERVIEW OF U.S. AFFIRMATIVE ASYLUM PROCESSING* *3*

III. *REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM FOR FY 2018* *6*
Proposed Ceilings **6**
Unallocated Reserve 7
Admissions Procedures **7**
Eligibility Criteria 7
Priority 1: Individual Referrals 8
Priority 2: Group Referrals 8
FY 2018 Priority 2 Designations 10
Priority 3: Family Reunification Cases 12
FY 2018 Priority 3 Nationalities 13
Following to Join Reunification Cases 13
Department of Homeland Security, USCIS **14**
The Eligibility Determination 15
Background Security Checks 15
Department of State, PRM **16**
Overseas Processing Services 16
Cultural Orientation 16
Transportation 18
Reception and Placement (R&P) 18
Health and Human Services, ORR 18

IV. *REGIONAL PROGRAMS* **21**
Africa **22**
Religious Freedom 23
Voluntary Repatriation 24
Local Integration 25
Third-Country Resettlement 26
FY 2017 U.S. Admissions 26
FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program 27

East Asia **28**
Religious Freedom 30
Voluntary Repatriation 32
Local Integration 32
Third-Country Resettlement 32
FY 2017 U.S. Admissions 32
FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program 32
Europe and Central Asia **33**
Religious Freedom 35
Voluntary Repatriation 37
Local Integration 37
Third-Country Resettlement 38
FY 2017 U.S. Admissions 38
FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program 38
Latin America and the Caribbean **39**
Religious Freedom 40
Voluntary Repatriation 41
Local Integration 41
Third and In-Country Resettlement 41
FY 2017 U.S. Admissions 43
FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program 43
Near East and South Asia **43**
Religious Freedom 45
Voluntary Repatriation 47
Local Integration 48
Third-Country Resettlement 50
FY 2017 U.S. Admissions 51
FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program 51

V. REFUGEE AND ASYLEE ASSIMILATION *52*
VI. ANTICIPATED SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC IMPACT OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS *54*

VII. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016 *54*

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
I.	Credible Fear Cases Completed – FY 2013 to FY2017	5
II.	Affirmative Asylum Receipts and Pending – FY 2013 to FY2017	5
III.	Refugee Admissions in FY 2016 and FY 2017, Proposed Refugee Admissions by Region for FY 2018	6
IV.	Proposed FY 2018 Regional Ceilings by Priority	21
V.	Refugee Arrivals by Country of Origin, FY 2016	56
VI.	Median Age and Gender of Refugee Arrivals, FY 2016	59
VII.	Select Age Categories of Refugee Arrivals, FY 2016	60
VIII.	Refugee Arrivals by State of Initial Resettlement, FY 2016	61
IX.	Estimated Available Funding of Refugee Processing and Resettlement FY 2017 and FY 2018	63
X.	UNHCR Resettlement Statistics by Resettlement Country CY 2016 Admissions	64

I. OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY

At the end of 2016, the estimated refugee population worldwide stood at 22.5 million, with 17.2 million under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This represents an increase of 1.1 million refugees under UNHCR mandate in one year. The United States – in numerous ways – actively supports efforts to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions to these refugees, which promotes our humanitarian interests and furthers our foreign policy and national security interests.

Under the authority of the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, the United States contributes to the programs of UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide protection and assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), victims of conflict, stateless persons, and other vulnerable migrants. These contributions are used to address the legal and physical protection needs of refugees and to furnish basic assistance such as water, sanitation, food, health care, shelter, education, and other services. The United States monitors these programs to ensure the most effective use of resources, maximizing humanitarian impact for the beneficiaries.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13780, Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States, "It is the policy of the United States to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks, including those committed by foreign nationals. The screening and vetting protocols and procedures associated with the visa-issuance process and the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) play a crucial role in detecting foreign nationals who may commit, aid, or support acts of terrorism and in preventing those individuals from entering the United States. It is therefore the policy of the United States to improve the screening and vetting protocols and procedures associated with the visa-issuance process and the USRAP."

The United States and UNHCR recognize that most refugees desire safe, voluntary return to their homeland. In 2016, some 552,200 refugees voluntarily repatriated to their country of origin. Although this is more than double the number in 2015, but it still unfortunately demonstrates that not enough refugee producing countries have established the conditions to allow for safe and voluntary returns. Refugee repatriation operations brought refugees home to Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Central African Republic, among others. These operations were carried out to protect returning refugees as well as to help them contribute to the stabilization, reconstruction, and development of their home countries.

When safe and voluntary return is not possible, the United States and its partners pursue self-sufficiency and temporary, indefinite, or permanent local integration in countries of first asylum. The Department of State encourages host governments to protect refugees and to allow them to integrate into local communities. The Department of State further promotes local integration by funding programs to enhance refugee self-reliance and support community-based social services. Groups that have availed themselves of opportunities for local integration in recent years include Afghans in India, Angolans in Zambia, Burundians in Tanzania, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in seven countries across West Africa, and Colombians in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela.

UNHCR estimates that there are at least 10 million people worldwide who are not recognized as nationals of any state and are therefore stateless. Without citizenship in any country, many stateless persons are unable to move freely, to access basic services such as health care and education, to work legally, to own property, or to access police protection and systems of justice. The United States supports UNHCR's mandate to prevent and reduce statelessness. The United States is encouraging States to address gaps in citizenship laws that result in statelessness, to eliminate provisions that discriminate against women, to facilitate naturalization for stateless persons, and to ensure universal birth registration. U.S. contributions to UNHCR's core budget support efforts to prevent and address statelessness in Burma, the Dominican Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, Sudan, Syria, and elsewhere. In addition, the Department of State seeks to use the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to demonstrate leadership and encourage other countries to do more to help stateless people and refugees in protracted situations. For example, Mali agreed to provide birth certificates to some 8,000 Mauritanian refugee children, paving the way for them to eventually apply for Malian citizenship. This approach is also reflected by the current resettlement of protracted Rohingya refugees from Burma who were born outside Burma, mostly in Malaysia and Thailand.

The United States, like UNHCR, recognizes that resettlement in third countries is a vital tool for providing certain refugees protection and/or a durable solution. For some refugees, resettlement is the best alternative. In particular, stateless refugees who are resettled in the United States not only find a durable solution to their displacement, but are also placed on a path that will afford the opportunity to naturalize and resolve their stateless status.

For more than a decade, the U.S. government has provided financial support to expand and improve UNHCR's resettlement capacity, principally by funding staff and construction of facilities. As a result, UNHCR has substantially increased referrals to other resettlement countries, submitting more than 162,000 individuals for resettlement in 2016 – an increase of nearly 20 percent over 2015. We plan to continue to work with UNHCR and consult with host governments on group referrals to maximize the efficiency of the resettlement process.

The United States continues to support UNHCR's efforts to expand the number of countries active in resettlement. In 2016, UNHCR referred refugees to 37 countries for resettlement consideration. Over 90 percent of refugees referred for resettlement were referred to the United States, Australia, and Canada, but the addition of four new resettlement countries and increases in quotas by ten others creates opportunities for larger resettlement numbers in the future. Referrals were also made to Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom.

The United States is by far the largest single donor to UNHCR, providing over $1.5 billion in FY 2016. During the past few years, U.S. resettlement efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia have helped energize efforts by UNHCR and other countries to ensure that first asylum is maintained for larger refugee populations and that local integration or third country resettlement are options offered to those in need.

The USRAP endeavors to promote and secure other durable solutions for refugees or advance other human rights or foreign policy objectives, while incorporating the highest level of security protocols to ensure our national security.

During its history, the USRAP has responded to changing humanitarian needs. The program initially focused on resettling large groups concentrated in a few locations (primarily refugees from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and the former Yugoslavia), but later shifted its focus and began to admit refugees representing over 50 nationalities per year. Today, officials from the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) often conduct refugee applicant interviews in remote locations and focus on the individuals and populations who most need third country resettlement opportunities.

While maintaining the United States' leadership role in humanitarian protection, an integral part of this mission is to ensure that refugee resettlement opportunities go only to those who are eligible for such protection and who do not present a risk to the safety and security of our country. Accordingly, the USRAP is committed to deterring and detecting fraud among those seeking to resettle in the United States and continues to employ rigorous security measures to protect against threats to our national security.

Many refugees resettled to the United States have enriched our nation by bringing new ideas and innovation to our country. The USRAP is premised on the idea that refugees should become economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible. The Department of State works domestically with agencies participating in the Reception and Placement (R&P) program to ensure that refugees receive services during the first 90 days after arrival in accordance with established standards. During and after the initial resettlement period, the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) provides technical assistance and funding to states, the District of Columbia, and nonprofit organizations to help refugees become self-sufficient and integrated into U.S. society. ORR programs use formula and discretionary grants to provide cash and medical assistance, employment and training programs, and other services to newly arriving and recently arrived refugees. Refugees arriving in the United States are expected to be future U.S. citizens. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), refugees are immediately authorized to work upon resettlement in the United States, and after one year in this country are required to apply for lawful permanent resident status. Five years after admission, a refugee who has been granted lawful permanent resident status is eligible to apply for citizenship.

II. Overview of U.S. Affirmative Asylum Processing

The United States' humanitarian support for refugees extends beyond the refugee admissions program. Every year, people come to the United States seeking protection because they have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Those found eligible for asylum may be permitted to remain in the United States. Therefore, it is important, when considering our nation's humanitarian response to consider not only refugee resettlement but also the work being done and the challenges confronted in providing asylum to tens of thousands of refugees who are already in the United States, many of whom have first made those claims upon arrival at the border or soon after crossing into the United States.

The United States has seen a substantial increase in the number of individuals seeking protection domestically over the last few years. Officials from the DHS/USCIS Asylum Division are responsible for adjudicating asylum applications filed affirmatively by individuals physically

present in the United States as well as conducting screening interviews for individuals apprehended at or near the Southwest Border who claim they are afraid to return to their home country.[2] In FY 2016, USCIS screened nearly 93,000 individuals who claimed a credible fear, including those apprehended at or near the border, nearly double the number of individuals screened the previous year and almost seven times the number screened as recently as FY2012. In FY2016, affirmative asylum application filings increased to over 100,000 for the first time in 20 years, reaching nearly 115,000 new filings. This was an increase of over 30,000 filings from the previous fiscal year, and double the number of filings received in FY2014. Through the third quarter of FY2017, USCIS has already received 61,063 credible fear referrals and 111,218 new affirmative asylum applications.

Because individuals in the credible fear screening process are detained while they await their interviews with USCIS asylum officers, USCIS has prioritized these cases for the last several years. To process these requests in a timely manner, USCIS has had to shift asylum officers from the affirmative asylum caseload to the credible fear caseload. Additional asylum officer resources were also diverted from asylum case processing over the previous two fiscal years to support increased overseas refugee processing. This diversion of resources, when coupled with the significant increase in the number of affirmative asylum filings, has resulted in a growing backlog of affirmative asylum cases. That backlog has increased from approximately 15,000 at the end of FY2012 to approximately 275,000 at the end of the 3rd quarter of FY2017, and will surpass 300,000 cases early in FY2018.

Delays in the timely processing of asylum applications are detrimental to legitimate asylum seekers. Furthermore, while a series of security checks are initiated when an asylum application is filed, lingering backlogs can be exploited and used to undermine the security and integrity of the country's asylum system. As such, in considering how to allocate its available resources for humanitarian work in FY 2018, DHS/USCIS is prioritizing adjudication of asylum cases to address this growing backlog, while still providing a portion of its resources to continue refugee processing activities.

---

[2] The U.S. Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) also plays a significant role in the adjudication of asylum claims. Individuals found to have a credible fear during the protection screening process are placed into removal proceedings with EOIR where they can file for asylum or other forms of protection with an immigration judge. Affirmative asylum applicants who are not approved by USCIS and are not otherwise in lawful status in the United States are referred by USCIS to EOIR for removal proceedings, where the applicant can renew his or her asylum claim before the immigration judge. Finally, individuals illegally residing in the United States who are placed in removal proceedings with EOIR may file an asylum application with EOIR as a defense to removal, even if the person has not previously filed an affirmative asylum application with USCIS. Again, that asylum claim would be decided by the immigration judge.

TABLE I
CREDIBLE FEAR CASES COMPLETED – FY 2013 TO FY 2017

CREDIBLE FEAR CASES	FY-13	FY-14	FY-15	FY-16	FY-17 THRU Q3	FY-17 (PROJECTED)
REFERRALS RECEIVED	36,035	51,001	48,052	94,048	61,063	78,600
COMPLETED	36,174	48,637	48,415	92,990	62,757	78,800
FEAR FOUND	30,393	35,456	33,988	73,081	47,883	---
FEAR NOT FOUND	2,587	8,977	8,097	9,697	6,826	---
CLOSED	3,194	4,204	6,330	10,212	8,048	---

TABLE II
ASYLUM RECEIPTS AND PENDING – FY 2013 TO FY 2017

AFFIRMATIVE ASYLUM CASES	FY-13	FY-14	FY-15	FY-16	FY-17 THRU Q3	FY-17 (PROJECTED)
NEW RECEIPTS	44,446	56,912	83,254	114,927	111,172	145,300
APPROVALS	10,981	10,811	14,344	9,538	9,595	---
DENIALS/REFERRALS/ CLOSED	17,400	18,161	22,980	20,189	22,696	---
PENDING CASES	32,526	61,479	108,725	194,986	274,986	290,000

--- USCIS does not calculate projections for decision outcomes because all cases are adjudicated on an individualized, case by case basis.

III. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM FOR FY 2018

PROPOSED CEILINGS

TABLE III

REFUGEE ADMISSIONS IN FY 2016 AND FY 2017
PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS BY REGION FOR FY 2018[3]

REGION	FY 2016 ACTUAL ARRIVALS	FY 2017 CEILING	FY 2017 PROJECTED ARRIVALS	PROPOSED FY2018 CEILING
Africa	31,624	35,000	19,700	**19,000**
East Asia	12,518	12,000	5,200	**5,000**
Europe and Central Asia	3,957	4,000	5,100	**2,000**
Latin America/Caribbean	1,340	5,000	1,600	**1,500**
Near East/South Asia	35,555	40,000	21,900	**17,500**
Regional Subtotal	84,994	96,000	53,500	**45,000**
Unallocated Reserve		14,000		
Total	84,994	110,000	53,500	**45,000**

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 101(a)(42) refugee definition includes multiple elements including that, generally, to be considered a refugee a person must be outside his or her country of nationality or, if stateless, outside his or her country of last habitual residence. Additionally, under the INA § 101(a)(42)(B), the President may specify circumstances under which individuals who are within their countries of nationality or last habitual residence may be considered a refugee for purposes of admission to the United States. The FY 2017 refugee admissions program included in-country processing for specified persons in Iraq, Cuba, Eurasia and the Baltics, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. Persons for whom resettlement is requested by a U.S. ambassador in any location in the world may also be considered, with the understanding that those within their countries of nationality or last habitual residence will only be referred to the USRAP following Department of State consultation with DHS/USCIS.

[3] These proposed figures assume enactment by Congress of the President's budget levels related to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program elements.

The proposed FY 2018 ceiling has been established taking into account the number of cases that have been interviewed and tentatively approved, but not yet traveled to the United States; historical data and projections to determine how many refugees can be interviewed using enhanced screening methods; analysis of staffing needs for other humanitarian protection priorities, including processing asylum claims filed by applicants present in the United States; and the need to work with the law enforcement and intelligence communities to assess their resource capacity for employing enhanced screening methods.

Unallocated Reserve

This proposal does not include unallocated admissions numbers to be used if needed for additional refugee admissions from any region. In prior years, the unallocated reserve gave the executive branch flexibility to resettle individuals in unforeseen circumstances, without needing to formally adjust the ceiling. The unallocated numbers have been used only following notification to Congress.

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

Eligibility Criteria

The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is responsible for coordinating and managing the USRAP. A critical part of this responsibility is determining which individuals or groups from among the millions of refugees worldwide will have access to the USRAP for resettlement consideration. PRM coordinates within the Department of State, as well as with DHS/USCIS and other agencies, in carrying out this responsibility.

Section 207(a)(3) of the INA states that the USRAP shall allocate admissions among refugees "of special humanitarian concern to the United States in accordance with a determination made by the President after appropriate consultation." Which individuals are "of special humanitarian concern" to the United States for the purpose of refugee resettlement consideration is determined through the USRAP priority system. There are currently three priorities or categories of cases:

- Priority 1 – Individual cases referred by designated entities to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement;
- Priority 2 – Groups of special concern designated by the Department of State as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement; and
- Priority 3 – Individual cases from designated nationalities granted access for purposes of reunification with family members already in the United States.

(Note: Refugees resettled in the United States may also seek the admission of spouses and unmarried children under 21 who are still abroad by filing a "Following to Join" petition, which obviates the need for a separate refugee claim adjudication. This option is described in more detail in the discussion of Following to Join cases below.)

Access to the USRAP under one of the above-listed processing priorities does not necessarily mean an applicant meets the statutory definition of a "refugee" or is admissible to the United States under the INA. Applicants who are eligible for access to the USRAP within the established priorities are presented to DHS/USCIS officers for interview. The ultimate

determination as to whether an applicant can be approved for classification as a refugee is made by DHS/USCIS in accordance with criteria set forth in the INA and various security protocols.

Although the access categories to the USRAP are referred to as "processing priorities," it is important to note that entering the program under a certain priority does not establish precedence in the order in which cases will be processed. Once cases are established as eligible for access under one of the three processing priorities, they all undergo the same processing steps.

PRIORITY 1 – INDIVIDUAL REFERRALS

Priority 1 (P-1) allows consideration of refugee claims from persons of any nationality,[4] usually with compelling protection needs, for whom resettlement appears to be the appropriate durable solution. Priority 1 cases are identified and referred to the program by UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or a designated NGO. UNHCR, which has the international mandate to provide protection to refugees worldwide, has historically referred the vast majority of cases to the United States under this priority. Some NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in locations where there are large concentrations of refugees have also undergone training by PRM and DHS/USCIS and have been designated as eligible to provide Priority 1 referrals.

