

Declines in U.S. Resettlement of Muslim Refugees under the Trump Administration

Data as of June 11, 2017¹

Since President Donald Trump took office on January 20, 2017, 143 days ago, the number of refugees resettled to the United States has fallen by 61 percent when compared to the 143 days prior to the inauguration.² This number has plummeted particularly sharply for Muslim refugees, as well as refugees from the seven Muslim-majority countries that were targeted by the President's January 27 executive order. These shifts, as outlined below, signal that U.S. agencies, under the Trump administration, have drastically decreased the resettlement of these refugees, despite the fact that the courts have enjoined the provisions of this executive order, as well as the revised March 6 version, that relate to refugee resettlement and travel restrictions.

President Trump's Executive Orders and Federal Court Litigation

Following a campaign that promised a Muslim ban and vilified refugees as security threats, President Trump issued an order only days after taking office that sought to suspend entry of citizens of seven predominately Muslim countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – for at least 90 days, halt all refugee resettlement for at least 120 days, ban resettlement of Syrian refugees indefinitely, and slash all resettlement down to 50,000 (an annual target that would be a historic low for a program established in 1980).³

The order also directed exceptions, and future prioritization, for religious persecution cases “provided that the religion of the individual is a minority religion in the individual's country of nationality,” a stipulation that would limit admission of Muslim refugees from Muslim-majority countries. From fiscal year 2013 to 2016, only 12 percent of the Muslim refugees resettled to the United States were from a country where Islam is a minority faith, meaning 88 percent of Muslim refugees were from Muslim-majority countries.⁴

These provisions were enjoined by the courts, but the President signed a revised version of the order on March 6. The revised executive order removed the provision to indefinitely ban Syrian resettlement and the preference for religious minorities. While it maintained the travel ban, it removed Iraq from the list leaving the other six countries. The order also kept the provisions that would suspend resettlement for at least 120 days and cap resettlement at 50,000. The federal courts quickly enjoined all the above provisions on March 15, 2017.

Decline in U.S. Resettlement of Muslim Refugees

In fiscal year 2016, Muslim refugees represented the largest religious group resettled in the United States, making up 46 percent of resettled refugees.⁵ Of these resettled Muslim refugees, 80 percent originated from the seven countries targeted for the travel ban in Trump's initial order. Syrian refugees accounted for 32 percent of all Muslim refugees, largely due to a modest Syrian resettlement initiative launched earlier that fiscal year.

In the 143 days before President Trump took office, Muslim refugees represented 47 percent of resettled refugees, and non-Muslim refugees represented 53 percent.⁶ However, since Trump took office the gap has widened, with Muslim refugees representing just 39 percent of resettled refugees, and non-Muslims representing 61 percent. This reflects a 68 percent decrease in the number of Muslim refugees resettled under the Trump

Administration, and a 55 percent decrease in the number for non-Muslims.⁷ Overall, the Trump Administration has resettled a little more than one third the amount that President Obama resettled in the same number of days prior to Trump assuming office.⁸

	Aug. 30, 2016 – Jan. 19, 2017	Jan. 20 – Jun. 11, 2017	Percent Change	
Overall Resettlement	44,910	17,417	- 61%	
Seven travel ban countries	21,163	6,476	- 69%	
Six travel ban countries	14,766	4,681	- 68%	
	<i>Over 1000 refugees resettled</i>			
	<i>Iraq</i>	6,397	1,795	- 72%
	<i>Somalia</i>	5,055	1,689	- 67%
	<i>Syria</i>	6,998	1,690	- 76%
Non-travel ban countries (seven)	23,747	10,941	- 54%	
Non-travel ban countries (six)	30,144	12,736	- 57%	
	<i>Over 1000 refugees resettled</i>			
	<i>Bhutan</i>	2,221	1,281	- 42%
	<i>Burma</i>	3,575	2,309	- 35%
	<i>DRC</i>	9,702	2,829	- 71%
	<i>Eritrea</i>	832	1,003	+ 21%
	<i>Ukraine</i>	2,214	1,425	- 36%
Muslim	21,123	6,717	- 68%	
Non-Muslim	23,787	10,700	- 55%	

Decline in U.S. Resettlement of Refugees from the Seven Targeted Muslim-majority Countries

The number of refugees resettled from the seven targeted Muslim-majority countries has dropped even further—by 69 percent, reflecting a reduction that is 15 percent greater than the 54 percent decrease in resettlement from other countries.

When compared to countries not listed in the travel ban from which over 1,000 refugees have been resettled since President Trump took office,⁹ the decrease has not been as dramatic. For example, the number of refugees resettled from Bhutan (where the vast majority practice Buddhism or Hinduism) has only decreased by 42 percent, Burma (where the vast majority practice Buddhism or Christianity) by 35 percent, and Ukraine (where the

vast majority practice Christianity) by 36 percent.¹⁰ Eritrean refugees (the majority of which practice various denominations of Christianity) have seen an *increase* in resettlement by 21 percent.

Decline in U.S. Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

Even though the second executive order did not include an indefinite ban on Syrian resettlement, and the resettlement provisions of both orders have been enjoined by the federal courts, the United States has dramatically cut its resettlement of refugees from Syria by 76 percent during President Trump's first 143 days. During this time, only 1,690 Syrian refugees were resettled to the United States.

