

**PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS
FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2016**

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 2016: Report to the Congress* is submitted in compliance with Sections 207(d)(1) and (e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The Act requires that before the start of the fiscal year and, to the extent possible, at least two weeks prior to consultations on refugee admissions, members of the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representatives be provided 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. 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.

FOREWORD

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, June 20, President Obama re-affirmed our nation's commitment to helping refugees and our leading role in providing safe haven. This commitment comes at a time when the global community faces an unprecedented crisis of displacement. There are currently more refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons – nearly 60 million – than at any time since World War II. The United States leads the world in providing humanitarian aid to crises from which innocent people flee and also is the top destination for refugees recommended for resettlement by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR).

While starting life anew in the United States may be daunting, it also offers hope and unparalleled opportunity. It is a chance not only to escape from violence and persecution but to start again. The assistance the American people provide helps newcomers find their footing and become a part of their new communities. Refugees are not the only ones who benefit; they add to America's vitality and diversity and make substantial contributions to our economic and cultural life.

Resettlement in a third country is a solution for some of the world's most vulnerable refugees. As a matter of principle, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) offers the possibility of resettlement to refugees regardless of their location, national origin, health status, occupational skills, or level of educational attainment.

U.S. Resettlement Program Remains Strong

In FY 2015, the Administration aims to reach the ceiling of 70,000 refugee arrivals established by the President. The program is on target to do this, despite safety concerns that halted refugee interviews in Baghdad for more than ten months; more than 10,000 Iraqi refugees are expected to come to the United States in 2015. Since 2007, more than 120,000 Iraqis have been resettled via the refugee program, including at least 38,000 who were affiliated with the United States by family ties or employment. FY 2015 also saw other events that slowed the pace of arrivals, such as the earthquake in Nepal, challenges staging interviews of refugees in hard-to-reach or insecure places, and occasional foreign government reluctance to approve departures. Nonetheless, concerted refugee processing efforts will mean that USRAP will likely reach the FY 2015 ceiling. For example, we had estimated that 17,000 refugees would arrive from Africa in 2015 but now expect to exceed that number by several thousand. More refugees will come to the United States from Africa this year than in any year since 2005.

Reflective of our commitment to offer safe haven to even more refugees, the Administration is proposing an increase in the FY 2016 ceiling to 85,000. This will require cooperation among several US government agencies, including close interagency coordination on security checks to ensure refugee cases are scrutinized thoroughly and still processed efficiently. As a public-private partnership, it will also require the support of American non-governmental organizations, charities, faith-based groups and thousands of volunteers and supporters of the program in hundreds of communities across the country. In honor of World Refugee Day, the White House celebrated the courage and resilience of those who flee violence and persecution, and the dedication of those individuals who provide protection and assistance to refugees abroad and ensure a warm reception for them here in the United States at a White House Champions of Change event held on June 25, 2015.

Syrian Resettlement

The refugee crisis caused by the conflict in Syria is the worst the world has witnessed in a generation, with more than 4 million refugees in the region. The U.S. government is deeply committed to assisting the Syrian people and is providing more than \$4.5 billion in humanitarian assistance since the start of the crisis, more than any other donor. While the vast majority of Syrians would prefer to return home when the conflict ends, it is clear that some remain extremely vulnerable in their countries of asylum and would benefit from resettlement. The Administration is committed to increasing Syrian resettlement in 2016 and beyond. The United States is one of 28 countries that have agreed to accept referrals from UNHCR as part of its ambitious international effort to secure permanent or temporary resettlement for 130,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. As of mid-2015, UNHCR has

“Tomorrow, on World Refugee Day, we will pause to reflect on the millions around the world who have been displaced from their homes – the hardships they face, the courage and resilience they demonstrate, and the dedication of those who come to their aid.

This year’s commemoration comes as worldwide displacement reaches record levels, with nearly 60 million people uprooted by wars, violence, and persecution. From Syria to Iraq, from Burma to Burundi, from South Sudan to eastern Ukraine, the number of displaced and vulnerable has escalated. The struggles of some are captured in searing images – of people waiting at border crossings, housed in endless lines of tents, and crammed into rickety boats at sea – while those of others, crowded into the shadows of large cities, may go unobserved.