PRM and DHS/USCIS will work closely with UNHCR to ensure that, in addition to referrals of refugees with compelling protection needs, referrals may also take into account certain criteria that enhance a refugee's likelihood of successful assimilation and contribution to the United States.

Process for Priority 1 Individual Referral Applications

Priority 1 (P-1) referrals from UNHCR and NGOs are submitted to the appropriate Department of State Regional Refugee Coordinator, who forwards the referrals to the appropriate Resettlement Support Center (RSC) for case processing and scheduling of the DHS/USCIS interview. PRM's Office of Admissions reviews embassy referrals for completeness and may consult with DHS/USCIS in considering these referrals.

A U.S. ambassador may make a Priority 1 referral for persons still in their country of origin if the ambassador determines that such cases are in need of exceptional treatment and the Departments of State (PRM) and DHS/USCIS concur.

PRIORITY 2 – GROUP REFERRALS

Priority 2 (P-2) includes specific groups whose members are in need of resettlement (within certain nationalities, clans, or ethnic groups; sometimes in specified locations) identified by the Department of State in consultation with DHS/USCIS, NGOs, UNHCR, and other experts. Some Priority 2 groups are processed in their country of origin. The process of identifying the group and its characteristics includes consideration of whether the group is of special humanitarian concern to the United States and whether individual members of the group will

[4] Referrals of North Koreans and Palestinians require State Department and DHS/USCIS concurrence before they may be granted access to the USRAP.

likely be able to qualify for admission as refugees under U.S. law. Groups may be designated as Priority 2 during the course of the year as circumstances dictate, and the need for resettlement arises. PRM plays the coordinating role for all group referrals to the USRAP.

There are two distinct models of Priority 2 access to the program: open access and predefined group access, often upon the recommendation of UNHCR. Under both models, Priority 2 designations are made based on shared characteristics that define the group. In general, these characteristics are the reason members of the group have been persecuted in the past or face persecution in the future.

The open-access model for Priority 2 group referrals allows individuals to seek access to the program on the basis of meeting designated criteria. To establish an open-access Priority 2 group, PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, and (as appropriate) with UNHCR and others, defines the specific criteria for access. Once the designation is in place, applicants may approach the program at any of the processing locations specified as available for the group to begin the application process. Applicants must demonstrate that they meet the specified criteria to establish eligibility for access to the USRAP.

The open-access model functions in the in-country programs in Eurasia and the Baltics and in Cuba. It is also used for Iranians belonging to religious minority groups and for Iraqis with links to the United States. The open-access program for individuals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras with lawfully present parents in the United States will be phased out in early FY 2018.

The RSCs responsible for handling open-access Priority 2 applications, working under the direction of PRM, make a preliminary determination as to whether individual applicants qualify for access and should be presented to DHS/USCIS for interview. Applicants who clearly do not meet the access requirements are "screened out" prior to the DHS/USCIS interview.

In contrast to an open-access group, a predefined group designation is normally based on a UNHCR recommendation that lays out eligibility criteria that should apply to individuals in a specific location. Once PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, has established the access eligibility criteria for the group, the referring entity (usually UNHCR) provides the biographical data of eligible refugee applicants for processing. This type of group referral is advantageous in situations in which the intensive labor required to generate individual UNHCR referrals would be impractical, potentially harmful to applicants due to delays, or counterproductive. Often, predefined groups are composed of persons with similar persecution claims. The predefined group referral process saves the labor intensive individual referral step and can conserve scarce UNHCR resources. In recent years, predefined groups have included certain Burmese in Thailand, certain Bhutanese in Nepal, and certain Congolese in Tanzania and Rwanda. Predefined group referrals with clear, well-defined eligibility criteria and several methods for cross-checking group membership can serve as a fraud deterrent as well, preventing non-group members from gaining access to the USRAP by falsely claiming group membership. Once an individual gains access to processing via a P-2 designation, all other processing steps are the same as for those referred by P-1, including individual pre-screening and USCIS interviews, and all security and medical checks.

FY 2018 Priority 2 Designations

In-country processing programs

The following ongoing programs that process individuals still in their country of origin under Priority 2 group designations will continue in FY 2018, all of which are "open-access" type P-2s:

Eurasia and the Baltics
This Priority 2 designation applies to Jews, Evangelical Christians, and Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox religious adherents identified in the Lautenberg Amendment, Public Law No. 101-167, § 599D, 103 Stat. 1261 (1989) (codified at 8 U.S.C. § 1157) as amended ("Lautenberg Amendment"), with close family in the United States. With annual renewal of the Lautenberg Amendment, these individuals are considered under a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution.

Cuba
Included in this Priority 2 program are human rights activists, members of persecuted religious minorities, former political prisoners, forced-labor conscripts, and persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs.

Iraqis Associated with the United States
Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the U.S. Government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, U.S. media or U.S. NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing in Iraq.

The following program that processes individuals still in their country of origin under Priority 2 group designations will be phased out in FY 2018:

Persons in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras
The Priority 2 program for certain Central American Minors (CAM) and other designated qualifying family members.

Groups of Humanitarian Concern outside the Country of Origin

The following Priority 2 groups are already designated and, in most cases, undergoing processing with significant arrivals anticipated during FY 2017. (Additional Priority 2 groups may be designated over the course of FY 2018.)

Pre-defined Group Access P-2s:

Ethnic Minorities and Others from Burma in Camps in Thailand
Under this existing Priority 2 designation, individuals who have fled Burma, are registered in one of nine refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border, are identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement, and expressed interest in third-country resettlement prior to January 2014 (depending on the location), are eligible for processing.

Ethnic Minorities from Burma in Malaysia
Under this Priority 2 designation, members of ethnic minorities from Burma who are recognized by UNHCR as refugees in Malaysia, registered by August 17, 2010, and identified as being in need of resettlement, are eligible for resettlement consideration. UNHCR has referred all P-2 cases and we will focus on resolving the residual caseload in FY2018.

Bhutanese in Nepal
Under this existing Priority 2 designation, Bhutanese refugees registered by UNHCR in camps in Nepal, identified as in need of resettlement, and who expressed interest in third-country resettlement prior to June 30, 2014, are eligible for processing. We are reaching the conclusion of this resettlement program with the vast majority of the residual caseload projected to arrive in FY2018.

Congolese in Rwanda
Under this Priority 2 designation, certain Congolese refugees in Rwanda who arrived between 1994 and 2005 were verifiably registered in 2011 or 2012 and identified as in need of resettlement are eligible for processing.

Congolese in Tanzania
Under this Priority 2 designation signed in May 2015, certain Congolese refugees registered by UNHCR in Tanzania whose residence in Nyarugusu camp was confirmed in a 2013-2014 UNHCR verification exercise are eligible for processing.

Open Access Model P-2s:

Iranian Religious Minorities
Under this Priority 2 designation, Iranian members of certain religious minorities are eligible for processing and are considered under a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution, pursuant to annual renewal of the Lautenberg Amendment as amended in 2004 by Sec. 213 of Title II, Division E, of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, P.L. 108-199, 118 Stat. 3 ("the Specter Amendment").

Iraqis Associated with the United States
Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the U.S. government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, U.S. media or U.S. NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing. This program is operating in Jordan and Egypt, in addition to the in-country program in Iraq.

Syrian Beneficiaries of Approved I-130 petitions
Under this Priority 2 designation that began in FY 2016, Syrian beneficiaries of approved I-130 immigrant visa petitions, for whom immigrant visas have not yet been issued, are eligible for refugee processing. For U.S. citizens, eligible relationships to the U.S.-based petitioner include spouse, children (regardless of age or marital status), siblings and parents. For lawful permanent residents, eligible relationships to the petitioner include spouse and unmarried children (regardless of age).

PRIORITY 3 – FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The Priority 3 (P-3) category has historically afforded USRAP access to members of designated nationalities who have immediate family members in the United States who initially entered as refugees or were granted asylum. However, as the program has evolved in recent years, including the addition of mechanisms to combat fraud, the number of refugee applicants admitted under this category has declined significantly from 27,818 at the height of its usage in 1991 to 228 in FY 2017 to date. At the beginning of each fiscal year, PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, establishes the list of nationalities eligible for processing under this priority. The PRM Assistant Secretary may modify the list during the year, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, but additions or deletions are generally made to coincide with the fiscal year.

The P-3 program has undergone significant changes in recent years. In order to qualify for access under the P-3 program, an applicant must be outside of his or her country of origin, be registered or have legal status in the country of asylum, have had an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) filed on his or her behalf by an eligible family member in the United States during a period in which the nationality was included on the eligibility list, and have been cleared for onward processing by the DHS/USCIS Refugee Access Verification Unit (RAVU).

Family members who are eligible to file an AOR are persons who were admitted to the United States as refugees or were granted asylum, including persons who are lawful permanent residents of the United States or U.S. citizens who initially were admitted to the United States as refugees or were granted asylum. The U.S.-based filer must be at least 18 years of age at the time the AOR is filed and must file the AOR within 5 years of the date he or she entered the United States as a refugee or was granted asylum. The USRAP may reject any AOR for a relationship that does not comport with public policy, such as under-age or plural marriages.

The following family members of the U.S.-based family members are qualified for P-3 access: spouse, unmarried children under 21, and/or parents. A U.S.-based family member may apply for a same-sex spouse if a legal marriage was conducted and documented. Cognizant that same-sex marriage is not legal in the vast majority of refugee-producing and refugee-hosting countries, the United States will allow a qualifying individual to file for P-3 access for a same-sex partner if he or she can provide evidence that he/she had a relationship with the partner for at least one year overseas prior to the submission of the AOR and considered that person to be his/her spouse or life partner, and that the relationship is ongoing, together with evidence that legal marriage was not an obtainable option due to social and/or legal prohibitions.

Under certain circumstances, a U.S.-based individual may file for P-3 access for an opposite-sex partner if he or she can provide evidence that he/she had a relationship with the partner for at least one year overseas prior to the submission of the AOR and considered that person to be his/her spouse or life partner, and that the relationship is ongoing, together with evidence that legal marriage was not an obtainable option due to social and/or legal prohibitions.

In addition to the qualifying family members of a U.S.-based individual identified above, the qualifying family member's spouse and unmarried children under 21 may derive refugee status from the principal applicant for refugee status.

On a case-by-case basis, an individual may be added to a qualifying family member's P-3 case if that individual:

1) lived in the same household as the qualifying family member in the country of nationality or, if stateless, last habitual residence; AND
2) was part of the same economic unit as the qualifying family member in the country of nationality or, if stateless, last habitual residence; AND
3) demonstrates exceptional and compelling humanitarian circumstances that justify inclusion on the qualifying family member's case.

These individuals are not "spouses" or "children", under INA 207(c)(2)(A) and thus cannot derive their refugee status from the principal applicant. They must, therefore, independently establish that they qualify as a refugee.

FY 2018 Priority 3 Nationalities

P-3 processing is available to individuals of the following nationalities:

Afghanistan
Burundi
Central African Republic
Cuba
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Iran
Iraq
Mali
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria

FOLLOWING-TO-JOIN FAMILY REUNIFICATION PETITIONS

Under 8 CFR Section 207.7, a principal refugee admitted to the United States may request following-to-join benefits for his or her spouse and/or unmarried children under the age of 21 who were not previously granted refugee status. Once in the United States, and within two years of admission, the refugee may file a Form I-730 Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition[5] with DHS/USCIS for each eligible family member. If the Form I-730 petition for a beneficiary residing abroad is approved or transferred by DHS/USCIS' Service Center Operations Directorate, preliminarily or finally, (signifying adequate proof of eligibility based on a file

[5] This petition is used to file for the relatives of both refugees and asylees, also known as Visa 93 and Visa 92 cases respectively. The USRAP handles only Visa 93 cases, which are counted within the annual refugee admissions ceiling. Visa 92 cases are not considered to be refugee admissions cases and are not counted in the number of refugees admitted annually.

review), the State Department's National Visa Center forwards the petition to the USCIS office,[6] embassy, or consulate nearest to the location of the beneficiary for adjudication or travel eligibility determination.

Individuals who gain access to the USRAP through the Form I-730 petition are interviewed by DHS/USCIS or consular officers to verify the relationships claimed in the petition, as well as to examine any applicable bars to status and admissibility to the United States. Beneficiaries are not required to establish past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution, as they derive their status from the refugee relative in the United States who filed the petition. Beneficiaries of I-730 petitions may be processed within their country of origin or in other locations

Certain relatives in the United States may file an I-730 Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition and seek Priority 3 access for their qualifying family members (if eligible) simultaneously. In some cases, the I-730 petition will be the only option as the family members are still in their country of origin. It is also important to note that unlike the P-3 process, the I-730 or "follow-to-join" process does not allow the relative in the United States to petition for parents.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS), U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS)

Section 207(c) of the INA grants the Secretary of DHS authority to admit, at his or her discretion, any refugee who is not firmly resettled in a third country, who is determined to be of special humanitarian concern, and who is admissible to the United States. The authority to determine eligibility for refugee status has been delegated to DHS/USCIS. In 2005, DHS/USCIS restructured the Refugee Affairs Division and established the Refugee Corps, a specially trained cadre of officers dedicated to adjudicating applications for refugee status. The Refugee Corps provides DHS/USCIS with the necessary resources and flexibility to respond to an increasingly diversified refugee admissions program.

In FY 2017, DHS/USCIS deployed over 300 staff (including adjudicating officers, fraud detection and national security officers, supervisors, and fingerprinters)[7] to over 50 countries around the world to process refugee applicants. In addition, DHS/USCIS staff permanently posted at USCIS international offices conducted refugee interviews in several countries where they are stationed, including Russia, India, Kenya and Thailand. DHS/USCIS also devotes substantial resources to security vetting, anti-fraud, and training related to refugee processing, and it has strong partnerships with the law enforcement, national security, and intelligence communities to maintain and promote the integrity of the USRAP.

In order to support the increased refugee admissions ceilings in FY 2016 and FY 2017, the Refugee Affairs Division was authorized to increase its staffing from 158 in FY 2015 to 354 employees in FY 2017, which includes adjudicators, headquarters staff, and supervisors/managers. However, in addition to processing refugee applicants for U.S. resettlement, the United States has seen a substantial increase in the number of individuals

---

[6] As of July 2017, the adjudication of I-730 petitions transferred to all USCIS international field offices are made by USCIS international staff.

[7] This figure includes staffing estimates for Fourth Quarter circuit rides. In addition, some staff travel on more than one circuit ride within the Fiscal Year.

seeking protection domestically. In FY 2017, USCIS received more than 135,000 affirmative asylum applications and screened over 75,000 individuals claiming a credible fear, including those who were apprehended at or near the Southwest Border. As a result, the number of asylum applications pending with DHS/USCIS has grown considerably to nearly 300,000, as resources were diverted from adjudicating affirmative asylum cases to handling the surge of credible fear screening requests along the Southwest Border and supporting increased refugee processing. In considering how to allocate its available resources for humanitarian work in FY 2018, DHS/USCIS is prioritizing adjudication of asylum cases to address the growing backlog, while still providing a portion of its resources to continue refugee processing activities.

The Eligibility Determination

In order to be approved for classification as a refugee, an applicant must meet the refugee definition as defined in § 101(a)(42) of the INA. That section provides that a refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or last habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. As mentioned above, the President may specify special circumstances under which a person can meet the refugee definition when he or she is still within his or her country of origin. The refugee definition excludes a person who has ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Further, an applicant who has been "firmly resettled" in a third country may not be admitted as a refugee under INA Section 207. Applicants are also subject to various statutory grounds of inadmissibility, including criminal, security, and public health grounds, some of which may be waived or from which applicants may be exempted.

A DHS/USCIS officer conducts a non-adversarial, in-person interview of each refugee applicant designed to elicit information about the principal applicant's claim for refugee status and any grounds of ineligibility and to assess credibility. The officer asks questions about the applicant's experiences in the country of origin, including problems and fears about returning (or remaining), as well as questions concerning the principal applicant's activities, background, and criminal history. The officer also considers evidence about conditions in the country of origin and assesses the applicant's credibility and claim.

Background Security Checks

Refugee applicants of all nationalities are required to undergo background security checks. Security checks include biographic name checks for all refugee applicants and biometric (fingerprint) checks for refugee applicants within certain age limits. PRM, through its overseas Resettlement Support Centers, initiates required biographic name checks, while DHS/USCIS is responsible for collecting biometric data for screening. Biographic and biometric information is vetted against a broad array of law enforcement, intelligence community, and other relevant databases to help confirm identity, to check for any criminal or other derogatory information (including watchlist information), and to identify information that could inform lines of questioning during the interview. Refugee applicants must clear all required security checks prior to final approval of their application.

In addition, PRM and DHS/USCIS work continually with interagency partners to identify opportunities to enhance security screening for refugee applicants. Beginning in 2014,

DHS/USCIS introduced Syrian Enhanced Review to provide intelligence-driven support to refugee adjudicators. This now includes social media checks, and the enhanced review methodology is being expanded to additional refugee applicant populations. Pursuant to Executive Order 13780, Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States, a 120-day review is currently underway to identify additional procedures that should be used to ensure that individuals seeking admission as refugees do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States.

In FY 2018, DHS/USCIS plans to utilize additional screening methods and identification tools to ensure that refugee applicants do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States. A full review of additional security enhancements and anti-fraud measures, including a review of documentary requirements, is currently being developed pursuant to Executive Order 13780, Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States.

In addition, DHS/USCIS is also exploring steps that may be taken to strengthen its adjudication of requests for Refugee Travel Documents in cases where the requesting refugee or asylee has traveled or intends to travel to the country from which he or she fled persecution.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION (PRM)

Overseas Processing Services

In most processing locations, PRM engages an NGO, an international organization (IO), or U.S. embassy contractors to manage a RSC that assists in the processing of refugee applicants for admission to the United States. RSC staff pre-screen applicants to determine preliminarily if they qualify for one of the applicable processing priorities and to prepare cases for DHS/USCIS adjudication. The RSCs assist applicants in completing documentary requirements and schedule DHS/USCIS refugee eligibility interviews. If an applicant is conditionally approved for resettlement by DHS/USCIS, RSC staff guide the refugee through post-adjudication steps, including obtaining medical screening exams and attending cultural orientation programs. The RSC obtains sponsorship assurances and, once all required steps are completed, including all necessary security clearances, refers the case to IOM for transportation to the United States.