Decline in U.S. Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees

The number of Iraqis resettled has also plummeted, falling by 72 percent during President Trump's first 143 days. Many Iraqis awaiting U.S. resettlement are individuals whose lives are at risk because of their work for, or association with, the United States military or government. The U.S. Congress passed a special law, called the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, to ensure that Iraqis who were in danger due to their ties to the United States could be brought to safety through the U.S. resettlement program. More than 50,000 Iraqis are awaiting completion of their processing through this program.¹¹

Comparative Decrease in U.S. Resettlement After Court Blocks Second Executive Order

Even after a Hawaii district court issued a March 15 Temporary Injunction (TRO) blocking the provisions related to travel and refugee resettlement in Trump's revised order, refugee admissions remain low. For fiscal year 2016, the refugee admissions target was set at 85,000 as compared to the 110,000-person target set for fiscal year 2017, reflecting an increase of 25,000 available resettlement spaces this year. Yet when comparing the period immediately after the Hawaii district court enjoined Trump's revised executive order (March 16 – June 11, 2017) with the same timeframe last year (March 16 – June 11, 2016), refugee resettlement has nevertheless been significantly reduced. Moreover, the reduction has disproportionately impacted refugees from the Muslim-majority countries listed on the travel bans despite President Trump rescinding the religious minority preference.

As compared to the same timeframe in 2016, overall resettlement has fallen by 51 percent since the day after the TRO was issued until now. For refugees from countries on the initial and revised travel ban, resettlement has decreased by 64 percent and 67 percent, respectively. However, for refugees from other countries on the initial and revised order, the decrease in resettlement stands at 41 percent and 43 percent, respectively.

For countries on the travel bans, in which over 500 refugees were resettled since the TRO was issued,¹² there has been a disproportionate decrease in resettlement, with admission dropping for Syrians by 77 percent, Iraqis by 55 percent, and Somalis by 68 percent. However, for refugees from countries not listed on the travel bans, in which over 500 refugees have been resettled since the TRO was issued, resettlement did not fall as significantly, and in some cases increased. For instance, refugee resettlement from Bhutan decreased by 48 percent, Burma by 59 percent, and DRC by 48 percent, while resettlement from Eritrea increased nearly double (97 percent) and Ukraine by nearly half (43 percent).

Over these comparison periods, resettlement of Muslim refugees decreased by 65 percent whereas resettlement of non-Muslim refugees only decreased by 39 percent. Of countries where over 500 refugees have been resettled since the TRO, 88 percent of resettled refugees from countries on the initial travel ban list were Muslim, as compared to only 11 percent of resettled refugees from other countries.¹³

	Mar. 16 – Jun. 11, 2016	Mar. 16 – Jun. 11, 2017	Percent Change	
Total Resettlement	18,886	9,322	- 51%	
Seven travel ban countries	8,017	2,868	- 64%	
Six travel ban countries	6,170	2,040	-67%	
Muslim	8,620	3,030	- 65%	
Non-Muslim	10,266	6,292	- 39%	
<i>Over 500 refugees resettled</i>				
	<i>Iraq</i>	1847	828	- 55%
	<i>Somalia</i>	2,262	733	- 68%
	<i>Syria</i>	2,772	624	-77%
Non-travel ban countries (seven)	10,869	7,282	-41%	
Non-travel ban countries (six)	12,716	6,454	-43%	
<i>Over 500 refugees resettled</i>				
	Bhutan	1,465	767	- 48%
	Burma	3,294	1337	- 59%
	DRC	3,099	1618	- 48%
	Eritrea	351	690	+ 97%
	Ukraine	585	836	+43%

¹ Data used for this analysis is from the [Refugee Processing Center](#). Muslim refugees were calculated using the labels provided by this source: Ahmadiyya, Moslem, Moslem Ismaici, Moslem Shiite, Moslem Sunni.

² From Aug 30, 2016-Jan 19, 2017, 44,910 refugees were resettled. From Jan 20, 2017-Jun 11, 2017, 17,417 were resettled. Percentage change: (17,417/44,910)-1=-.6121 (a decrease of 61%).

³ U.S. Refugee Admissions and Refugee Resettlement Ceilings, Fiscal Years 1980-2016, [available at](#) https://public.tableau.com/profile/mpi.data.hub#!/vizhome/RefugeeAdmissionstotheU_S_WRAPS1980-2016/Dashboard1

⁴ International Refugee Assistance Project v. Trump (U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland), Complaint for Injunctive and Declaratory Relief (Feb. 7, 2017), [available at](#) <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3456733-IRAP-Complaint-2-7.html>

⁵ Pew Research, Key facts about refugees to the U.S., [available at](#) <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>

⁶ From Aug 30, 2016-Jan 19, 2017, 21,123 Muslims refugees and 23,787 non-Muslim refugees were resettled of a total 44,910 refugees. From Jan 20, 2017-Jun 11, 2017, 6,717 Muslim refugees and 10,700 non-Muslim refugees were resettled of a total 17,417 refugees.

⁷ Percentage change: Muslim refugees: (6,717/21,123)-1=-.682 (a decrease of 68%). Non-Muslim refugees: (10,700/23,787)-1=-.5501 (a decrease of 55%).

⁸ From Aug 30, 2016-Jan 19, 2017, 44,910 refugees were resettled as compared to 17,417 from Jan 20, 2017-Jun 11, 2017. Percent: (17,417/44,910=-.388).

⁹ To make reliable conclusions, only countries with high resettlement rates during this period were used for comparison.

¹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), World Factbook (Religions), [available at](#) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>

¹¹ Human Rights First, President Trump's Executive Order on Refugees Harms Our Iraqi Allies, [available at](#) <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRFFactSheetP2SIVIraqis.pdf>.

¹² To make reliable conclusions, only countries with high resettlement rates during this period were used for comparison.

¹³ The number of Muslim refugees resettled from these travel ban countries: (1,928 of 2,185 (88%): Iraq (571), Somalia (733), Syria (624). The number of Muslim refugees resettled from these other countries: (560 of 5,248 (11%): Bhutan (0), Burma (336), DRC (38), Eritrea (186), Ukraine (0).