As the largest global donor of humanitarian aid, the United States supports programs that provide food, water, shelter, and medical care to refugees and other displaced persons. We thank the aid workers who deliver this assistance, sometimes at great personal risk, and we offer our gratitude to the many families who open their homes to those in need. All the while, we express our appreciation for the millions of men and women who, having endured the struggles of displacement, have contributed so much to the life of this Nation.

President Barack Obama
June 19, 2015
In commemoration of World Refugee Day

referred more than 15,000 Syrian refugees to the United States and these individuals are being screened to determine whether they are eligible. We expect to admit some 1,600-1,800 Syrian refugees in FY 2015. In FY 2016, we project we will admit at least 10,000 Syrians.

In-Country Processing in Central America

In December 2014, the Administration established an in-country refugee and parole program for children in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. If their parents are lawfully present in the United States, the parents may file to bring their unmarried children under 21 to join them in this country. As of August 2015, parents have submitted nearly 3,000 applications and children are being interviewed to determine their eligibility. Because the majority of applications were received from May-to-July, very few such minors will be admitted to the United States in FY 2015. We expect a modest, yet increasing number of admissions in FY 2016. The Departments of State and Homeland Security continue to inform eligible parents in the Central American community about the new program, through the media, community meetings and conference calls, and are exploring ways to broaden outreach.

Improvements to Global Resettlement

Our efforts to convince more nations to resettle refugees continue to pay dividends. In recent years, countries without a history of resettling refugees have stepped forward and established programs. The list includes Switzerland, which has announced a regular resettlement program, and Japan, which has announced that its pilot program will become permanent next year. In 2014, a total of 28 countries resettled refugees that had been identified and referred by UNHCR. Most of these countries have agreed to accept Syrian refugees referred by UNHCR. A number of other countries without regular resettlement programs have also stepped forward to admit Syrians through humanitarian admissions programs.

It's almost unfathomable that nearly 60 million men, women, and children are now displaced inside and outside of their countries. That is the largest number the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has ever counted and 8 million more than the record set just one year ago. We've seen haunting images of Syrian families fleeing indiscriminate barrel bombings and young children rescued at sea after days without food. Escaping from bullets, bombs, or machetes is often just the beginning of the ordeal. Refugees remain in exile for an average of 17 years. Some are born and grow up in camps and never get to leave them.

I'll never forget meeting with refugee leaders on my recent trip to Kenya, where 350,000 mainly Somali refugees live in a remote, dusty camp complex called Dadaab. By video link to Nairobi, I spoke to a group of Dadaab's best students. They told me how they dream of attending university and pursuing careers in medicine, politics, and human rights. But they also shared their fears that they would end up trapped and jobless, and that all their striving would be in vain. We cannot let that happen.

Secretary John Kerry
June 18, 2015
In commemoration of World Refugee Day

For several years the U.S. government has provided targeted financial support to UNHCR in order to boost resettlement globally. For example, in the Great Lakes region of Africa UNHCR has been able to hire more staff. They in turn have been able to refer more refugees to more countries. The United States has also funded two new facilities for holding interviews that all countries can use to screen refugees from the region.

Great Lakes Core Group

In 2013, UNHCR and the United States established the Congolese Core Group, designed to leverage UNHCR's newly announced large-scale resettlement initiative for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo located in other Great Lakes region countries (Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda). The United States has chaired this group and, in addition to resettlement, spearheaded other initiatives to help larger numbers of Congolese refugees.

In 2015, the group was renamed the Great Lakes Core Group in recognition that refugees of other nationalities in the four main hosting countries should also benefit from the multinational group's work. Current activities include pursuing local integration for 15,000 long-staying refugees in Uganda and exploring ways to build on the resettlement of some 30,000 Congolese from Tanzania.

Combatting Fraud and Ensuring National Security in the Refugee Admissions Program

The USRAP is committed to deterring and detecting fraud among those seeking to resettle in the United States and continues to employ the most rigorous security measures possible to protect against threats to our national security.

In 2015, we took additional measures to protect the refugee admissions program against fraud. The Department of State has issued updated guidelines for its worldwide network of Resettlement Support Centers to improve the way we screen and train staff and interpreters, control access points, manage electronic data, and communicate with applicants. The U.S. government also continues to work with UNHCR and other resettlement countries to safeguard refugee referral data by improving registration procedures and enhancing electronic screening of registration data to detect identity fraud. We also note the importance of working closely with refugee hosting countries in those places where the host country, and not UNHCR, registers refugees.