In FY 2017, NGOs (Church World Service, HIAS, the International Rescue Committee, and the International Catholic Migration Commission) worked under cooperative agreements with PRM as RSCs at locations in Austria (covering Austria and Israel), Kenya (covering sub-Saharan Africa), Thailand (covering East Asia), and Turkey (covering Turkey and Lebanon). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported refugee processing activities based in Ecuador, Jordan, Russia, and Nepal which covered Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia. The Department of State supported refugee processing in Havana, Cuba.

Cultural Orientation

The Department of State strives to ensure that refugees who are accepted for admission to the United States are prepared for the profound life changes they will experience by providing cultural orientation programs prior to departure for the United States as well as upon arrival. It is

critical that refugees have a realistic idea of what their new lives will be like, what services will be available to them, and what their responsibilities will be.

Every refugee family is offered a copy of Welcome to the United States, a resettlement guidebook developed with contributions from refugee resettlement workers, resettled refugees, and government officials. The current edition is available in twelve languages: Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Dari, English, Farsi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili. The previous (2007) edition is still available in six other languages: Amharic, French, Kirundi, Russian, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese. Through this book, refugees have access to accurate information about the initial resettlement period before they arrive in the United States. The Welcome to the United States refugee orientation video is available in twelve languages: Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Dari, English, Farsi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili. The 2004 version of the video is available in four other languages: Karenni, Kirundi, Russian, and Tigrinya. All of these materials are available to download free of charge at www.COResourceExchange.org.

In addition, the Department of State funds one- to five-day pre-departure orientation classes for eligible refugees at sites throughout the world. In an effort to further bridge the information gap for certain refugee groups, brief video presentations featuring the experience of recently resettled refugees of the same ethnic group are made available to refugee applicants overseas. Groups featured include refugees from Bhutan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Darfur, and Iraq. *Faces of Resettlement* shows five individuals who entered the United States as refugees, from Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, Iraq, and Sudan. Each of them tells their own story of the ways in which they are rebuilding their lives in their new communities. *Faces of Resettlement* also includes interviews with receiving community members. This video is accompanied by discussion guides for community members, service providers, and refugees. In order to provide an overview of the USRAP to refugee applicants, a short animated video was produced outlining the steps of the process from referral to life in the United States. In an effort to reach Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, a population that does not routinely have access to pre-departure classroom cultural orientation, a series of four videos was produced. The videos feature several SIV families and groups of single SIVs that have been resettled to the United States.

The Department of State also offers a curriculum for cultural orientation after refugees' arrival in the United States. Based on Reception and Placement (R&P) Program objectives and indicators, the curriculum was developed to provide domestic cultural orientation providers with lesson plans, tools, and techniques to help refugees develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will need to adjust to new life in the United States. In addition to lesson plans, the publication contains a User's Guide; a section on staff preparation; and a section on tools for trainers and orientation development, with sub-sections on topics such as instructional approach, working with groups of different sizes, incorporating English into orientation, and conducting needs assessments. A companion toolkit includes a model assessment intended to provide domestic orientation providers with a sample tool for assessing refugee understanding of orientation topics during the R&P period.

Transportation

The Department of State funds the international transportation of refugees resettled in the United States through a program administered by IOM. The cost of transportation is provided to refugees in the form of a loan. Refugees are responsible for repaying these loans over time, beginning six months after their arrival, although it is possible to request a deferral based on inability to begin paying at that time.

Reception and Placement (R&P)

In FY 2017, PRM funded cooperative agreements with nine private resettlement agencies to provide initial resettlement services to refugees arriving in the United States. The R&P agencies are responsible for providing initial reception and core services (including housing, furnishings, clothing and food, as well as assistance with access to medical, employment, educational, and social services) to arriving refugees. These services are provided according to standards of care within a framework of outcomes and indicators developed jointly by the NGO community, state refugee coordinators, and U.S. government agencies. The nine organizations maintain a nationwide network of 328 affiliated offices in 191 locations to provide services. Two of the organizations also maintain a network of 30 affiliated offices in 29 locations through which unaccompanied refugee minors are placed into foster care, a program administered and funded by HHS/ORR.

Using R&P funds from PRM supplemented by funds and in-kind contributions from private and other sources, the participating agencies provide the following services, consistent with the terms of the R&P cooperative agreement:

- Sponsorship;
- Pre-arrival resettlement planning, including placement;
- Reception on arrival;
- Basic needs support (including housing, furnishings, food, and clothing) for at least 30 days;
- Cultural orientation;
- Assistance with access to health, employment, education, and other services, as needed; and
- Development and implementation of an initial resettlement service plan for each refugee.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS), OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT (ORR)

Through the United States Refugee Act of 1980, Congress directed HHS/ORR to provide refugees with resettlement assistance that includes employment training, English language training, cash assistance (in a manner that promotes early independence), and job placement – including providing women with equal opportunities to employment as men. ORR's mission is to help refugees transition into the United States by providing benefits and assistance to achieve self-sufficiency and become integrated members of society as soon as possible. To this end, ORR funds and administers various programs, some of which are highlighted below.

State-Administered Programs, State Replacement Designees and Wilson-Fish Programs

Under ORR's state-administered, replacement designees (RD) or Wilson-Fish (WF) programs, refugees who are not eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible to receive up to eight months of Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). Refugees not eligible for Medicaid are eligible to receive up to eight months of Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) upon arrival. In addition, each refugee receives a medical screening within the initial resettlement period.

State-administered programs operate a publically administered RCA program in thirty states. In addition, there are four states that operate through a Public Private Program (PPP) model in which the state enters into a partnership agreement with local resettlement agencies for the provision of RCA.

The WF program, operating in twelve States and one county, is an alternative to the traditional state-administered program, and is usually administered by local resettlement agencies. The WF program emphasizes early employment and economic self-sufficiency by integrating cash assistance, case management, and employment services, and by incorporating innovative strategies for the provision of cash assistance (e.g. financial bonuses for early employment). WF programs also serve as a replacement for the state when the state government declines to participate in the ORR-funded refugee assistance program.

In the past year, Kansas, Maine, New Jersey and Texas withdrew from the ORR funded Refugee Assistance Program and now operate as RDs. In these states a local resettlement agency has been designated by ORR to coordinate and administer the provision of assistance and services.

ORR also provides states/WF programs with *Formula Refugee Social Services (RSS)* and *Targeted Assistance (TAG)* funds. ORR distributes these funds based on arrival numbers and refugee concentration levels in counties with a high utilization of public assistance. Funding is time limited, and refugees can only access RSS and TAG services up to five years after arrival. These services include: employment services, on-the-job training, English language instruction, vocational training, case management, translation/interpreter services, social adjustment services, health-related services, home management, childcare, and transportation.

Additionally, to assist specific groups of refugees, ORR administers specialized programs through states/WF programs, including Cuban-Haitian, Older Refugees, Refugee School Impact, and Targeted Assistance.

ORR Matching Grant Program

The ORR Voluntary Agencies Matching Grant Program (MG) is provided through the 9 national resettlement agencies that provide R&P services and their resettlement affiliates in 42 states. The objective of MG is to guide newly arrived refugee households toward economic self-sufficiency through employment within four to six months of program eligibility (which usually begins on the date of arrival in the United States). In MG, self-sufficiency is defined as total household income from employment that enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of public cash assistance. For each MG participant, ORR awards $2,200 to participating national resettlement agencies, which then allocate funds to their networks of local affiliates. Agencies provide a 50 percent match to every federal dollar.

Through the ORR Matching Grant Program, local service providers ensure core maintenance services for a minimum of 120 days which include housing, transportation, food, and a cash allowance. Clients also receive intensive case management and employment services throughout the 180 day service period. Refugees who are unable to attain self-sufficiency by the end of the MG service period (day 180) may access RCA for the remainder of their eight month eligibility period. In FY 2016, nearly 35,000 individuals were newly enrolled in the program, and, of those who completed the 180 day service period, 84 percent achieved self-sufficiency. Approximately 30 percent of refugees who arrived in FY 2016 participated in the ORR MG Program.

ORR Refugee Health

ORR addresses the health and emotional well-being of refugees by providing technical assistance on Refugee Medical Assistance and domestic refugee medical screening, supporting mental health awareness, managing the Services for Survivors of Torture and Refugee Health Promotion grant programs, and other health initiatives.

ORR Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program

ORR provides funds to 15 states which administer over 20 Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) programs. States contract with local licensed foster care agencies that provide specialized placements and services to URMs. URMs live in various placements including: traditional and therapeutic foster homes, group homes, semi-independent and independent living and residential treatment centers, and homes of relatives. URMs receive various services including: English language training, educational and vocational training, cultural preservation, social integration, family tracing, permanency planning, independent living, medical care, and mental health care. ORR regulations require states to provide services to URM in parity with the state's Title IV-B foster care plan.

Other ORR Discretionary Refugee Service Programs

ORR also provides funding to non-profit agencies to carry out special initiatives or programs for refugees including: case management, ethnic community development, career pathways, individual development accounts, microenterprise development, and agricultural projects.

The Preferred Communities Program is implemented through the nine resettlement agencies and focuses on building capacity to receive an increasingly vulnerable refugee population. The program supports long-term case management services to the more at-risk populations including, but not limited to, women heads of household and refugees with significant medical and mental health needs. Additionally, the program has allowed resettlement agencies the flexibility to address unanticipated arrivals such as refugees arriving in underserved areas, and secondary migrants.

ORR Technical Assistance

ORR provides technical assistance (TA) to resettlement stakeholders through various organizations that have relevant expertise. Currently ORR's TA providers assist stakeholders in the areas of community engagement/integration, employment, mental health, youth initiatives, services to survivors of torture, and monitoring.

IV. REGIONAL PROGRAMS

TABLE IV

PROPOSED FY 2018 REGIONAL CEILINGS BY PRIORITY

AFRICA	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*13,500*
Priority 2 Groups	*5,000*
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	*500*
Total Proposed:	***19,000***
EAST ASIA	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*750*
Priority 2 Groups	*4,150*
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	*100*
Total Proposed:	***5,000***
EUROPE / CENTRAL ASIA	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*90*
Priority 2 Groups	*1,900*
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	*10*
Total Proposed:	***2,000***
LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*200*
Priority 2 Groups	*1,250*
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	*50*
Total Proposed:	***1,500***
NEAR EAST / SOUTH ASIA	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	*8,400*
Priority 2 Groups	*9,000*
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	*100*
Total Proposed:	***17,500***
UNALLOCATED RESERVE	***0***
TOTAL PROPOSED CEILING:	***45,000***

AFRICA

There are currently over 5.6 million refugees across the African continent, constituting over 30 percent of the global refugee population. Refugee numbers in Africa increased by 1.5 million since 2015 due to new or intensified conflicts across the continent. There has been some progress finding opportunities for local integration in host countries in Africa but limited refugee repatriation. Third country resettlement has increased from the continent but falls short of needs.

Ongoing conflicts in three countries – Burundi, Nigeria, and South Sudan – are primarily responsible for the growth in refugee numbers in 2016 and 2017. In Burundi, early 2015 election-related violence and the aftermath forced over 400,000 refugees to flee to neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda; this outflow has continued but slowed throughout 2017. Instability and violence in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger have displaced more than 2.4 million people in the region, including 1.9 million Nigerian internally displaced persons (IDPs) and some 200,000 Nigerian refugees to neighboring countries. Cameroon, Niger and Chad continue to struggle with rising numbers of IDPs. In South Sudan, ethnic-fueled political conflict that erupted in December 2013 continues. Nearly two million South Sudanese are internally displaced and total refugee numbers have now surpassed two million.

Conflict in the DRC and Sudan has also continued to generate new refugee outflows over the past few years. Conflict in eastern DRC since mid-2012 has led steady flows of Congolese to seek asylum in Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, while an uptick in violence in the Kasai Province in 2017 has sent a new wave of refugees into Angola. The total number of Congolese refugees is over 600,000 and over 3.5 million are believed to be displaced internally. Conflict in Sudan's Darfur region continued to displace people internally. The ongoing conflict with rebel groups in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states has forced some 300,000 Sudanese refugees to flee to South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya since June 2011. The steady outflow of Eritreans also continues, to refugee camps in Ethiopia and eastern Sudan, and also further north as Eritreans attempt to migrate to Europe and beyond.

Conflicts beyond the continent have also augmented Africa's refugee numbers, primarily in the neighboring Near East region. North Africa has long hosted large numbers of Palestinian refugees. The ongoing crisis in Syria has added more than 140,000 new refugees to the region, including 120,000 in Egypt and 18,000 in Libya. Since March 2015 the crisis in Yemen has led more than 188,300 people of multiple nationalities living in Yemen to flee to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. No progress was made over the past year in seeking a resolution to the Western Saharan conflict that would enable an estimated 90,000 Sahrawi refugees in Algeria to return home.

Most African countries honor the principle of first asylum and most have allowed refugees to remain – and in some cases to effectively integrate economically and/or socially – until voluntary repatriation is possible. Some countries, such as Cameroon, and Egypt, have forcibly returned refugees over the past year. For countries growing weary of hosting large refugee caseloads, we continue to advocate for first asylum and inclusion for refugees. For those countries that lack formal mechanisms for asylum, we continue, in consultation with UNHCR, to advocate for the establishment of such systems.

Religious Freedom

In Sub-Saharan Africa, people are generally free to practice their chosen religions. Governments regularly provide for and respect freedom of religion, although in some countries, such as Eritrea and Sudan, religious freedom is limited, particularly in the midst of ethnic and other conflicts. In other countries, such as Nigeria and Mauritania, religious freedom is restricted through the use of blasphemy laws.

The Government of the State of Eritrea is responsible for severe religious freedom abuses. In recent years the country has engaged in serious religious repression by harassing, arresting, and detaining members of independent evangelical groups, including Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses (who lost certain rights of citizenship for not participating in the 1993 national referendum). Detainees are held in harsh conditions and some have died in custody. The government has also sought greater control over the four state-approved religious groups: the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church, and the Sunni Islamic community. The government reportedly holds at various locations individuals who are jailed for their religious affiliation. Often detainees are not formally charged, accorded due process, or allowed access to their families. While many are ostensibly jailed for evasion of military conscription, significant numbers were being held solely for their religious beliefs. The U.S. Committee for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) estimates that between 1,200 and 3,000 individuals are being detained on religious grounds. At least three Jehovah's Witnesses had been detained since September 24, 1994 (almost 22 years), reportedly for evading compulsory military service, a term far beyond the maximum legal penalty of two years for refusing to perform national service.

In Sudan, the government continues to deny permits for the construction of new churches, detain church members, close or demolish pre-existing churches, restrict non-Muslim religious groups and missionaries from operating in or entering the country, censor religious materials and leaders, and arrest or intimidate suspected proselytizers. The government places restrictions on non-Muslims in a manner that is inconsistent with domestic and international obligations to uphold freedom of religion. Although there is no penalty for converting from another religion to Islam, converting from Islam is punishable by death. Authorities express their strong prejudice against conversion by occasionally subjecting converts to intense scrutiny, ostracism, and intimidation, or by encouraging converts to leave the country.

Both Eritrea and Sudan are currently designated by the Secretary of State as Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for engaging in or tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. The USRAP continues to be available through Priority 1 referrals to Sudanese, Eritrean, and other refugees who are victims of religious intolerance. Refugees from Eritrea and Sudan with certain refugee or asylee family members in the United States have access to the USRAP through Priority 3.

In Somalia the provisional federal constitution provides for freedom of religion within limits, although it enshrines Islam as the state religion. The law prohibits proselytism for any religion other than Islam. Since its inception in July 2012, the Federal Government of Somalia has made incremental progress to establish institutions and expanding its authority, but its capacity to enforce the provisional constitution remains extremely limited, particularly outside of Mogadishu. There have been reports that non-Muslim individuals experience discrimination, violence, and detention because of their religious beliefs. Refugees from Somalia with certain

refugee or asylee family members in the United States also have access to the USRAP through Priority 3.

In Nigeria, the constitution guarantees religious freedom, but religious groups reported instances in which both the state and federal governments often did not investigate, prosecute, or punish those responsible for abuses committed due to religious intolerance, such as the November 3 release of five Muslim men arrested for the June 2 killing of a Christian woman in Kano who was accused of blasphemy for preventing a Muslim from praying in front of her shop. There were at least three separate cases in Kano State in 2016 in which clerics and their followers were sentenced to death for blasphemy. All cases are on appeal. There were religiously-motivated attacks by mobs; one instance led to the deaths of eight Muslims in Zamfara State when Muslim students burned down the home of another Muslim for helping a Christian accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad. A mob killed a Christian man in May in Niger State for posting a statement considered blasphemous against Islam.

Boko Haram continued to carry out attacks targeting citizens who did not adhere to its radical beliefs. In 2016, the Kaduna State government banned the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the country's largest Shia group, following the 2015 altercation between the army and the IMN members.

There were incidents of killings and other religiously motivated violence, including clashes between Christian farmers and Fulani Muslim herdsmen. According to the Catholic Diocese, by late December 2016, 808 people had died in attacks on 53 villages in clashes between Christian farmers and Fulani Muslim herdsmen in the Middle Belt.

In Mauritania, only Muslims may be citizens, and apostasy is a crime punishable by death. In April, 2016, the Regional Court of Appeals in Nouadhibou upheld the 2014 conviction of Mohammad Cheikh Ould Mkheytir ("MKheytir"), a blogger charged with apostasy and sentenced to death after he published an online article the government said criticized the Prophet Mohammad and implicitly blamed the nation's religious establishment for the plight of the country's *forgeron* (blacksmith) caste, which traditionally suffers discrimination. At the end of 2016, the Supreme Court sent the case back to an appellate court to be re-tried. During the appellate court trial, protesters called for the death of both Mkheytir and the human rights activist who defended him. Authorities issued an arrest warrant for the leader of the protests but did not arrest him.

