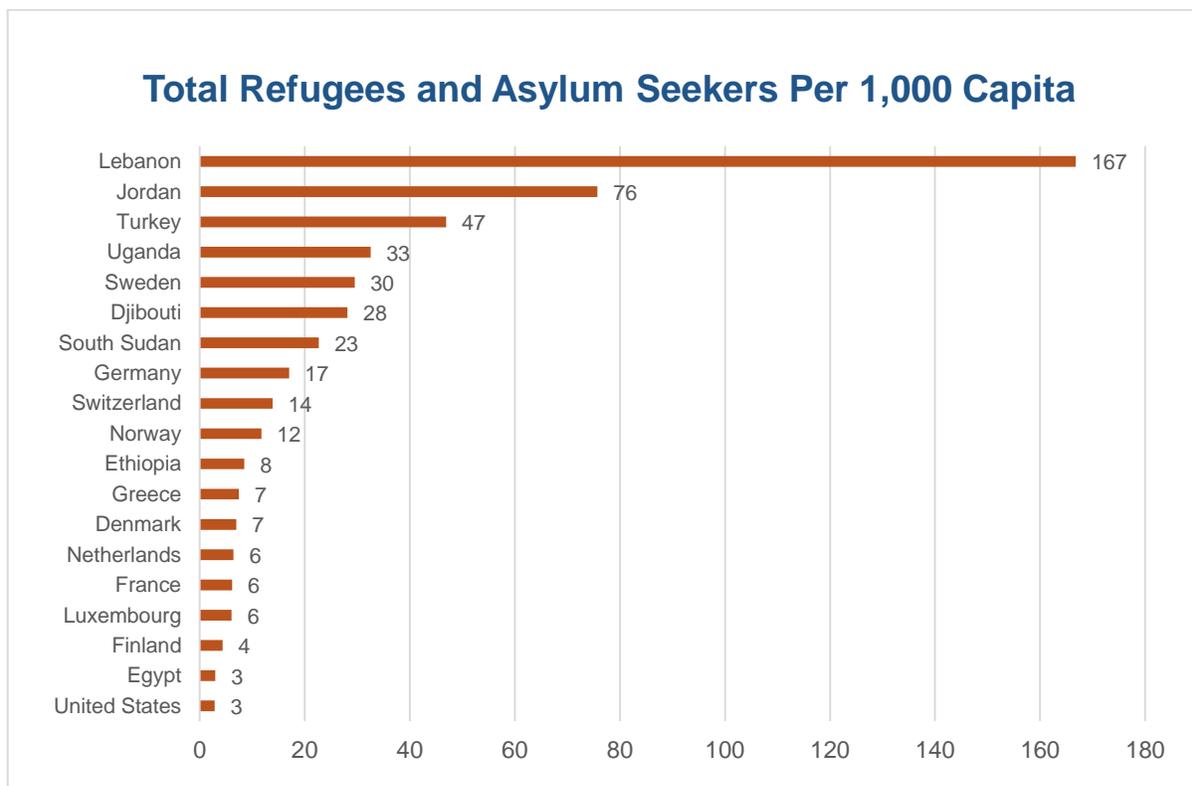


Response to the Low PD

Secretary Pompeo recently announced the Trump Administration's intention to set the refugee admissions goal for Fiscal Year 2019 at an all-time low of 30,000 refugees, citing the large backlog of asylum applications. While the United States *does* have a growing backlog of asylum applicants that needs to be addressed, the United States has one of the lowest ratios of refugees and asylum seekers per 1,000 citizens in the developed world, with only 3 refugees for every 1,000 Americans. For comparison, Sweden—a country roughly the size of the state of California with 27 million *less* citizens—hosts 30 refugees for every 1,000 citizens.



United States Resettlement Priorities

Each country that participates in the refugee resettlement program through the United Nation's High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) determines that populations of refugees they wish to resettle into their country based on criteria such as ability to integrate.

The United States has set three refugee processing priorities:¹

- Priority One:** Refugees who are the most vulnerable and are unable to return home, as well as those who remain in danger in the country of asylum they fled to.

- ☑ **Priority Two:** Groups designated by the United States to be of special humanitarian concern, including U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and Afghans who worked on behalf of the U.S. government whose lives were threatened because of their support of the U.S. mission.
- ☑ **Priority Three:** Family reunification limited to designated nationalities.