Refugee applicants of all nationalities are also required to undergo background security checks. Security checks include biographic name checks for all refugee applicants and biometric (fingerprint) checks for refugee applicants.

Refugee applicants must clear all required security checks prior to final approval of their application.

Protecting the Health of Refugees and U.S. Communities

In recent years, the Department of State and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have collaborated to develop and implement a comprehensive pre-departure vaccination program for U.S.-bound refugees to protect the health of refugees and the U.S. public. In coordination with the International Organization for Migration, the program is fully implemented in six countries and partially implemented in two countries. To date, more than 88,000 refugees have been vaccinated with 315,000 vaccines administered. More than half of the refugees admitted in FY 2015 benefitted from the program. In addition to the health benefits, pre-departure vaccines also prevent delays in the resettlement process during overseas outbreaks of diseases such as measles. The Administration will continue to look for opportunities to expand the program to additional locations overseas.

Ensuring a Suitable Welcome

In FY 2015, to maintain quality reception and placement services for arriving refugees, the Department of State continued to guarantee resettlement agencies a minimum level of funding for their operations, even during lulls caused when the numbers of refugees arriving in the United States dip or referrals are delayed. This policy ensures that staff and services will be available when needed. The Department expects to continue this practice in FY 2016.

Benefits and services for refugees include the Reception and Placement grant provided by the State Department and time-limited assistance programs (up to eight months from arrival) and social service programs (up to five years) funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS/ORR). These programs help refugees find employment, become economically self-sufficient, and integrate into American society. The State Department and HHS/ORR continue to work closely with communities receiving refugees so that they are prepared to welcome them and know about programs and services that are available to them. Over the past year, the State Department and Department of Health and Human Services have consulted with groups in Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia. HHS/ORR's newly established regional offices have increased engagement and consultation with those who have a stake in the resettlement program. In November 2014, President Obama created a formal interagency body, the White House Task Force on New Americans, which aims to strengthen integration efforts nationwide and

build welcoming communities for all immigrants, including refugees. The Administration will continue to explore ways of sustaining a strong federal-state-community partnership and ensuring that refugees can integrate successfully.

Planning for the Future

As we prepare to bring growing numbers of Congolese and Syrian refugees to the United States, we are simultaneously bringing to a close longstanding resettlement programs for Burmese in Thailand and Bhutanese in Nepal. In 2015 the cases of some 6,000 remaining priority two (P-2) eligible Burmese in Thailand were processed.² We are processing the cases of the approximately 12,000 Bhutanese refugees who will depart Nepal over the next two years before operations there are reduced.

In a number of places, we continue to face challenges carrying out the program. In some countries, such as Syria, Yemen, and Eritrea, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) adjudicators have been unable to travel to interview applicants for several years. Some applicants in Yemen, Iran, and Eritrea were moved to a UNHCR Emergency Transit Center in Romania or Slovakia as an intermediate step, but space limitations mean that relatively small numbers are able to benefit from this option. In Iraq, Lebanon, and Kenya, security concerns have hampered our ability to process cases. We are constantly reviewing our operations to find efficient and creative ways to interview applicants in remote locations in Africa. This may include setting up interviewing facilities and health clinics so that interviews can be conducted nearby and refugees do not have to be transported long distances.

In these and other ways, the program will adapt to stay strong while meeting changing needs. With the support of Congress and the American people, refugee resettlement will continue to be a proud American tradition for many years to come.

² Priority Two or P-2 refugees belong to a group of special humanitarian concern identified by the U.S. refugee program.

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I. OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY

At the end of 2014, the estimated refugee population worldwide stood at 19.5 million, with 14.4 million under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This represents an increase of 2.7 million refugees under UNHCR mandate in one year. The United States actively supports efforts to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions to these refugees, as these measures fulfill our humanitarian interests and further 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 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.

The United States and UNHCR recognize that most refugees desire safe, voluntary return to their homeland. In 2014, some 126,800 refugees voluntarily repatriated to their country of origin – the lowest recorded number since 1983. Refugee repatriation operations brought refugees home to Afghanistan, Cote d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sri Lanka. 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.