Voluntary Repatriation

Voluntary repatriation to improved conditions in the home country is the most common and desirable durable solution, however there have been few refugee returns on the continent in recent years. Recent outflows have far surpassed repatriation reversing a trend of falling refugee numbers since the mid-1990s. Large-scale organized repatriations to Angola, Liberia, and Rwanda are largely complete, but residual populations remain. In the case of Burundi and South Sudan, many who returned in the early 2000s have fled again. UNHCR recommended cessation of prima facie refugee status for refugees from Angola and Liberia effective June 30, 2012, and for pre-1999 caseload Rwandan refugees effective June 30, 2013. Efforts continue to repatriate those who still wish to return, and to locally integrate residual populations where asylum countries agree to provide permanent residence or citizenship. The local integration of former Angolan refugees in Zambia has progressed, though resources are a constraint.

Smaller-scale repatriation efforts continue throughout the continent. In West Africa, out of an estimated 300,000 individuals who fled the 2010-2011 election-related violence in Côte d'Ivoire, over 260,000 have now returned home. Repatriation was delayed in 2014 and 2015 due to the Ebola crisis and related border closures but started up again in December 2015. UNHCR sought to assist with the return of 15,000 Ivoirian refugees primarily from Liberia in 2017. In Mali, while UNHCR is not yet promoting refugee return to northern Mali, more than 40,000 refugees have returned spontaneously to safe regions under government control but periodic outbreaks of violence in 2015 in northern Mali have deterred would-be returnees and caused new refugee outflows to Niger during the year.

In East Africa, the repatriation to South Sudan that started in 2005 was largely concluded in 2011 with the return of more than 370,000 refugees. However, due to widespread conflict since 2013, all repatriation stopped and the focus continues to be the emergency response to the new refugees. UNHCR, the Government of Kenya, and the Government of Somalia signed a tripartite agreement in 2013 that established a legal framework for the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya, and UNHCR has supported the voluntary return of more than 59,000 Somalis to date to nine identified "safe" areas within Somalia. Most parts of Somalia, however, are not conducive to safe and sustainable refugee return. Despite the efforts of some asylum countries, including Israel and Sudan, to repatriate Eritrean refugees, UNHCR has strongly discouraged returns to Eritrea given ongoing political repression and harsh treatment of returnees.

In Central Africa, while there were over 500,000 refugee returns to Burundi from 2002 to 2014, election-related violence that erupted in Burundi in April 2015 has generated over 400,000 refugees to date, many of them former refugees. Although the majority of Rwandan refugees returned home in the late 1990s, some 200,000 are thought to remain in exile. With the cessation of prima facie refugee status for pre-1999 Rwandan refugees on June 30, 2013 and host country commitment to implement the cessation clause by the end of 2017, most remaining Rwandans will be required either to repatriate or to seek non-refugee means of remaining in asylum countries. UNHCR had made significant progress in repatriating Congolese to eastern DRC earlier in the past decade. However, renewed hostilities between the Congolese government and other armed groups across central and eastern DRC erased most of these gains. The relatively peaceful elections in the Central African Republic have raised hopes of refugee repatriation but while we anticipate some spontaneous returns to assess the situation, most refugees are still wary.

Local Integration

While most African countries adhere to encampment policies for refugees, many have allowed, or even encouraged, refugees to pursue economic activities, a sort of de facto integration, by providing land for refugee farmers or permitting refugees to open small businesses. Despite such de facto integration, refugees residing among the local population do not necessarily enjoy the same rights, entitlements to social services, or economic opportunities available to citizens or permanent residents. As a result, this piecemeal integration is often an interim, rather than a durable, solution for many African refugees. However, strengthened partnerships with development actors, including the World Bank, shows promise in facilitating more sustainable socio-economic integration of refugees.

In recent years, a number of African countries have offered more formal integration as a durable solution for residual refugee populations who will not or cannot repatriate. Among member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the issuance of identity documents by home governments and subsequent regularization of immigration status allows refugees to access legal residency and the right to work in host countries; Ivoirians will be the latest refugee population to benefit under these ECOWAS protocols as UNHCR pursues local integration for those who wish to remain in their countries of asylum in the coming years. Senegal offered Mauritanian refugees who wished to remain in Senegal the option of becoming Senegalese citizens in 2007, and UNHCR, in partnership with the Senegalese government, launched a campaign in 2012 to provide digitized and biometric identity cards to some 19,000 refugees (of whom 14,000 were Mauritanians). The identity card guarantees holders the same rights as Senegalese citizens, including the right to residence in the country and to travel to ECOWAS member states. In 2015, Mali provided birth certificates to some 8,000 Mauritanian refugee children, facilitating access to state services such as education and paving the way for them to eventually apply for Malian citizenship.

In Southern Africa, the Government of Zambia has offered local integration to some 20,000 former Angolan refugees and up to 4,000 Rwandans. The 2012 initiative offers permanent residence status to the former Angolan refugees mainly refugees who arrived before 1986, were born in Zambia, are married to Zambians, or otherwise have strong ties to the country. The Government of Zambia has approved over 10,000 applicants who meet eligibility criteria but residency documentation has been slow to come.

In East Africa, the Government of Tanzania has finalized citizenship for nearly 200,000 1972-era Burundi former refugees. While not offering a formal integration program, Uganda has permitted refugees to live and work outside of camps – most are in rural settlements where they have access to land or in urban areas. Ethiopia formally introduced an out-of-camp policy for Eritrean refugees in August 2010, allowing Eritreans to live outside camps if they are able to support themselves or if they have someone to sponsor them financially. Approximately 14,000 Eritreans are part of this program now. While it does not give Eritrean refugees the right to work, it does offer the ability to pursue additional educational opportunities, including tertiary education. In 2013, Sudan agreed to issue work permits to some 30,000 Eritrean refugees who wish to work outside of refugee camps in eastern Sudan, although only a handful have been issued permits to date.

Third-Country Resettlement

Given the political and economic volatility in many parts of Africa, resettlement to third countries outside the region is an essential durable solution and element of protection for certain refugees. With limited opportunities for permanent integration in many countries of asylum and the protracted nature of some refugee situations, the need for third-country resettlement of African refugees is expected to continue. In recent years, UNHCR has increasingly viewed resettlement as an important tool of protection for refugees in Africa and has increased resettlement referrals this past year.

FY 2017 U.S. Admissions

We project approximately 19,700 African refugee arrivals in FY 2017. Two countries of origin – Somalia and DRC – still account for the vast majority of U.S. refugee admissions from Africa,

followed by Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia. UNHCR's enhanced Congolese Resettlement Strategy effort has reached its stated goal to refer 50,000 DRC refugees for resettlement from Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi to resettlement countries over five years. In FY 2017, the number of Congolese resettled to the United States (more than 9,000) will equal or surpass the number of Somalis. UNHCR will continue to refer Congolese refugees from the four countries, as the resettlement need for Congolese from the eastern Congo still exists.

We expect to admit nearly 8,000 refugees from our two largest processing locations in Africa: Kenya and Ethiopia, plus another 400 from other locations in East Africa. Close to 5,500 refugees will depart for the United States from Kenya this year, mostly Somalis in the Kakuma and Dadaab camps. PRM continues to fund movements of refugee applicants from Dadaab to Kakuma for the purposes of DHS/USCIS interview and adjudication, since DHS/USCIS staff cannot work at Dadaab due to the security conditions. Applicants return to Dadaab for medical exams and other post-DHS/USCIS steps until their departure for the United States. Admissions from Ethiopia also continue to be strong, with approximately 2,500 U.S. arrivals projected this year. Populations include primarily Somalis from camps in the east and Eritreans from the northern camps, including approximately 60 Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors. We also will resettle smaller numbers of Sudanese from camps in the west.

The United States continues to interview refugees from the Central African Republic in southern Chad and Sudanese Darfuri refugees in eastern Chad. We expect to admit approximately 160 refugees from Chad in FY 2017, part of an effort to build a large resettlement operation for Darfuri refugees in eastern Chad. An additional 250 refugees from various locations in West Africa are also expected to be admitted in FY 2017.

From Southern Africa, we expect to admit 1,500 refugees – primarily Somalis from South Africa and Congolese from Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, we anticipate approximately 1,000 Sudanese, Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and other sub-Saharan African refugees who will be arriving primarily from Egypt, Malta, or via one of the UNHCR Emergency Transit Centers in Romania and Slovakia. In all, we expect to admit refugees of nearly 30 African nationalities, processed in dozens of countries, during FY 2017.

FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program

We propose 19,000 resettlement numbers for African refugees in FY 2018 that will largely parallel the populations admitted in FY 2017. As a result of discussions within the Department of State, UNHCR, the NGO community, and DHS/USCIS to identify caseloads, PRM has identified a number of nationalities and groups for processing during FY 2018.

In the Great Lakes region, processing of Congolese in Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania (and Burundi if the situation allows) is expected to result in a total of 9,500 departures. Approximately 5,000 of these admissions will be the result of a P-2 group designation for Congolese refugees in Tanzania and Rwanda. Departures from Uganda and Burundi will result in 4,500 arrivals. It is yet to be determined whether the violence in Burundi that has prevented processing of Congolese there will result in lower arrival numbers from Burundi in FY 2018.

From East Africa, we expect to resettle just over 3,000 refugees each from Kenya and Ethiopia, primarily Somalis, Eritreans, and South Sudanese. We also expect UNHCR to continue referring Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors at a rate of about 50 per year from refugee camps in northern Ethiopia.

From southern Africa, we expect to admit 1,500 refugees consisting primarily of Somalis from South Africa and Congolese from Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

In eastern Chad, UNHCR is establishing infrastructure for a robust resettlement program for Sudanese Darfuris with funding from PRM. This will be in addition to the continued processing of Central African Republic refugees from southern Chad. Total admission numbers from West Africa and Chad are expected to be approximately 1,000.

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, we anticipate 1,000 Sudanese, Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean and other sub-Saharan African refugees will be admitted from Egypt and Malta, and through the Emergency Transit Centers in Slovakia and Romania.

Proposed FY 2018 Africa program to include arrivals from the following categories:

Priority 1 Individual Referrals	***13,500***
Priority 2 Groups	***5,000***
Priority 3 Family Reunification	***500***
Total Proposed Ceiling	***19,000***

EAST ASIA

Several countries in East Asia host large and diverse refugee and asylum seeker populations. Recent years have seen important developments for these groups. Thailand, Bangladesh, and Malaysia continue to host large numbers of Burmese refugees and asylum-seekers, and thousands more are in the capital cities of Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and New Delhi, including Burmese, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, West Africans, Syrians, Palestinians, and others. The number of persons of concern to UNHCR across the archipelago of Indonesia has also increased to nearly 14,443, including some 8,096 refugees, in recent years.

The U.S. government continues to press for meaningful political and democratic reforms in Burma, as well as a national ceasefire agreement with remaining ethnic minority groups. The international community is engaged in discussions regarding the voluntary return of Burmese refugees, but acknowledges that ongoing conflict with armed ethnic groups, particularly in Kachin and Shan States, peace and national reconciliation efforts, a fragile democratic transition, and limited access to humanitarian and development assistance make large-scale promoted voluntary return of refugees undertaken in conditions of safety and dignity a slow, gradual process.

The resettlement of more than 100,000 Burmese refugees from Thailand since 2006 – including more than 87 ,000 to the United States – has significantly reduced the number of Burmese refugees in the camps who are eligible for the U.S. P-2 resettlement program. After more than a

decade of large-scale resettlement, we have arrived at the residual caseload of the group resettlement program with specific eligibility criteria for Burmese refugees who were re-registered by UNHCR in 2005 and formally registered by the Royal Thai Government (RTG). P-2 processing should conclude within one year with the final departures from the P-2 program departing within two years. Those who do not exercise this option will be able to remain in the camps until safe and voluntary returns are possible. The United States will continue to accept individual referrals from UNHCR for all nationalities, including registered Burmese.

Since 2006, UNHCR Malaysia has operated the second largest refugee status determination program in the world and Malaysia is currently one of the largest resettlement countries in the U.S. program with some 2,700 projected refugee departures in FY17 and more than 61,900 since 2010. As of the end of February 2017, there were 149,496 persons of concern registered with UNHCR in Malaysia of which 133,263 – or 90 percent – are from Burma. In addition, some 16,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from various countries – primarily Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Sri Lanka – are registered with UNHCR. Malaysia is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, but generally tolerates the presence of refugees.

The systematic persecution and discrimination of members of the Rohingya minority from Rakhine State, Burma have resulted in large numbers fleeing Rakhine State to seek safety in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries in the region for over five decades. The mid-2015 migrant crisis in the Indian Ocean began to unfold on May 1 when Thai authorities discovered mass graves of migrants in the south and began cracking down on migrant smuggling and human trafficking operations. The U.S. Government continues to support the ongoing regional response that stresses the need to address the root causes of the crisis in source countries, including by promoting and protecting the human rights of members of vulnerable populations in source countries.

Since attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on Burmese security positions on August 25, over 400,000 Rohingya have fled to neighboring Bangladesh, while an unknown number of internally displaced persons remain sheltering without basic needs in northern Rakhine State. There have been numerous accounts of human rights violations and abuses by Burmese security forces responding to the attacks, including coordinated burning of Rohingya villages by security forces and armed civilians, and alleged planting of mines in the path of fleeing refugees near the Burma-Bangladesh border. U.S. Ambassador to Burma Scot Marciel has raised the situation in Rakhine State at the highest levels of the Burmese government, including the urgent need to provide humanitarian assistance and media access to northern Rakhine State, a call to cease alleged violations and abuses of human rights by security forces, and the need to investigate and hold accountable those responsible.

Prior to this latest violence, another outbreak of violence in Rakhine State followed attacks on Burmese border guard posts in October 2016. The subsequent Burmese government security operations resulted in an influx of approximately 87,000 Rohingya to the Cox's Bazar district in southeastern Bangladesh. A previous large-scale influx in July of 1991 saw 250,000 Rohingya flee to Cox's Bazar. Between 1992 and 2005, over 236,000 UNHCR-registered Rohingya refugees were voluntarily repatriated from Cox's Bazar to Rakhine State, most of them immediately after their arrival to Bangladesh.

Prior to the recent influx following the August 25 attacks in Rakhine State, UNHCR supported approximately 34,000 registered Rohingya refugees in two official refugee camps (Kutupalong and Nayapara) in Cox's Bazar. The IOM is the designated lead for assisting the estimated 200,000 to 500,000 undocumented Rohingya that were residing in various villages and towns outside the refugee camps and in makeshift settlement sites, prior to the October 2016 influx.

In February 2014, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) announced its national strategy on "Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar Nationals in Bangladesh." As part of the strategy, the GOB completed the main census of the undocumented Rohingya in June 2016, and closed in June 2017 a second iteration of the census launched to include new arrivals following the October 2016 influx. The GOB's plans to publish the census results this year have been delayed following the recent influx. The GOB has pledged to issue information cards for those who participate in the census, which we understand will ensure protection and access to basic services, including freedom of movement, access to livelihood, and education opportunities to the Rohingya. The U.S. government is encouraged by GOB commitments made in the national strategy, including the resumption of third country resettlement. We are prepared to resume resettlement activity upon notification by the GOB that we may proceed. In addition, we expect ongoing UNHCR referrals of urban Burmese in India.

As reflected in the North Korean Human Rights Act, the United States remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation of North Koreans both inside the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and in various countries in the region. The United States began resettling interested, eligible North Korean refugees and their family members in 2006 and remains committed to continuing this program.

Religious Freedom

Although many governments in East Asia do not restrict religious freedom, religious believers face serious persecution in several countries. The DPRK, China, and Burma are currently designated by the Secretary of State as CPCs under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for engaging in or tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.

The DPRK severely restricts religious freedom, including organized religious activity, except for that which is supervised tightly by officially recognized groups linked to the government. Although the DPRK constitution provides for "freedom of religious belief," people in the DPRK cannot exercise religious freedom in practice. Information about the day-to-day life of religious persons in the country is limited. Religious and human rights groups outside of the country have provided numerous reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, tortured, or killed because of their religious beliefs.

While the constitutions of China, Burma, and Vietnam provide for freedom of religion, in practice, these governments restrict or repress religious activities of some members of religious communities in a manner inconsistent with their commitments to uphold freedom of religion.

The Chinese government continues to harass and interfere with unregistered religious groups, most notably the unofficial Catholic churches loyal to the Holy See, Protestant "house churches," some Muslim groups (especially ethnic Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region), members of the Falun Gong, and Tibetan Buddhists reverent to the Dalai Lama. In

September 2016, the Chinese government issued draft amendments to religious affairs regulations that, if enacted, would significantly expand government oversight of religious speech and education and increase criminal penalties for unregistered religious activities. China additionally reprimanded members of government-sanctioned churches for advocacy on behalf of their church communities. Certain religious or spiritual groups are banned by law. The criminal law defines some banned groups as "evil cults" and those belonging to them can be sentenced to prison or administrative detention. This includes Falun Gong and some other qigong-based groups, in addition to some Christian groups. Although legislation officially abolished the Reeducation through Labor system in December 2013, religious believers have been harassed, arrested, detained in "black jails" without due process and sentenced to long jail terms. There have been credible allegations of torture.

In Burma, the government implemented considerable political and economic reforms, resulting in improved respect for many human rights. However, the government continues to discriminate against members of religious minority groups. Members of some ethnic groups, including those not formally recognized as citizens – such as the Muslim Rohingya in northern Rakhine State – are not protected under anti-discrimination laws. In 2012, intercommunal conflict led to the death of nearly 200 Rohingya and the displacement of 140,000 people. Throughout 2013-2017 isolated incidents of violence against Rohingya individuals continued to take place, including after the October 9, 2016 attacks on three border guard posts. Rohingya and some international organizations have reported allegations of severe human rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims during security operations in northern Rakhine State during late 2016 and 2017.