What the Trump Administration fails to acknowledge is that by reducing the admissions ceiling to 30,000 they are harming the world's most vulnerable and breaking promises to our war-time allies. For example, in 2016 over 72% of refugees resettled in the United States were women and children—many of which were single mothers, survivors of sexual assault and torture, and had serious medical conditions.² Someone fleeing from a terrorist organization because of their sexual orientation or religion is still very likely to experience the same persecution in the first country of asylum, and suffer severe trauma that cannot be addressed in camps or difficult urban environments.

Additionally, the United States made a promise to their wartime allies who are now in danger because of their involvement with the U.S. government. Leaving the men and women who worked with our troops as interpreters, translators, and aids in unconscionable.

Global Impact

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developing countries host 85% of the world's refugees.³ A large-scale inflow of refugees can overburden the economic and administrative capacities of a host country and can create social tensions, especially in poor and underserved regions of developing countries where most newcomers are located. The small number of nations that host large numbers of refugees face serious strains to their medical, housing, water, waste, labor, and other infrastructures. Without leadership from the United States and its allies, a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) task force warned that Uganda, Jordan, Bangladesh and other countries “will face greater pressures that could lead to descent into instability and conflict, driving even more people from their homes.”⁴ If these countries' infrastructures should collapse, the stability of these countries—and the regions surrounding them—will be threatened.

The United States' commitment to resettling refugees has practical repercussions on a global scale. In 2014 and 2015, the international community failed to fully meet appeals for humanitarian aid and resettlement for Syrian refugees. Across the region, governments and relief agencies cut food assistance as well as access to medical care and other essentials, actions that deepened the suffering of refugees who are generally prohibited from working legally in these states.

In the absence of adequate responsibility-sharing by other countries, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey imposed restrictions that denied entry to Syrian refugees and made it more difficult for those who had succeeded in fleeing to neighboring countries to remain in the region. As the Syrian government's Russian-backed attacks on Aleppo intensified in February 2016, tens of thousands of Syrians fled to the Turkish border, only to be barred from entering. At the same time, roughly 20,000 Syrian refugees have been stranded in a remote desert area at Jordan's border, which has been largely closed to refugees during the last two years. Beginning in January 2015, Lebanon implemented border restrictions that generally bar Syrians and initiated onerous registration requirements for remaining in the country that most refugees cannot meet. Not only do such border restrictions violate international law, they leave some Syrians trapped in a war-ravaged country. Prohibitions on entry, stay, and work also push refugees to seek protection outside the region. As a result, more than one million refugees and migrants fled to Europe by sea in 2015 alone, with more than 3,800 perishing at sea.

Former-President Obama hosted the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September of 2016 calling the international community to work together and commit to increases in refugee resettlement, aid, and access to work and

education, pledging the United States to resettle 110,000 refugees. Following the summit, the 42 countries and international organizations who participated announced commitments that cumulatively increased their 2016 financial contributions to the UN by approximately \$4.5 billion, roughly doubled the number of refugees they resettled or afforded other legal channels of admission in 2016, created improved access to education for one million refugee children globally, and improved access to lawful work for one million refugees.⁵ With pressure alleviated from frontline countries, they were able to begin accepting refugees again. At the same time, travel to Europe decreased.

However, the United States reduced their admissions ceiling by 65% compared to 2016, prompting Canada and Australia to reduce their admission ceilings by 45% as well. Additionally, Jordan announced in June 2018 that “we will not accept more Syrian refugees,” and Lebanon instituted new visa restrictions which required \$2,000 and hotel reservations for Syrians wanting to enter Lebanon.

Not only do many refugees lose their lives on these journeys, but refugees who take these routes are often targeted by smugglers, traffickers, and other criminal enterprises. In contrast, effective resettlement initiatives help ensure that refugees who cannot secure protection in front-line countries have safe and orderly routes to access protection.⁶

1 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL31269.pdf>

2 U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. “Fact Sheet: Fiscal Year 2016 Refugee Admissions.” January 2017. <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266365.htm>

3 UNHCR report (Global Trends FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN 2017)

4 Ctr. for Strategic & Int'l Stud., *Confronting the Forced Migration Crisis* 28 (May 2018).

5 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/20/fact-sheet-leaders-summit-refugees>

6 UNHCR, *Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2018* 19 (June 2017)