Government authorities, through various policies and practices, subjected Rohingya Muslims to physical abuse, arbitrary arrest and detention, restrictions on religious practice and travel, and discrimination in employment, social services, and access to citizenship. Religious minority populations, including Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities, experienced arrest and detention, restrictions on religious practice, and various forms of discrimination. At the same time, the government continued to support interfaith dialogue.

Vietnam and the United States signed an agreement on religious freedom in May 2005, under which Vietnam committed to improving the protection of religious freedom in Vietnam. As a result of the progress Vietnam made after signing the agreement, the U.S. Government removed Vietnam from the CPC list in November 2006. While there have been some improvements, Vietnam's religious freedom record has been mixed. Progress has been made with regard to the registration/recognition of religious groups and congregations and many religious groups have experienced expanded freedom of assembly.

However, some local and provincial authorities systematically and openly use the local and national regulatory systems to slow, delegitimize, and suppress religious activities of religious groups, especially those choosing not to register with the government. Religious leaders, particularly those of groups without recognition or certificates of registration, report various forms of governmental harassment, including physical assault, short-term detention, prosecutions, monitoring, restrictions on travel, property seizure or destruction, and denials of registration and/or other permissions, especially in the Central and Northwest Highlands.

Nationals of the DPRK, Vietnam, China, Laos, and Burma have access to the USRAP. North Korean refugees also have access to family reunification processing through Priority 3.

Voluntary Repatriation

Although the Burmese government has taken steps to implement democratic and political reforms, ongoing fighting continues in Kachin and northern Shan States, and tensions remain in Rakhine State since the October and November 2016 violence. The new government continues to work towards a national reconciliation and peace process but continue to face challenges. We are hopeful that substantial progress towards this goal will be made in the near future. UNHCR, together with IOM and the World Food Program (WFP), continues with its planning for facilitated returns and continues its discussions with the RTG, Burmese government, NGOs working on the Thailand-Burma border, and the Karen and Karenni refugee communities in this regard. In October 2016, the first group of 71 Burmese refugees from Thailand returned to new homes in seven locations throughout Burma. UNHCR is working with both the Thai and Burmese governments on the next groups of returnees. However, conditions are not yet conducive for large-scale, sustainable, promoted returns and refugee returnees cited concerns about the lack of access to civil documentation, education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and security issues. The United States and other donor governments continue to engage regularly with the Thai government concerning the future of the nine refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

Local Integration

Countries in the region have traditionally been reluctant to integrate refugees or to grant asylum. Local integration remains a difficult option; however, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Malaysia have made efforts to improve refugee self-reliance and inclusion following the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September 2016 at the United Nations General Assembly. UNHCR and the international community continue to encourage these governments to make policy changes relating to refugees, and to expand humanitarian protection and assistance space for refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern.

Third-Country Resettlement

The United States continues to lead third country resettlement efforts in the region. Other countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Nordic countries, resettle refugees referred by UNHCR. In FY 2017, the United States processed UNHCR-referred refugee cases in China, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Thailand.

FY 2017 U.S. Admissions

We expect to admit 5,200 refugees from East Asia in FY 2017. This will include more than 4,500 members of Burmese ethnic minorities living in camps along the Thai-Burma border and urban Burmese (of various ethnic minorities) in Malaysia, and some 700 urban refugees of various nationalities in the region.

FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program

We propose 5,000 refugees from East Asia in FY 2018. This will include up to 1,750 members of Burmese ethnic minorities living in camps along the Thai-Burma border, 1,750 urban Burmese in Malaysia and some 1,500 refugees of various nationalities in the region.

Proposed FY 2018 East Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

Priority 1 Individual Referrals	***750***
Priority 2 Groups	***4,150***
Priority 3 Family Reunification	***100***
Total Proposed Ceiling	***5,000***

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

In 2016, Europe experienced humanitarian emergencies affecting at least 5.2 million refugees and forcibly displaced people in Ukraine, Turkey, and Southwest Europe. Meanwhile, the international community continued to seek solutions for the approximate 1.5 million people in protracted displacement situations due to unresolved conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, and the Balkans. According to UNHCR, significant challenges persisted in providing protection and securing solutions for people of concern to UNHCR in the region, including increasing restrictions on access to territory; a lack of appropriate reception conditions; and inadequate asylum procedures. In its 2017-2018 Global Appeal, UNHCR reported that its priorities are to: 1) support governments in maintaining protection regimes that are compliant with international standards; 2) advocate for the rights of asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless people; and 3) maintain emergency responses.

Ukraine: In Ukraine, fighting between Ukrainian troops and combined Russia-led forces continues despite the signing of numerous ceasefire agreements. Russia's attempted annexation and occupation of Crimea, and the fighting in parts of eastern Ukraine have resulted in over 2 million people displaced from their homes, including over 1.3 million to neighboring countries. Although most IDPs have settled in regions bordering the conflict zone, they are increasingly settling in more remote areas of the country as host communities reach absorption capacity. Integration opportunities are limited for displaced individuals as displacement increases, and needs outstrip the response capacity of local governments and community groups.

Europe Refugee and Migrant Crisis: Widespread border closures throughout Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Aegean activity, and the European Union's agreement with Turkey to stem dangerous outmigration from Turkey led to the relative stabilization of Europe's refugee and migration crisis in 2016. Turkey continued to host the largest number of refugees in the world, with more than 2.9 million Syrian refugees and at least 300,000 refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and elsewhere. There was a dramatic reduction in Greece arrivals while Italy arrivals kept apace at approximately 1,500 people, primarily from sub-Saharan Africa, per week. According to UNHCR, about 39 percent of arrivals in Italy received international protection status from the government. For refugees and migrants stranded in Greece, Italy, and Serbia, humanitarian needs continued, with slight improvements to reception and accommodation facilities. Greek officials estimate the country is hosting about 60,000 refugees and migrants. Italy is hosting upwards of 175,000 refugees and migrants and an additional 25,000 unaccompanied minors, severely straining asylum and reception capacities.

The challenge for Europe remains two-fold: first, providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees arriving on their shores after undertaking dangerous maritime journeys and, second, integrating the more than 1.4 million people who arrived since 2015. UNHCR and IOM published a Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe to provide humanitarian

assistance in affected countries including Turkey and Greece. The United States has contributed $74 million to international organizations in response to the Europe Migration crisis since 2016, including providing life sustaining assistance, protection to vulnerable populations, and registration assistance in Greece and the Western Balkans. The long-term integration challenges are most acute in Germany, Sweden, Austria and Finland, which received the bulk of the asylum seekers last year. We anticipate that many other countries will face challenges (albeit at a smaller scale) as they work to follow through with commitments to relocate individuals from Greece and Italy and/or participate in voluntary resettlement programs.

Despite the fact that a majority of countries in the region are party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, countries' compliance with these instruments remains problematic. UNHCR and other stakeholders continue to build host country protection capacity and are helping to strengthen asylum systems and protection laws in the region; however, many of these countries have been slow or reluctant to recognize and integrate refugees and other at-risk individuals. The protection provided by some governments in the region to refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants is limited and public intolerance, including attacks against members of minority populations, is common. There are documented cases of *refoulement*. UNHCR has been working with many of these governments to establish and/or reform asylum procedures and refugee protection laws.

Balkans: According to UNHCR, as of April 2016, there were over 360,000 refugees and IDPs in the Balkans, almost all of whom have been displaced for a decade or longer. Over 200,000 persons of this population are displaced from Kosovo, most of whom currently live in Serbia. UNHCR estimates that more than 90,000 individuals in this group are in need of assistance. Since 2000, the overall level of return to Kosovo from Serbia has been low. While there have been over 26,000 voluntary returns of minorities to Kosovo since the conflict ended, housing, documentation issues, a lack of employment opportunity, and occasional violence directed against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo has limited continuing return prospects.

Despite the situation in Kosovo, since 2010, the countries of the region – with the assistance of the international community – made significant progress toward resolving a large part of the refugee situation in the Balkans. A November 2011 ministerial meeting in Belgrade brought together Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro to sign a Joint Declaration expressing their collective will to resolve the protracted refugee and displacement situation. They committed their countries to a Regional Housing Program (RHP) for refugees and IDPs supported by international donors.

The RHP was designed to create durable solutions for up to 74,000 of the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs in those countries. While principally affecting housing, the RHP has established the Regional Coordination Forum to discuss other pertinent issues such as unpaid pensions, civil documentation, exchange of data and other public information. An international donors' conference in April 2012 succeeded in raising over $340 million (€260 million) in pledges to support the RHP over five years. The United States has provided $30 million since FY 2012, and U.S. involvement is seen as a critical ingredient to the RHP's success. With over a dozen projects approved and several well underway, we expect FY 2016 and FY 2017 to be the years where we see housing solutions to be completed and delivered to a large number of beneficiaries eligible for the RHP.

Caucasus: Although governments have taken important steps to assist individuals displaced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and related conflicts, IDPs and returnees still await housing compensation, restitution, or alternative accommodation provision in the North and South Caucasus. The Caucasus region, comprised of parts of Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, still hosts over 1.3 million persons of concern for PRM. The Nagorno-Karabakh War displaced over 800,000 Azerbaijanis in several waves between 1988 and 1994. Today 600,000 IDPs remain in Azerbaijan, almost 7 percent of Azerbaijan's population. The vast majority lives in temporary shelters, administrative buildings, dormitories, and hostels. The government is increasingly providing housing and livelihood support to vulnerable IDPs, but more needs to be done to support integration to aid its displaced population.

The April 2016 "Four Day War" in the Nagorno-Karabakh region displaced 1,500 vulnerable people. According to UNHCR, most were women who were pregnant, caring for young children, and/or accompanied by relatives with disabilities and the elderly. As of March 2017, approximately 500 people of the 1,500 displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2016 remain in Armenia. In addition, Armenia still hosts some 360,000 ethnic Armenians who left Azerbaijan for Armenia after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict broke out in 1988. In Armenia, the government adopted a policy of local integration towards this group of refugees. However, most of them still live in unsuitable collective housing or remote villages with insufficient access to government services. A struggling economy and the recent influx of an estimated 20,000 Syrian-Armenians have left the Armenian government few resources to address refugee concerns, and the country remains dependent on international humanitarian and development assistance.

Georgia still hosts approximately 265,000 displaced from the 1993 and 2008 wars, consequences of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Russian occupation of two Georgian regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. An estimated 147,000 people have returned to their homes in the Gali district (in the Abkhazia region), secured a durable housing solution elsewhere in Georgia, or remained in their original places of residence near the South Ossetia region,

Statelessness: The 1990's break-up of the Soviet Union created newly independent states with sizeable populations of stateless individuals due to gaps in nationality laws and inconsistent implementation of those laws. Difficulty in establishing citizenship at the time of succession has created subsequent problems for children born to an undocumented parent(s). The problem of statelessness remains in the region, although some states, such as Turkmenistan, have taken steps to register stateless individuals and facilitate their acquisition of nationality.

Religious Freedom

The status of religious freedom varies widely across Europe and Central Asia. Some countries place legal restrictions or prohibitions on the wearing of religious attire and symbols in schools, in government employment, or in public, particularly impacting Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Sikhs.

Many countries in the region mandate the registration of religious groups. Registration typically is required to rent or own property, hold religious services, appoint military and prison chaplains, and receive state subsidies. Restitution of religious properties is an issue yet to be fully resolved. "Nontraditional" religious groups are sometimes labeled as "sects" or "cults" by their home governments and may be subject to harassment and discrimination.

In Turkey, some religious minority communities, including Alevis, face difficulties owning property, registering places of worship, and gaining exemptions from compulsory Sunni Islamic instruction. Faith-based conscientious objectors in Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan are sometimes arrested and prosecuted for failing to comply with laws mandating military service.

All Central Asian governments restrict religious activities and have laws that broadly define "extremism," enabling authorities to arrest and jail citizens for engaging in peaceful religious practice under the guise of combatting extremism. All Central Asian governments require religious organizations to register, regulate religious materials, and strictly control mosques. In many Central Asian countries, citizens are harassed, tortured and jailed for their religious beliefs. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are currently designated by the Secretary of State as CPCs under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for engaging in or tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. In Uzbekistan, according to human rights groups, between 5,000 and 15,000 individuals are in prison on charges related to "religious extremism" or membership in an "illegal" religious group; attempts by independent groups to verify this figure have been unsuccessful. Under Tajiki law, persons under the age of 18 cannot participate in public religious activities, and a ruling by Tajikistan's highest Islamic religious body bans Hanafi Sunni women from attending mosques. In Turkmenistan, surveillance, beatings, imprisonment, arbitrary detention, searches, and confiscation of religious materials of religious minorities, as well as Muslims the government considers to be "extremist" or "Wahhabist," have been reported by human rights groups. The government of Turkmenistan has imprisoned an unknown number of Muslims for their religious beliefs, as well as conscientious objectors, primarily Jehovah's Witnesses.

There is a disturbing increase in anti-Semitism in a number of countries in the region, manifested as physical assaults and verbal harassment; hate speech over the internet; and vandalism of cemeteries, synagogues, community centers, and monuments. In January 2015, Amedy Coulibaly killed four Jewish hostages and critically injured four others at a kosher supermarket in Paris. According to media reports citing survivors of the siege, Coulibaly was explicit about wishing to kill Jews. In February 2015, a gunman killed one Jewish man and a security guard, and injured five police officers outside a synagogue in Copenhagen. In several countries, openly anti-Semitic, nationalistic political parties have gained seats in parliaments, with government officials and elected members of parliaments at times responsible for anti-Semitic statements and acts. Acts of anti-Semitism persisted among far-right organizations; various groups continued to commemorate World War II fascist leaders.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is also on the rise, with a similar trend of physical assaults and verbal harassment, hate speech, as well as vandalism directed at visibly Islamic targets such as mosques. In September 2015, Hungary's Viktor Orban painted Muslims and immigration as a threat to Europe's Christian identity. Political parties opposing Muslim immigration drew support. Bans on kosher/halal slaughter exist in several European countries, while there are increasing calls for bans or restrictions on circumcision, particularly in the Nordic countries. Both circumcision and kosher/halal slaughter are religious practices for Jews and Muslims, as well as some other religious groups.

The Russian government uses the Yarovaya amendments package to the Russian criminal code, signed in July 2016, to justify raids, arrests, and bans on religious literature of peaceful, "non-traditional" minority religious groups, including readers of Muslim theologian Said Nursi, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, Falun Gong practitioners, and some Protestant groups, even

though the amendments are purportedly meant to address extremism. In July 2017, the Russian Supreme Court upheld a decision to declare Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist organization, ban their activities, and liquidate their administrative center.

Throughout Europe online hatred has become a major concern. In France and Germany cases have been brought against social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, for failure to address hate speech. In May 2016, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Microsoft signed the European Code of Conduct, which is a set of commitments to fight illegal hate speech online. In order to effectively combat religious discrimination and hate, the European Union named two coordinators in October 2016, one to address anti-Semitism and the other to address anti-Muslim hatred.

Voluntary Repatriation

The international community continues to support efforts to create favorable conditions for the return of ethnic minorities to their homes in the Balkans. In June 2006, Serbian, Kosovo, and UN authorities signed the Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Return to Kosovo, which sought to improve the conditions for return by focusing on three elements: ensuring the safety of returnees, returning property to the displaced and rebuilding their houses, and creating an overall environment that sustains returns. There is still much work to be done in ensuring that those hoping to return have the means to do so.

PRM supported the return process through a grant to Danish Refugee Council in FY 2015 and to IOM in FY2016 that promoted sustainable return through income-generation activities including vocational training and the provision of agricultural inputs, as well as community development projects to facilitate inter-ethnic dialogue. International funding continues to facilitate and sustain the return and reintegration of displaced minorities from Kosovo. The Regional Housing Program will allow thousands of returns to take place in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The program will encourage both voluntary repatriation and local integration as durable solutions.

Local Integration

UNHCR has led efforts to create viable asylum systems and effective legal protections for refugees in the Balkans, the Russian Federation, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. However, ineffective implementation of these laws, combined with the history of national animosities and xenophobia throughout the region, often makes effective local integration difficult for ethnic minority refugees. In Azerbaijan, a majority of refugees lack legal status, despite being recognized by UNHCR and permitted by the government to stay in the country. As such, refugees do not have access to legal employment, making local integration in Azerbaijan extremely difficult. In Russia, difficulties in acquiring citizenship remain for some former Soviet citizens who resided in Russia before 1992 and are, under Russian law, entitled to Russian citizenship. Members of groups such as Meskhetian Turks have been unable to obtain Russian citizenship and thus remain stateless.

In Russia, UNHCR focuses on quality-assurance measures to strengthen the national asylum system, including access to the asylum system at borders, and measures contributing to the Government's plans to bring its reception infrastructure and processes up to international standards. In Montenegro, the path to citizenship has been particularly slow for those displaced

from Kosovo. The Regional Housing Program should provide an easier path to local integration for some of the most vulnerable, including members of Roma populations, among this group. The Government of Serbia is implementing local integration programs for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and the displaced persons from Kosovo.

Third-Country Resettlement

The United States continues to accept refugees from the region. The vast majority are members of religious minorities from former Soviet Union countries who are adjudicated under the reduced evidentiary standards of the Lautenberg Amendment. While Jews comprised an average of 85 percent of the applicant pool in the early 1990s, Evangelical Christians now make up over 90 percent of the applicant pool. Around 70 percent of the Lautenberg caseload is from Ukraine. Jewish immigration to Israel from the region continues under the United Israel Appeal Program.

In addition to Lautenberg cases, the United States also accepts small numbers of UNHCR referrals from Russia and Central Asian countries. In an effort to continue processing refugees trapped in DHS-inaccessible countries such as Iran, Eritrea, and Yemen, the United States transfers UNHCR-referred cases of Afghans, Somalis, and a variety of other African nationality refugees to UNHCR Emergency Transit Centers (ETCs) in Timisoara, Romania and Humenne, Slovakia for U.S. resettlement processing. Despite being limited by the number of beds available (200 beds in Timisoara and 250 in Humenne), the USRAP has made steady use of the ETCs, although ETC transfers declined significantly in FY 2017. (*Note: these refugees are not counted against the Europe and Central Asia ceiling, but against the region that includes the country of origin of each refugee.*)

FY 2017 U.S. Admissions

In FY 2017 the United States will admit an estimated 5,100 refugees from Europe and Central Asia, the majority of whom are Lautenberg religious minority cases. Applicants are being processed in Almaty, Baku, Bishkek, Dushanbe, Kyiv, Valletta, Minsk, Tbilisi, Moscow, Timisoara, Humenne and Vienna.

FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed FY 2018 ceiling for refugees from Europe and Central Asia is 2,000 individuals. Priority 2 includes individuals from countries of the former Soviet Union who will be adjudicated under the reduced evidentiary standards of Lautenberg Amendment guidelines. Applications for the Lautenberg program have increased substantially since the Russia-initiated aggression against Ukraine.

Proposed FY 2018 Europe and Central Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

Priority 1 Individual Referrals	***90***
Priority 2 Groups	***1,900***
Priority 3 Family Reunification	***10***
Total Proposed Ceiling	***2,000***

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

UNHCR reported in its latest 2016 mid-year statistics that the total population of concern of persons with origins in Latin America and the Caribbean is more than 7.9 million, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and other persons of concern. The ongoing conflict in Colombia generates the largest numbers of refugees and IDPs in the region, and the second largest world-wide. The Government of Colombia (GOC) reports 7.2 million IDPs as of March 2017. The Colombian government's peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Spanish acronym FARC) culminated with the two sides signing a formal peace agreement on September 26, 2016, ending more than five decades of fighting. The Colombian public rejected the agreement in a national plebiscite on October 2, however, forcing the two sides to renegotiate the agreement to include additional concessions from the FARC. The two sides signed the renegotiated deal on November 24, 2016, and the Colombian congress approved it November 30.

Despite this breakthrough, Colombians continue to be displaced by other armed groups fighting for control over lucrative coca producing areas, illegal mineral mines, and drug trafficking routes abandoned by the FARC. Over the past three years, armed actions by groups other than the FARC/National Liberation Army (Spanish abbreviation ELN) have caused more than half of all displacement in Colombia. State institutions still lack the capacity in many areas to protect the rights of, and provide public services to, displaced populations and communities at risk of displacement.

In surrounding countries, including Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Panama, there are approximately 340,000 Colombian asylum seekers and refugees and the number continues to rise. Ecuador has the highest number of recognized Colombian refugees and asylum seekers in Latin America. As of March 2017, the Government of Ecuador (GOE) had recognized over 60,000 refugees and UNHCR reports an additional 170,000 persons of concern. The asylum process in Ecuador is inefficient and slow, with an approval rate of around 20 percent. In 2016, UNHCR signed an agreement with the Ecuadoran Civil Registry and Ministry of Refugees to provide ID cards to refugees that would allow them to access social services. In addition, the Ecuadoran legislature passed its Human Mobility Law in January 2017. The law will revise existing immigration legislation to bring it in line with Ecuador's 2008 Constitution and the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Under the law, refugees will be given a temporary residence permit, renewable every two years, in lieu of the refugee "visas" they currently receive. UNHCR notes that the protection environment in Ecuador for refugees and asylum seekers is still challenging, citing delays in registration, labor exploitation, xenophobia, and discrimination. Other countries in the region, such as Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Panama, also have established asylum procedures, but the registration and determination procedures are often implemented ineffectively. UNHCR is working with these countries to improve their asylum processes.

As of December 2016, the Government of Panama recognized 2,392 persons, mostly Colombians, as refugees. Approximately 6,000 people applied for asylum in 2016, but Panama conducts "eligibility screenings" prior to allowing asylum seekers access to the formal asylum process (and, ultimately, be considered for refugee status), so considerably fewer have their cases reviewed. In 2016, ONPAR, the Panamanian office in charge of refugee affairs, reviewed 784 cases for admission into the asylum process, of which only 10 cases were approved. Asylum

applications typically take three to four years to process, during which time asylum seekers do not have the right to work and their access to education and basic services is limited.

In Costa Rica, refugee status determinations can take up to a year, though asylum seekers have the right to work 90 days after submitting a formal claim. Refugee applications in Costa Rica doubled in 2016 compared to 2015, reaching 4,470 by December 2016, compared to 2,203 in the previous year. The number has increased four-fold since 2013, when Costa Rica received 958 asylum petitions. According to UNHCR, however, the Costa Rican Refugee Unit only has the capacity to process only about 800-850 cases per year. As a result, processing times have increased from four months to approximately ten months.

Persons fleeing violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, from the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) – the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras – represent the second largest population of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Latin America and the Caribbean. Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala face extreme violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, severe economic inequality and social exclusion, and widespread corruption and poverty, compelling many people to flee their homes each year.

In 2016, Costa Rica's Refugee Unit reported that 1,471 of the total 4,470 asylum applications received were from persons originating from El Salvador; overtaking the number of Colombian and Venezuelan applicants for the first time. In Mexico, asylum applications rose 156 percent in 2016 compared to 2015 – the majority of which originated from the NTCA. UNHCR estimates this number could double again in 2017 to as many 20,000 asylum seekers. The United States has also experienced this trend of increasing asylum seekers from the NTCA. DHS reported asylum applications from the NTCA rose from less than 5,000 in 2013 to more than 20,000 in 2015.

Religious Freedom

In Latin America and the Caribbean, religious freedom is widely recognized and supported by government and society, though there are cases of religious intolerance. In some isolated instances, Christian groups, mainly Evangelicals, Protestants, and Mormons, have reported impediments or complications to their practice of religion, establishment of religious institutions, and importation of religious materials. In some areas, there is harassment of Muslims, anti-Muslim speech, and marginalization of Afro and indigenous religions. In Cuba, significant government restrictions remain in place.

Although the constitution protects religious freedom, the Government of Cuba continues to monitor aspects of religious life, including interference in church affairs, surveillance of religious institutions, and harassment of outspoken church leaders. The USRAP in Havana offers Cubans who have been persecuted on a number of grounds, including their religious beliefs, the opportunity for permanent resettlement in the United States.

Priests and other religious leaders in some parts of Mexico continued to be targeted and received extortion attempts, death threats, and intimidation, often from organized criminal groups. There are also reports of local leaders pressuring Protestants to convert through forced displacement, arbitrary detention, and destruction of property in some rural and indigenous communities.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism that occurred throughout the hemisphere at times appeared correlated to the unfolding transitions to democracy in other parts of the world. In Venezuela, anti-Semitism is a growing concern, including instances of anti-Semitism in the government-controlled media.

Voluntary Repatriation

Given the threats and violence in Colombia from illegal armed groups (non-state actors) and the lack of state presence to provide full protection in some areas, UNHCR has not been actively promoting repatriation of Colombian refugees. Because of this ongoing violence and inherent mistrust of the peace process by Colombian refugees and IDPs, UNHCR estimates that only 20 percent of all displaced Colombians (both refugees and IDPs) will choose to return to their places of origin.

Local Integration

The Governments of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela have maintained policies that allow refugees in need of protection to obtain asylum and integrate locally, although the processes involved are usually slow and cumbersome. The governments' capacity to review applications and confer refugee status remains limited. Even registered refugees with the right to work struggle to find stable employment or income-generating opportunities. Refugees seeking international protection face high levels of discrimination and xenophobia, and face significant challenges accessing basic services like healthcare and education. The vast majority of refugees live in urban areas, rather than camps, making it difficult for international organizations to deliver much needed assistance. Many Colombian refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador and Venezuela report harassment and threats by persons associated with armed Colombian groups operating along the borders with Colombia.

The Department of State is currently supporting UNHCR's efforts to assist the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries in developing systems for conducting refugee status determinations for asylum seekers, including Haitians. UNHCR's office in the Dominican Republic and its continued presence in Haiti have contributed greatly to its ability to address the protection needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, and displaced and stateless persons in mixed migration flows throughout the region. Despite Dominican Republic restarting its refugee eligibility committee (CONARE) in 2012, the asylum process remains dysfunctional. We also remain concerned that individuals are at risk of statelessness in the Dominican Republic due to the September 2013 Constitutional Tribunal ruling.

Third Country and In-Country Resettlement

In the past, local integration had been the solution best suited to regional refugee problems in Latin America. In recent years, however, third-country resettlement has become an important alternative for those who face physical risks and have urgent protection needs. Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and the United States offer resettlement to at-risk Colombian refugees. Under the "Solidarity Resettlement Program," a component of the Mexico Plan of Action which sought regional solutions to the Colombian refugee issue, countries in the region including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay are working with UNHCR to resettle a modest number of Colombian refugees.

Currently, the United States accepts referrals from UNHCR and embassies in the region and processes cases principally in Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for possible third country resettlement. The United States has specific authority to conduct in-country processing in the nations of the Northern Triangle and Cuba, but is ending in-country processing in the Northern Triangle in FY 2018 for applicants to the Central American Minors (CAM) program. The United States also facilitates the resettlement to third countries of Cubans and Haitians interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard in the Caribbean or who enter Guantanamo Naval Station directly and are found by DHS/USCIS to have a well-founded fear of persecution or to be more likely than not to face torture if repatriated to their country of origin. From 1996 to date, approximately 412 such protected persons have been resettled to 20 countries worldwide.

The U.S. government also operates an in-country refugee resettlement program in Cuba since 1987. The number of persons seeking refugee resettlement has decreased in recent years, and the backlog of cases pending review by the Department of State for access to the USRAP has been eliminated. The decrease in new applications reflects a shrinking pool of qualified applicants. The Refugee Section at the U.S. Embassy has not received any recent information regarding individuals who have been prevented by the Cuban government from traveling through the in-country refugee settlement program.

Cubans eligible to apply for admission to the United States through the in-country program include the following:

1. Former political prisoners;
2. Active members of persecuted religious minorities;
3. Human rights activists, long-standing members;
4. Forced labor conscripts (1965-68); and
5. Persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs.

On December 1, 2014, PRM and DHS/USCIS launched the Central American Minors (CAM) program, an in-country refugee program in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras for unmarried children under 21 of certain lawfully present parents residing in the United States. On November 15, 2016, the CAM program was expanded to allow additional categories of applicants when these family members accompany a qualifying child. The CAM program will be phased out in FY 2018 as the vast majority of individuals accessing the program were not eligible for refugee resettlement.

Instead, DHS/USCIS and the State Department will focus on more targeted refugee processing in Central America through the Protection Transfer Arrangement (PTA) with the Government of Costa Rica, UNHCR, and IOM. Through UNHCR and IOM, the U.S. government pre-screens vulnerable Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan applicants and will transfer applicants who qualify for protection to Costa Rica, where they are interviewed by DHS/USCIS and considered for resettlement to the United States. In some situations, the USRAP may decide to process UNHCR-identified cases in one of the three countries.

FY 2017 U.S. Admissions

We anticipate admitting approximately 1,600 refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean during FY 2017, including Central Americans, Colombians, and Cubans.

FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed 1,500 ceiling for Latin America and the Caribbean for FY 2018 comprises Cuban refugees eligible for the in-country Priority 2 program; Central American Minors eligible for the in-country Priority 2 program; and UNHCR-referred Priority 1 Colombians and Central Americans.

Proposed FY 2018 Latin America program to include arrivals from the following categories:

Priority 1 Individual Referrals	***200***
Priority 2 Groups	***1,250***
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	***50***
Total Proposed Ceiling	***1,500***

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The Near East/South Asia region remains host to more than 12 million refugees, primarily Palestinians, Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Burmese, Bhutanese, Sri Lankans, and Tibetans. Countries hosting the largest populations of refugees are Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan. Few countries in the region are party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol. Nonetheless, many host governments tolerate the presence of refugees within their borders.

UNHCR, UNRWA, ICRC, IOM, WFP, UNICEF, and other humanitarian organizations work with refugees in the region. Some countries have provided long-term protection and/or asylum, mainly to Tibetans, Bhutanese, Sri Lankans, Palestinians, Afghans, Iraqis, Somalis, Syrians, and a handful of other nationalities. Refugees identified by UNHCR for third-country resettlement include Syrians in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq; Iraqis in Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and the Gulf States; Bhutanese in Nepal; Afghans in Pakistan Iran, Turkey, Syria, and India; Iranians in Turkey and Pakistanis in Sri Lanka.

As of December 31, 2016, more than 250,000 Iraqi refugees were registered with UNHCR in the region. IOM reports that more than three million Iraqis have been displaced since January 2014 by violence in Iraq. As of March 2017, there are approximately 230,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, as well as approximately 30,000 refugees and asylum seekers of other origins (including Palestinians and Iranian Kurds). The U.S. government is providing humanitarian assistance to displaced Iraqis in Iraq and the region through support to international and non-governmental organizations. U.S. funding seeks to ensure conflict-affected Iraqis receive shelter, water, sanitation, health care, protection, education, and livelihoods opportunities. Since the start of FY 2014, the United States has provided nearly $1.7 billion in essential humanitarian assistance in the region.

Ongoing conflict in Syria since 2011 has caused massive displacement, both internally and to countries in the region. Inside Syria, 13.5 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance, and 6.3 million are internally displaced. An estimated 4.5 million Syrians are living in areas that are besieged or difficult to reach. Outside of Syria, neighboring countries are hosting 5.2 million refugees. Hospitals are filled to capacity, schools are running double shifts, the availability of water has decreased, and rental housing is limited communities hosting Syrians. The crisis in Syria and its spillover effects have pushed the number of Lebanese living below the extreme poverty line ($2.40 per day) to 154,000. The number of poor Lebanese and refugees in Lebanon has risen by an estimated 110 percent since 2011. Meanwhile, the Government of Turkey reports it has spent more than $12 billion to support refugees, through the free education and health care it provides to Syrians and construction and management of high-quality camps that host approximately 10 percent of the refugee population. Jordan is also making significant outlays and will require $7.6 billion between 2017 and 2019 to meet refugee needs and strengthen Jordanian communities.

The U.S. government is providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced Syrians and refugees from Syria across the region through support to international organizations, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and ICRC, as well as through non-governmental organizations, which are providing critical assistance in virtually all sectors, including water and sanitation, shelter, education and medical care. The U.S. government, the single largest global donor, had provided nearly $7.4 billion in critical humanitarian assistance since the start of the Syria crisis.

Despite the voluntary repatriation of over 5.8 million Afghan refugees since 2002, Pakistan continues to host approximately 1.4 million registered Afghans and estimates of undocumented Afghans have ranged from 500,000 to 1 million. Iran hosts approximately 950,000 Afghans registered as refugees, as well as significant numbers of Afghan visa holders and undocumented Afghans. Many Afghans have resided in these countries for over three and a half decades. The maintenance of asylum and protection space for those refugees who cannot yet return to Afghanistan while continuing to support voluntary repatriation, is a top priority for the U.S. government and for UNHCR. Over 11,000 Afghan refugees and asylum seekers are also registered with UNHCR in India. Identifying durable solutions remains an important component of UNHCR's strategy in India. Local integration in South Asia remains a difficult option due to opposition from most host countries.

Tens of thousands of ethnic Nepali Bhutanese were forced out of Bhutan in the early 1990s as a result of the Bhutanese government's policy of "one nation and one people" (also referred to as "Bhutanization"). Despite 15 rounds of formal negotiations between Bhutan and Nepal, and pressure from the United States and other governments to resolve the issue and secure the right of return for Bhutanese refugees, particularly humanitarian cases, to date none have been permitted to return. Due to concerted resettlement efforts commenced in late 2007 by the United States and other resettlement countries, over 109,000 Bhutanese refugees have departed after spending two decades in camps in eastern Nepal; of whom more than 92,500 have resettled in the United States. The U.S. government continues to press the Government of Bhutan to help resolve this protracted situation by accepting the return of eligible refugees who wish to voluntarily repatriate. Similarly, the U.S. government encourages the Government of Nepal to allow the projected 7,000-9,000 refugees who will remain in the camps following the conclusion of third country resettlement to work, gain legal status, and access public education, health care, and other services. PRM expects the refugee processing program in Nepal to wind down over the next year or two.

Religious Freedom

Persecution of religious groups is common in many countries in the Near East and South Asia that are countries of origin for refugee populations entering the United States. Some state and local governments fail to hold perpetrators of violence against members of religious groups accountable and are complicit through failure to prevent such crimes. The responses of other governments are often inadequate, which in turn can foster a sense of impunity among perpetrators of violence against members of religious communities. Although many of these countries do not have indigenous Jewish populations, societal anti-Semitism is prevalent. Governments regularly fail to condemn anti-Semitism and government and religious leaders sometimes employ anti-Semitic speech.

In some countries in the region, most notably Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Egypt, blasphemy and defamation of religion laws are used to restrict religious liberty, constrain the rights of religious minorities, and limit freedom of expression, and those accused face prison sentences and threats of violence. In most countries in the region, efforts to proselytize Muslims are forbidden and Sharia courts decide personal status cases of Muslims. Such courts find Muslims who convert away from Islam to be apostates and sentences range from death to legal restrictions on all rights except freedom of movement.

Iran and Saudi Arabia are designated by the Department of State as CPCs under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. Iran continues to enforce some of the world's harshest restrictions on religious freedom. Apostasy, conversion from Islam, and efforts to proselytize Muslims are punishable by death. Members of non-recognized religious groups, face harsher and more frequent forms of discrimination, home raids, arrest, harassment, and abuse by security services. Religious groups, including Sunni Muslims, Bahais, Sufis, Jews, Zoroastrians, Yarsanis, and Christians, continue to face official discrimination, harassment, and arrest. Members of the Shia community who express religious views different from those of the government are also subject to harassment and intimidation. The government continues to convict and execute of dissidents, political reformists, and peaceful protesters on the charge of moharebeh (enmity against God), anti-Islamic propaganda, and other religion-related charges, which it often links to national security.

Saudi Arabia prohibits the public observance of any religion other than Sunni Islam and restricts interpretations of Sunni Islam other than its own, banning some outright. In law and in practice, the government discriminates against non-practicing Sunni, Shia, and persons of other religions. Conversion from Islam is considered apostasy and punishable by death, though in practice no one accused of apostasy has been executed. Serious government restrictions result in restrictions on worship and religious teaching. There is widespread official discrimination against adherents of non-Sunni groups, including Christians, Jews, and members of "polytheistic" religions.

In Iraq, ISIS targeted many of its attacks and abuses on the basis of religious and ethnic identity. As Secretary Tillerson recently stated, ISIS is clearly responsible for genocide against Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims in areas it controls or has controlled. ISIS is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities. Ongoing sectarian tensions and discrimination affect all of Iraq's religious and ethnic communities. As a result, some of these religious communities, along with their ancient languages and customs, are on the verge of disappearing.

In Syria, the Assad regime and its allies, including foreign, Shia militia allies have killed, arrested, and physically abused Sunnis populations and members of targeted religious minority groups, and intentionally destroyed their property, according to numerous reports, as part of its effort to defeat the armed insurrection mounted by armed opposition groups. Sources reported government-affiliated militias seized the homes of Sunnis with the explicit intention of permanently displacing these individuals and changing the religious demography of these areas by populating the area with Shia and Alawite residents. The government increased its targeting and surveillance of members of a variety of faith groups it deemed a threat, especially members of the country's Sunni majority. This occurred concurrently with the escalation of violent extremist activity conducted by ISIS targeted against religious minorities, including Christians, Druze, Alawites, Yezidis, and others as the civil war continues. Large-scale internal and external displacement of all sectors of the population is ongoing.

In Lebanon, the constitution requires the state to respect all religious groups and declares equality of rights and duties for all citizens without discrimination or preference, and stipulates that there be a balance of political power among the major religious groups. Sectarian violence continued during 2017, straining relations among the country's 18 officially-recognized religious groups. Despite this violence, political and religious leaders were vocal in their opposition to violent extremism and in their support of peaceful coexistence across sectarian divides. Religious leaders reported the continued operation of places of worship in relative peace and security.

In Afghanistan, religious freedom is severely restricted due to constitutional contradictions, legislative ambiguity, and interpretations of Islamic law that mandate the death penalty for apostasy and blasphemy. According to the Supreme Court, the Bahai Faith is distinct from Islam and is a form of blasphemy, which is a capital offense. Members of the Bahai Faith have reported legal discrimination and restrictions on their rituals. Individuals who converted from Islam feared repercussions. Due to their fear of government and societal reprisal, Christians avoid situations where they might appear to be proselytizing. Members of the Bahai Faith have reported legal discrimination and restrictions on their rituals. Hindus and Sikhs encounter problems in cremating their dead, despite police protection for their rituals. Both groups continued to express fear of retaliation if they availed themselves of legal protection in disputes with neighbors.

In Pakistan, the penal code includes blasphemy laws that carry punishments ranging from imprisonment to the death penalty. Frequent abuses of these laws disproportionately affect religious minorities, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Those accused of blasphemy in Pakistan face exceedingly difficult legal battles, although Pakistan's higher courts have exonerated a number of defendants in recent years. In 2015, Pakistan's Supreme Court suspended the death sentence in the case of Asia Bibi, a particularly high-profile blasphemy case and reaffirmed the death sentence for an individual, Mumtaz Qadri, convicted of murdering Punjab Governor Salman Taseer over Taseer's comments criticizing the blasphemy law. The constitution and penal code maintain that members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are not Muslims and may not call themselves Muslims or assert they are adherents of Islam. The penal code bans Ahmadis from preaching or propagating their religious beliefs, proselytizing, or "insulting the religious feelings of Muslims." The punishment for violation of these provisions is imprisonment for up to three years and a fine. Sectarian terrorist groups regularly target the predominantly Shia Hazara community, resulting in hundreds of violent attacks annually. Terrorist groups also

target members of other religious minority communities and their places of worship. Members of religious minority communities have stated the government has been inconsistent in safeguarding minority rights, and discrimination against Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis persist.

In Bangladesh, militant groups claiming affiliation with transnational terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaida and ISIS, have targeted secular bloggers and members of religious minorities, including those accused of converting from Islam to another religion. There are frequent societal attacks against members of minority religious groups, including Hindus, and looting of their religious sites and their members' homes.

In India, members of minority groups who have been victims of religiously motivated violence or other animus have sometimes complained of police inaction, including failure to register, investigate, and prosecute alleged crimes. As noted in the Department of State's most recent International Religious Freedom Report, India continues to experience religiously motivated incidents, including killings, assaults, riots, restrictions on the right to practice religion and proselytize, and attacks against property. Violence, including sometimes lethal attacks on Muslims due to alleged cow slaughter, remains a significant concern.

The USRAP provides resettlement access in various ways to refugees who suffer religious persecution. Nationals of any country, including CPCs, may be referred to the USRAP through a Priority 1 referral by UNHCR or a U.S. embassy for reasons of religious persecution. Under the Lautenberg-Specter Amendment, Iranian religious minorities designated as Priority 2 category members are considered under a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution.

Voluntary Repatriation

Since 2002, over 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan, mostly from Pakistan and Iran. Over 4.7 million have been assisted by UNHCR in the largest repatriation operation in UNHCR's history. Due to a number of factors, including pressures placed on refugees in Pakistan, voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan increased dramatically in 2016 with over 370,000 refugees returning from Pakistan. Returned refugees represent roughly 20 percent of Afghanistan's total population and overwhelm the country's capacity to absorb them.

It is unlikely that all of the remaining 2.3 million registered Afghans in Pakistan and Iran will repatriate in the near future. UNHCR and IOM report the continuing migration of Afghans in both directions across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is part of a larger process of economic and social migration that has been occurring for centuries. However, this has changed somewhat with Pakistan's implementation of stricter border controls. UNHCR is working with the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran and the international community to develop policies and programs to manage voluntary returns. They are also working to better manage the residual Afghan population in Pakistan by working toward longer-term protection and migration solutions. IOM is seeking a greater role in border management and in developing regional mechanisms for economic migration that would bolster protection for Afghans. The Government of Afghanistan is working to increase its capacity in helping returnees integrate into Afghan economic and social structures and at the same time prioritizes continued protection for Afghan citizens still seeking refuge abroad. UNHCR, together with the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, continues to work toward implementing UNHCR's *Solutions*

Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries (SSAR). The SSAR provides for the orderly, voluntary return of Afghan refugees and emphasizes the need to integrate returned refugees into their communities fully.

Stabilizing the displaced Afghan population – e.g. integrating returning refugees and IDPs into Afghan society and preserving asylum space for refugees in neighboring countries – is critical to regional stability, as is addressing irregular migration. The Afghan government has also adopted a national IDP policy which seeks to address protection, assistance, and durable solutions for displaced populations within its borders. With assistance from UNHCR and others, the Afghan government began implementing the IDP policy in 2015.

UNHCR in India facilitates the voluntary return of Sri Lankan and Afghan refugees. With the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka in 2009, more than 13,000 refugees have returned with UNHCR assistance, and the number of Tamils seeking to return from India is slowly increasing. In 2016, UNHCR assisted in the voluntary return of nearly 850 Tamil refugees to Sri Lanka. As of October 2016, 66 Afghan refugees had voluntarily returned from India during the year.

The United States continues to work with other interested governments in urging the Government of Bhutan to allow for the voluntary repatriation of Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan under acceptable terms and conditions.

Local Integration

The SSAR promotes enhancing support for refugee-hosting communities and providing some alternative stay arrangements for refugees in Pakistan and Iran. On February 7, 2017 the Cabinet of the Government of Pakistan approved a series of proposals on refugees submitted including the extension of Proof of Registration (POR) cards in two, one-year increments with the first increment valid through December 31, 2017; the creation of specific visa categories for Afghans; support for a national refugee law; and the documentation of undocumented Afghans in Pakistan. These measures could improve the protection environment and provide some alternative stay arrangements; however, the only implementation to date has been the extension of POR cards. The United States will continue to work with UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan to preserve asylum space and promote alternative stay arrangements. However, at present, local integration is not an option for most of the Afghan refugees.

Local integration is currently not an option for Iraqi refugees who settled in the region, though Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon have preserved first asylum and protection space for Iraqi refugees. Syria hosted approximately 22,000 UNHCR-registered Iraqi refugees as of December 31, 2015. Jordan and Lebanon host approximate 62,000 and 18,000 Iraqi refuges respectively. Both countries closely manage their borders, requiring Iraqis to obtain visas before entering, which effectively limits the number of Iraqis able to seek asylum as not all are able to secure visas.

Iraqis in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan are not legally defined as refugees, but rather as guests or, in the case of Jordan, asylum seekers. These governments allow UNHCR to register Iraqis. With help from the international community, the governments of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan have allowed Iraqi students to enroll in public schools, though they are often required to pay fees, which may be prohibitively expensive for refugees without international assistance, and enrollment numbers are low. Similarly Iraqi refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan have access

to the public health care systems, but are required to pay fees to access services. Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and Syria are not legally allowed to work, though many do so in the gray economy. Although Iraqis, like all foreigners in Jordan, can work legally in several labor sectors, few have obtained the necessary work permits because these require possession of residency permits, which the Government of Jordan is not issuing to Iraqis.

More than 1.5 million Iraqi IDPs have returned to their homes, as areas previously under ISIS control are liberated. It is important for displaced Iraqis to be able to access services in their areas of displacement, as many will be unable to return to their homes in the near future due to ongoing conflict, damaged homes and infrastructure, and unexploded ordnance.

While Turkey ratified the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and acceded to its 1967 Protocol, the Turkish government acceded to the Protocol with a geographic limitation acknowledging refugees only from Europe. While nearly all asylum seekers are thus not considered refugees under Turkish law, the Turkish government grants temporary refuge and temporary local integration possibilities to refugees recognized by UNHCR usually pending their referral to a potential resettlement country. As of March 2016, there were over 250,000 refugees, as well as those pre-registered and registered with UNHCR, the majority from Iraq and Afghanistan. UNHCR-recognized refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey are assigned to one of 64 satellite cities. Provincial governments are responsible for meeting refugees' basic needs, including by providing access to employment, healthcare, and education, although support varies from one location to another. The 2.95 million Syrians that Turkey hosts are not counted under these regulations as they are afforded temporary protection status instead of conditional refugee status.

Turkey's "Foreigners and International Protection Law" regulates the entry, exit, and the stay of migrants in the country, along with the scope of international protection for those who seek asylum in Turkey. The law went into full implementation on April 11, 2014, creating a new entity within the Ministry of Interior, the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM). DGMM is responsible for implementing most aspects of the law, including temporary protection registration and exit permit issuance. DGMM continues to build up staff size and capacity, expand its regional scope, and refine roles and responsibilities with other Turkish agencies in emergency response for refugees. Legislation passed in 2016 allows Syrian refugees legal access to work. Syrians must reside in Turkey for six months and need an employer-sponsored work permit from the Ministry of Labor – a $140 expense few employers are willing to pay. Further restrictions limit refugees to working in the province where they are registered, and restrict Syrian employment at any company to less than 10 percent of the total staff. Together with Turkey's high unemployment rate and large informal sector, the result is that very few Syrian refugees are working legally in Turkey.

Despite the increasing number of asylum seekers and refugees, India does not have a clear national policy for the treatment of refugees, and UNHCR has a limited mandate in the country. India permits UNHCR to assist asylum seekers and urban refugees in New Delhi and some other cities, primarily Burmese, Afghans, and Somalis. UNHCR-recognized asylum seekers and urban refugees are eligible to apply for long-term visas that, if granted, are renewable for five years and, provide work authorization and access to higher education and public services. India recognizes and aids certain groups, including Sri Lankan refugees in the 112 camps in Tamil Nadu and Tibetan refugees in the 39 settlements and other urban areas throughout the country. The Government of India provides support and benefits to registered Tibetan and Sri Lankan refugees. It also grants work authorization and other rights to documented Tibetans. However,

Sri Lankan refugees in India do not receive work authorization from the central government but have authorization from the state government to work in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Third-Country Resettlement

The USRAP anticipates the continued processing in this region of Syrians and Iraqis, and, to a lesser extent, Bhutanese, Afghans, and Iranians, during FY 2018.

In the Near East, the United States recognizes that the possibility of third-country resettlement must be available to the most vulnerable Iraqi and Syrian refugees, and has processing facilities in Amman, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, and Erbil and Istanbul. The U.S. Embassy in Syria is shuttered and interviews are not currently taking place in Damascus.

The majority of Syrian referrals to the United States are processed in Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt, and to a lesser extent in Lebanon and Erbil, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and elsewhere. As of February 2017, UNHCR had referred over 65,000 Syrians for U.S. resettlement consideration. In FY 2016, the United States admitted 12,587 Syrian refugees.

The United States has been resettling Iraqis in large numbers since 2007. While many Iraqis gain access to the USRAP via a referral from UNHCR, direct access to the USRAP for Iraqis with close U.S. affiliations is also available in a limited number of countries in the region. The Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, enacted January 28, 2008, created categories of Iraqis who are eligible for direct access (Priority 2) to the USRAP, both inside and outside Iraq. Individuals who meet the following criteria may seek direct access to USRAP in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates:

1. Iraqis who work/worked on a full-time basis as interpreters/translators for the U.S. Government, MNF-I in Iraq, or U.S. Forces-Iraq;
2. Iraqis who are/were employed by the U.S. Government in Iraq;
3. Iraqis who are/were employees of an organization or entity closely associated with the U.S. mission in Iraq that has received U.S. Government funding through an official and documented contract, award, grant or cooperative agreement;
4. Iraqis who are/were employed in Iraq by a U.S.-based media organization or non-governmental organization; and
5. Spouses, sons, daughters, parents, and siblings of individuals described in the four categories above, or of an individual eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa as a result of his/her employment by or on behalf of the U.S. Government in Iraq, including if the individual is no longer alive, provided that the relationship is verified.

In addition to the above, the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act provides direct access to the USRAP to Iraqis who have close family members in the United States, which has been defined as beneficiaries of approved I-130 Petition for Alien Relative petitions, as well as to their derivatives.

Although security and logistical challenges associated with operating in Iraq limit in-country processing capacity, refugee processing in Iraq remains a high priority for the United States, as it directly benefits Iraqis associated with U.S. efforts in Iraq.

The United States is also working closely with UNHCR to expand an important resettlement P-1 program from Northern Iraq for survivors of ISIS atrocities, many of whom are Yezidi, Christian, and other religious minorities.

In February 2016, direct access (Priority 2) to the USRAP was extended to Syrian beneficiaries of approved I-130 Petition for Alien Relatives and their derivatives. Processing is available in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Since the United States is unable to conduct refugee resettlement directly from Iran, we partner with the Government of Austria to allow for certain Iranian religious minority applicants (Bahais, Zoroastrians, Jews, Mandaeans, and Christians) to travel from Iran to Austria for their U.S. resettlement processing. These refugees are considered under a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution granted by the Lautenberg-Specter Amendment. The Amendment was reauthorized for a one-year extension on May 5, 2017. New applications will be accepted through September 30, 2017. In Turkey, the United States also processes Iranian religious minorities, including the Bahai who qualify for special procedures involving a "fast-track" refugee status determination and referral by UNHCR.

Resettlement processing of the group resettlement program for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal is reaching a successful conclusion. The final UNHCR referrals were received on December 31, 2016 and the vast majority of refugee departures will conclude this fiscal year. As of April 2017, UNHCR had referred over 120,500 Bhutanese refugees for resettlement to eight countries and more than 108,700 of these Bhutanese refugees have been resettled to these countries – over 92,500 resettled in the United States – since late 2007.

In India, UNHCR refers some 300-400 individuals per year, with priority given to those it deems most vulnerable. The majority of referrals are Burmese. UNHCR also refers a very limited number of refugees out of Sri Lanka, mostly Pakistanis. We continue to explore modalities for processing vulnerable Tibetan refugees in the region.

FY 2017 U.S. Admissions

We estimate the admission of almost 22,000 refugees from the Near East region in FY 2017. These will include up to 7,000 Iraqis, 6,500 Syrians, 3,500 Bhutanese, 1,200 Iranians, and approximately 500 Afghans, including Afghan refugees in Iran processed through UNHCR Emergency Transit Centers in Slovakia and Romania.

FY 2018 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed regional ceiling for refugees from the Near East and South Asia for FY 2018 is 17,500 including vulnerable Syrians, Iraqis, Bhutanese, Iranians, Pakistanis, and Afghans. We expect Priority 1 UNHCR referrals for all of the aforementioned nationalities, including individuals from various and diverse religious and ethnic groups in the region, such as Assyrians, Yezidis, Mandeans, Iranian Kurds, Syrian Kurds, and Ahmadi Muslims. Many Iraqis, Syrians, and Iranians will also access the USRAP through specific Priority 2 programs.

Proposed FY 2018 Near East/ South Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

Priority 1 Individual Referrals	***8,400***
Priority 2 Groups	***9,000***
Priority 3 Family Reunification	***100***
Total Proposed Ceiling	***17,500***

V. REFUGEE AND ASYLEE ASSIMILATION

Successful assimilation of refugees into U.S. society directly benefits refugees, asylees, and communities, while it also serves the national interest of the United States by helping to establish a safe and secure homeland. Assimilation facilitates the ability of refugees and asylees to make positive contributions to the United States and the communities where they live. With these benefits in mind, PRM, DHS/USCIS, and ORR are working to enhance efforts to promote refugee and asylee assimilation and integration. Improved assimilation of refugees and asylees will not only boost their ability to be successful in the United States, but will also help to better secure our communities by fostering a cohesive society based upon shared civic ideals, an appreciation of our history, and an understanding of the English language.

The education and work history of each refugee is included in information shared with resettlement agencies prior to a refugee's arrival which leads to placement supporting the most optimal outcomes for refugees. The Department of State requires that a clear plan of action for each refugee, including children, is developed and implemented within the first 30 days after arrival in the United States. This plan is based on an assessment of individual needs and indicates the initial employability for each refugee. For each employable adult, the principal objective of the service plan is assisting the refugee to obtain early employment.

Employment outcomes at each locality are assessed annually and considered as one of several factors during the review of proposals for resettlement. The U.S. government will continue to seek to improve outcomes in coordination with federal and local entities.

In addition to working collaboratively on these concepts, each agency is pursuing individualized efforts to support refugee assimilation.

The Department of State will improve the delivery of post-arrival cultural orientation by ensuring that each local resettlement affiliate has an effective policy for the delivery of required cultural orientation, as well as a sound mechanism for assessing refugee understanding of cultural orientation topics. PRM will also ensure that the required local refugee resettlement quarterly consultations include the development and implementation of a community strategy to support refugee integration.

HHS will continue to support self-sufficiency and assimilation of newly arriving refugees through its social service program. In the coming year, the program will combine social service and targeted assistance funding to allow states and providers more flexibility to address specific needs. ORR is looking to expand youth services focused on mentoring, social skills and job skill

development. Given the growing number of refugees with advanced skills, ORR is proposing to launch a pilot program to support career laddering in partnership with local employers and universities. ORR will continue to focus on health and emotional wellness through screening and technical assistance to ensure refugee needs are addressed in support of self-sufficiency and integration into their community. ORR will also use technical assistance providers to further develop efforts to promote civic education and involvement, with an eye toward full citizenship.

DHS/USCIS intends to pursue several integration-related initiatives in FY 2018:

Grant Funding. Since fiscal year 2009, DHS/USCIS has received congressional authority to award competitive grant funding to organizations to support citizenship and immigrant assimilation efforts. Subject to congressional authority, DHS/USCIS is considering prioritizing grant-funded programs that focus on integrating newly arrived refugees and recently approved asylees through a variety of critical assimilation services. Additionally, DHS/USCIS is exploring awarding grant funds to local governments that are partners in resettling refugees or hosting asylees to support effective settlement and assimilation programming. DHS/USCIS will also work to develop and refine a method to assess the efficacy of such federal grant funding in promoting local assimilation efforts.

Informational Brochure. DHS/USCIS is working to develop an informational brochure for refugees and asylees containing information on critical resettlement resources, including available English language learning opportunities, lawful permanent residence and citizenship, and U.S. civic values. This brochure will be translated into several languages and distributed to refugees at designated ports of entry, to asylees through DHS/USCIS asylum offices, and through other appropriate and available channels.

VI. ANTICIPATED SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND DEMOGRAPHIC IMPACT OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS

In accordance with the Refugee Act of 1980, ORR produces an Annual Report to Congress that presents ORR's activities, expenditures, and policies, and information about the individuals receiving ORR benefits and services, which addresses this issue in greater detail. The Annual Report to Congress also includes data from the Annual Survey of Refugees (ASR), which provides insight into the social, economic, and demographic impact of refugee admissions. The ASR collects basic demographic information such as age, level of education, English language proficiency and training, job training, labor force participation, work experience, and barriers to employment. Other data are collected by family unit, including information on housing, income, and utilization of public benefits.

ORR published the results of the 49th Annual Survey of Refugees in the 2015 Annual Report to Congress. Data from the 2015 Annual Survey of Refugees (ASR) highlights responding families' progress toward self-sufficiency during their initial five years in the United States. Survey respondents demonstrated noticeable gains in English language proficiency and workforce participation, and a decreased reliance on public benefits. After being in the United States for only two years, male respondents were employed at a rate roughly on par with the U.S. population. ORR will release the results of the most recent Annual Survey of Refugees in its forthcoming Annual Report to Congress.

On March 6, 2017, the President released a memorandum directing the Secretary of State – in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Director of the Office of Management Budget – to submit a report detailing the estimated long-term costs of the USRAP at the Federal, State, and local levels, along with recommendations about how to curtail those costs. The Presidential Memorandum also directs the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, to produce a report estimating how many refugees are being supported in countries of first asylum (near their home countries) for the same long-term cost as supporting refugees in the United States, taking into account the full lifetime cost of Federal, State, and local benefits, and the comparable cost of providing similar benefits elsewhere. The Department of State is currently preparing both reports for submission to the President.

VII. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

In FY 2016, the USRAP admitted 84,994 refugees from 68 countries. More than half were originally from either Democratic Republic of the Congo or Syria. (See Table V.)

The demographic characteristics of refugee arrivals from the 20 largest source countries (representing close to 100 percent of total arrivals) in FY 2016 illustrate the variation among refugee groups. The median age of all FY 2016 arrivals was 24 years and ranged from 18 years for arrivals from the Republic of South Sudan to 37 years of age for arrivals from Cuba and Iran. In FY 2016, 49.1 percent of all arriving refugees were female and 50.9 percent of all arriving refugees were male. Males predominated among refugees from Sudan (59.2 percent), Pakistan (55.4 percent), and Rwanda (52.8 percent). (See Table VI.)

Of the total arrivals in FY 2016, some 11.7 percent were under the age of five, 32.6 percent were of school age, 57.6 percent were of working age, and 2.2 percent were of retirement age. (See Table VII.) Considerable variation among refugee groups can be seen among specific age

categories. Refugees under the age of five ranged from a high of 15.8 percent among Burundi arrivals to a low of 2.7 percent of those from Iran. The number of school-aged children (from 5 to 17 years of age) varied from a high of over 42.8 percent of arrivals from the Republic of South Sudan to a low of 13 percent of those from Iran. The number of working-aged refugees (16 to 64 years of age) varied from a high of 84.8 percent of those from El Salvador to a low of 46.3 percent of individuals from Syria. Retirement-aged refugees (65 years or older) ranged from a high of 11.1 percent of arrivals from Iran to a low of less than 1 percent of those from El Salvador.

During FY 2016, 61 percent of all arriving refugees resettled in 12 states. The majority were placed in California (9.3 percent), followed by Texas (9.2 percent), New York (5.9 percent), Michigan (5 percent), Ohio (4.9 percent), and Arizona (4.8 percent). The states of North Carolina (3.9 percent), Washington (3.8 percent), Pennsylvania (3.8 percent), Illinois (3.7 percent), Georgia (3.5 percent), and Florida (3.5 percent) also were in the top twelve states where refugees were resettled. (See Table VIII.)

TABLE V
Refugee Arrivals By Country of Origin
Fiscal Year 2016

Country of Origin	Arrival Number	% of Total
Afghanistan	2,737	3.22%
Angola	3	0.00%
Bangladesh	1	0.00%
Belgium	2	0.00%
Bhutan	5,817	6.84%
Burma	12,347	14.53%
Burundi	694	0.82%
Cambodia	18	0.02%
Cameroon	14	0.02%
Central African Republic	401	0.47%
Chad	2	0.00%
China	57	0.07%
Colombia	529	0.62%
Congo	16	0.02%
Cuba	354	0.42%
Dem. Rep. Congo	16,370	19.26%
Egypt	21	0.02%
El Salvador	364	0.43%
Eritrea	1,949	2.29%
Ethiopia	1,131	1.33%
Former Soviet Union*	3,947	4.64%
Former Yugoslavia*	3	0.00%
Gabon	2	0.00%
Guatemala	8	0.01%
Guinea	5	0.01%

Honduras	84	0.10%
India	4	0.00%
Indonesia	7	0.01%
Iran	3,750	4.41%
Iraq	9,880	11.62%
Ivory Coast	79	0.09%
Jamaica	1	0.00%
Jordan	6	0.01%
Kenya	6	0.01%
Korea, North	14	0.02%
Kuwait	2	0.00%
Laos	7	0.01%
Liberia	16	0.02%
Libya	1	0.00%
Malaysia	4	0.00%
Mali	6	0.01%
Mongolia	1	0.00%
Nepal	33	0.04%
Nigeria	7	0.01%
Norway	2	0.00%
Pakistan	545	0.64%
Palestine	50	0.06%
Rep. of South Sudan	189	0.22%
Rwanda	140	0.16%
Saudi Arabia	2	0.00%
Senegal	16	0.02%
Sierra Leone	3	0.00%
Somalia	9,020	10.61%

Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	91	0.11%
Sudan	1,458	1.72%
Sweden	2	0.00%
Syria	12,587	14.81%
Tanzania	1	0.00%
Thailand	5	0.01%
Tibet	1	0.00%
Togo	19	0.02%
Tunisia	1	0.00%
Uganda	65	0.08%
United Arab Emirates	1	0.00%
Vietnam	58	0.07%
Yemen	26	0.03%
Zambia	1	0.00%
Zimbabwe	11	0.01%
TOTAL	**84,994**	**100.00%**

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

TABLE VI

Median Age and Gender of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2016

Rank (# of Arrivals)	Country of Origin	Refugees Admitted	Median Age	% Females	% Males
1	Dem. Rep. Congo	16,370	20	49.35%	50.65%
2	Syria	12,587	20	47.80%	52.20%
3	Burma	12,347	22	47.20%	52.80%
4	Iraq	9,880	25	48.89%	51.11%
5	Somalia	9,020	20	50.86%	49.14%
6	Bhutan	5,817	27	51.30%	48.70%
7	Former Soviet Union*	3,947	28	52.04%	47.96%
8	Iran	3,750	37	49.92%	50.08%
9	Afghanistan	2,737	22	51.44%	48.56%
10	Eritrea	1,949	23	47.36%	52.64%
11	Sudan	1,458	23	40.74%	59.26%
12	Ethiopia	1,131	22	48.81%	51.19%
13	Burundi	694	19	49.71%	50.29%
14	Pakistan	545	25	44.59%	55.41%
15	Colombia	529	23	51.98%	48.02%
16	Central African Republic	401	19	50.37%	49.63%
17	El Salvador	364	19	60.16%	39.84%
18	Cuba	354	37	51.13%	48.87%
19	Republic of South Sudan	189	18	54.50%	45.50%
20	Rwanda	140	26	47.14%	52.86%
21	All Other Countries	785	25	47.13%	52.87%
TOTAL		**84,994**	**24**	**49.10%**	**50.90%**

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

TABLE VII

Select Age Categories of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2016

Rank (# of Arrivals)	Country of Origin	Under 5 Yrs	School Age (5-17)	Working Age (16-64)	Retirement Age (=or > 65)
1	Dem. Rep. Congo	12.60%	40.78%	51.39%	1.15%
2	Syria	14.94%	41.69%	46.30%	0.82%
3	Burma	15.67%	26.73%	59.46%	1.53%
4	Iraq	10.19%	27.66%	61.98%	3.40%
5	Somalia	11.27%	36.70%	55.58%	1.16%
6	Bhutan	8.89%	23.67%	67.18%	3.61%
7	Former Soviet Union*	10.97%	25.26%	61.69%	5.27%
8	Iran	2.77%	13.04%	74.96%	11.17%
9	Afghanistan	7.71%	37.85%	60.72%	1.64%
10	Eritrea	8.06%	29.50%	66.09%	0.82%
11	Sudan	10.91%	29.01%	62.07%	0.48%
12	Ethiopia	11.85%	29.53%	62.16%	0.71%
13	Burundi	15.85%	37.03%	51.15%	0.58%
14	Pakistan	8.26%	29.54%	63.67%	1.65%
15	Colombia	10.40%	31.95%	59.92%	0.38%
16	Central African Republic	14.96%	37.91%	49.63%	1.50%
17	El Salvador	6.32%	21.70%	84.89%	0.27%
18	Cuba	3.39%	20.06%	70.90%	10.45%
19	Republic of South Sudan	13.23%	42.86%	49.74%	0.53%
20	Rwanda	5.00%	35.71%	67.14%	0.71%
21	All Other Countries	5.86%	24.46%	73.38%	1.40%
TOTAL		**11.77%**	**32.60%**	**57.62%**	**2.24%**

NOTE: Totals may exceed 100 percent due to overlapping age categories.

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

TABLE VIII

Refugee Arrivals By State of Initial Resettlement, Fiscal Year 2016

STATE	Refugee Arrivals	Amerasian Arrivals	Total Arrivals	% of Total Arrivals to U.S.
Alabama	120	0	120	0.14%
Alaska	128	0	128	0.15%
Arizona	4,107	3	4,110	4.84%
Arkansas	8	0	8	0.01%
California	7,909	0	7,909	9.31%
CNMI	0	0	0	0%
Colorado	1,647	0	1,647	1.94%
Connecticut	819	0	819	0.96%
Delaware	0	0	0	0%
District of Columbia	6	0	6	0.01%
Florida	2,983	0	2,983	3.51%
Georgia	3,017	0	3,017	3.55%
Guam	0	0	0	0%
Hawaii	0	0	0	0%
Idaho	1,135	0	1,135	1.34%
Illinois	3,125	0	3,125	3.68%
Indiana	1,893	0	1,893	2.23%
Iowa	995	0	995	1.17%
Kansas	914	0	914	1.08%
Kentucky	2,405	0	2,405	2.83%
Louisiana	173	0	173	0.20%
Maine	607	0	607	0.71%
Maryland	1,653	0	1,653	1.94%
Massachusetts	1,734	0	1,734	2.04%
Michigan	4,258	0	4,258	5.01%
Minnesota	2,635	0	2,635	3.10%
Mississippi	13	0	13	0.02%
Missouri	2,072	0	2,072	2.44%
Montana	27	0	27	0.03%
Nebraska	1,441	0	1,441	1.70%
Nevada	753	0	753	0.89%
New Hampshire	515	0	515	0.61%
New Jersey	536	0	536	0.63%
New Mexico	342	0	342	0.40%
New York	5,026	0	5,026	5.91%

STATE	Refugee Arrivals	Amerasian Arrivals	Total Arrivals	% of Total Arrivals to U.S.
North Carolina	3,342	0	3,342	3.93%
North Dakota	540	0	540	0.64%
Ohio	4,194	0	4,194	4.93%
Oklahoma	534	0	534	0.63%
Oregon	1,293	0	1,293	1.52%
Pennsylvania	3,219	0	3,219	3.79%
Puerto Rico	0	0	0	0%
Rhode Island	337	0	337	0.40%
South Carolina	350	0	350	0.41%
South Dakota	426	0	426	0.50%
Tennessee	1,959	0	1,959	2.30%
Texas	7,802	0	7,802	9.18%
Utah	1,192	0	1,192	1.40%
Vermont	386	0	386	0.45%
Virginia	1,471	0	1,471	1.73%
Virgin Islands	0	0	0	0%
Washington	3,230	3	3,233	3.80%
West Virginia	25	0	25	0.03%
Wisconsin	1,691	0	1,691	1.99%
Wyoming	1	0	1	0.00%
Total	**84,988**	**6**	**84,994**	**100.00%**

Note: Arrival figures do not reflect secondary migration.

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

TABLE IX

ESTIMATED AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR REFUGEE PROCESSING AND RESETTLEMENT FY 2017 AND FY 2018 ($ MILLIONS)

AGENCY	ESTIMATED FY 2017 AVAILABILITY (BY DEPARTMENT)	ESTIMATED FY 2018 AVAILABILITY(BY DEPARTMENT)
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY *United States Citizenship and Immigration Services*		
Refugee Processing [1]	**$67.8**	**$64.1**
DEPARTMENT OF STATE *Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration*		
Refugee Admissions [2,3]	**$583.9**	**$472**
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES *Administration for Children and Families,* *Office of Refugee Resettlement*		
Refugee Resettlement [4]	**$697.2**	**$479.3**
ESTIMATED TOTAL AVAILABILITIES	**$ 1,348.9**	**$1,015.4**

[1] FY 2018: Includes cost factors to reflect Headquarters facilities rent related to the refugee resettlement program, staffing, general expense and following-to-join refugee processing, in addition to certain International Cooperative Administrative Support Services (ICASS) and Capital Security Cost Sharing (CSCS) costs. Refugee Officers may be assigned to domestic asylum processing in lieu of international refugee adjudications.

[2] FY 2017: Includes FY 2017 Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) appropriation of $445 million, $48.8 million in PRM carryover from FY 2016, $80.1 million in projected IOM loan collections/carryover, and an estimate of $10 million in prior year MRA recoveries. A portion of these funds will be carried forward into FY 2018.

[3] FY 2018: Includes FY 2018 MRA budget request of $410 million, $56 million in projected IOM loan collections/carryover, and an estimate of $6 million in prior year MRA recoveries. Additional funds carried forward from FY 2017 will be available in FY 2018.

[4] FY 2017 and FY 2018: HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) refugee benefits and services are also provided to asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, certain Amerasians from Vietnam, victims of a severe form of trafficking who have received certification or eligibility letters from ORR, and certain family members who are accompanying or following to join victims of severe forms of trafficking, and some victims of torture, as well as Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants and their spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21. The estimated funding for these groups is included here. However, none of these additional groups is included in the refugee admissions ceiling except Amerasians. This category does not include costs associated with the Unaccompanied Alien Children's Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income programs, or the Victims of Trafficking or Torture. These estimates do not include any prior year carryover funding. The estimated FY 2018 figures above reflect the President's FY 2018 Budget request.

TABLE X
UNHCR Resettlement Statistics by Resettlement Country CY 2016 ADMISSIONS

RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY	TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESETTLED
United States	78,340	62.3%
Canada	21,838	17.4%
Australia	7,502	6.0%
United Kingdom	5,074	4.0%
Norway	3,149	2.5%
Sweden	1,864	1.5%
France	1,328	1.1%
Germany	1,229	1.0%
Finland	926	.01%
New Zealand	895	.01%
Netherlands	689	.01%
Switzerland	667	.01%
Italy	528	.01%
Belgium	456	.01%
Ireland	359	.01%
Denmark	315	.01%
Spain	288	.01%
Austria	81	.01%
Rep. of Korea	64	.01%
Iceland	56	.01%
Luxembourg	52	.01%
Brazil	31	.01%
Lithuania	25	.01%
Czech Rep.	22	.01%
Japan	18	.01%

Portugal	12	.01%
Estonia	11	.01%
Monaco	6	.01%
Latvia	6	.01%
Hungary	4	.01%
TOTAL	125,835	100.00%

Resettlement country figures (submissions and departures) may not match UNHCR reported figures as resettlement country figures may include submissions received outside of UNHCR auspices. UNHCR figures may also include cases in which UNHCR did not submit but assisted, i.e. obtaining exit permits for humanitarian admissions or family reunion.