Where opportunities for return remain elusive, the United States and partners pursue self-sufficiency and temporary, indefinite, or permanent local integration in countries of asylum. The Department of State encourages host governments to protect refugees and allow them to integrate into local communities. The State Department further promotes local integration by funding programs to enhance refugee self-sufficiency 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. Mali agreed to provide birth certificates to some 8,000 Mauritanian refugee children, paving the way for them to eventually apply for Malian citizenship.

UNHCR estimates that there are at least 10 million people worldwide who are not recognized nationals of any state and are therefore stateless. Without recognized citizenship in any country, many stateless persons exist in refugee-like situations, unable to access benefits or services and denied protections. The United States has supported UNHCR's efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness, including encouraging States to address gaps in citizenship laws and eliminate provisions that discriminate against women, and by promoting fair application of those laws. 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, 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. This approach is reflected in, for example, 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 refugees protection and/or durable solutions in some particularly difficult cases. For some refugees, resettlement is the best, and perhaps the only, alternative. In particular, stateless refugees who arrive in the United States for resettlement 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 constructing facilities. As a result, UNHCR has substantially increased referrals to the United States and other resettlement countries. We plan to continue to work with UNHCR and consult with host governments on group referrals. We will continue to assess resettlement needs and allow qualified NGOs to refer refugee applicants to the program.

The United States has also supported UNHCR's efforts to expand the number of countries active in resettlement. In 2014, UNHCR referred refugees to 30 countries for resettlement consideration. Over 90 percent were referred to the United States, Australia, and Canada. Smaller numbers of referrals were made to Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France,

Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom.

While the overall number of refugees referred by UNHCR and the percentage resettled by various countries fluctuate from year to year, the United States aims to ensure at least 50 percent of all refugees referred by UNHCR worldwide are considered for resettlement in the United States, depending on the availability of funds. Some 67 percent of UNHCR-referred refugees who were resettled in 2014, were resettled in the United States (see Table VIII).

The foreign policy and humanitarian interests of the United States are often advanced by addressing refugee issues in asylum and resettlement countries. In some cases, the United States has been able to use its leadership position in resettlement to promote and secure other durable solutions for refugees, or advance other human rights or foreign policy objectives. The United States is by far the largest single donor to UNHCR, providing over \$1.28 billion in FY 2014. 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 or that local integration or third country resettlement are options offered to those in need. In certain locations, the prompt resettlement of politically sensitive cases has helped defuse regional tensions.

During its history, the USRAP has responded to changing circumstances. The end of the Cold War dramatically altered the context in which the USRAP operated. The program shifted its focus away from large groups concentrated in a few locations (primarily refugees from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and the former Yugoslavia) and began to admit refugees representing over 50 nationalities per year. Interviews of refugees by officials from the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are often conducted in remote locations and are focused on members of populations in greatest need of 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 the most rigorous security measures possible to protect against threats to our national security.

Refugees resettled in the United States enrich our nation. 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 in the first thirty to ninety days after arrival in accordance with established standards. During and after the initial resettlement period, the Office of Refugee Resettlement at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS/ORR) provides leadership, 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. Moreover, upon arrival, refugees are potential Americans in waiting. Refugees are immediately eligible for lawful employment, and after one year are required to apply for adjustment of status to that of lawful permanent resident. Five years after admission, a refugee who has been granted lawful permanent resident status is eligible to apply for citizenship.

To strengthen the integration of refugees and immigrants and ensure that all community members have the tools and opportunities to fully contribute to the nation, in November 2014 President Obama created the White House Task Force on New Americans, comprised of 16 Federal departments, agencies, and White House offices. In April 2015, the Task Force submitted to President Obama a [strategic action plan](#) to better integrate refugees and immigrants into American communities through a series of recommendations to support civic, economic, and linguistic integration. Under this plan, federal agencies are taking actions such as extending competitive grant funding for citizenship preparation programs in communities across the country, and providing information and tools to employers about increasing access to ESL courses, education services, and other training programs for immigrant and refugee workers.

A number of factors create challenges for resettlement agencies striving to meet the needs of refugees in the program. The refugee population is ever more linguistically diverse, with wide-ranging educational and employment histories. To better prepare refugees for arrival in the United States, the USRAP continues to improve overseas cultural orientation, including thorough curricula review and teacher training. In 2013, the Department of State determined after two pilot rounds of English language training (ELT) for some refugees in Kenya, Thailand, and Nepal that the classes provided basic English competency and promoted continued language learning after arrival in the United States. As a result, since 2014 the Department has funded the Resettlement Support Center for Africa to provide ELT to some Congolese prior to resettlement in the United States.

REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM FOR FY 2016

PROPOSED CEILINGS

TABLE I
REFUGEE ADMISSIONS IN FY 2014 AND FY 2015
PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS BY REGION FOR FY 2016³

REGION	FY 2014 ACTUAL ARRIVALS	FY 2015 CEILING	REVISED FY 2015 CEILING	FY 2015 PROJECTED ARRIVALS	PROPOSED FY2016 CEILING
Africa	17,476	17,000	20,400	22,600	25,000
East Asia	14,784	13,000	17,300	18,200	13,000
Europe and Central Asia	959	1,000	2,300	2,350	4,000
Latin America/Caribbean	4,318	4,000	2,300	2,050	3,000
Near East/South Asia	32,450	33,000	27,700	24,800	34,000
Regional Subtotal	69,987	68,000	70,000	70,000	79,000
Unallocated Reserve		2,000			6,000
Total	69,987	70,000	70,000	70,000	85,000

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. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) § 101(a)(42)(B), however, 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 2016 proposal recommends continuing such 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 USCIS at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

³ These proposed figures assume enactment by Congress of the President’s Budget levels related to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program elements.

Unallocated Reserve

This proposal includes 6,000 unallocated admissions numbers to be used if needed for additional refugee admissions from any region. The unallocated numbers would only be used 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 U.S. 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 to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement;
- Priority 2 – Groups of cases designated as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement;
- 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 program under one of the above-listed processing priorities does not necessarily mean an applicant meets the statutory definition of "refugee" or is admissible to the United States under the INA. Applicants who are eligible

for access within the established priorities are presented to DHS/USCIS officers for interview. The ultimate determination as to whether an applicant can be admitted 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 nationality⁴, 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 worldwide to provide protection to refugees, has historically referred the vast majority of cases 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 eligible to provide Priority 1 referrals.

Process for Priority 1 Individual Referral Applications

Priority 1 referrals from UNHCR and NGOs are submitted to the appropriate 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 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 Homeland Security (DHS/USCIS) concur. When a Priority 1 referral cannot be made, in some limited cases, a Department of State request to DHS/USCIS for parole may be an appropriate option.

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

PRIORITY 2 – GROUP REFERRALS

Priority 2 (P-2) includes specific groups (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 whose members are in need of resettlement. 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 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, normally upon the recommendation of UNHCR. Under both models, Priority 2 designations are made based on shared characteristics that define the group. In general, the possession of these characteristics is 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 specified criteria to establish eligibility for access.

The open-access model has functioned well in the in-country programs, including the long-standing programs in Eurasia and the Baltics, and in Cuba. It was also used successfully for Vietnamese for nearly thirty years (1980-2009), Bosnian refugees during the 1990s, and is now in use for Iranian religious minorities, Iraqis with links to the United States, and minors from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras with lawfully present parents in the United States.

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 bio 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 impracticable, 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 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 2016 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 2016, 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.

Minors in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Under this Priority 2 program, certain lawfully present parents in the United States can request access to a refugee interview for an unmarried child under 21 in his/her country of origin.

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 2015. (Additional Priority 2 groups may be designated over the course of FY 2016.)

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 nine refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border, are identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement, and expressed interest 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 and identified as being in need of resettlement are eligible for processing.

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 expressed interest prior to June 30, 2014, are eligible for processing.

Congolese in Rwanda

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, certain Congolese refugees in Rwanda who were verifiably registered in 1997 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 Nyaragusu 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.

PRIORITY 3 – FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The Priority 3 (P-3) category affords 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. 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.

Inclusion on the P-3 list represents a finding by PRM that the nationality is of special humanitarian concern to the United States for the purpose of family-reunification refugee processing. Eligible nationalities are selected following careful review of several factors. UNHCR's annual assessment of refugees in need of resettlement provides insight into ongoing refugee situations which could create the need for family-reunification processing. In addition, prospective or ongoing repatriation efforts and U.S. foreign policy interests must be weighed in determining which nationalities should be eligible.

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).

Since the P-3 program resumed in October 15, 2012, after a suspension period due to fraud concerns, the AOR has been an official Department of State form (DS-7656). The form contains new language about penalties for committing fraud, and alerts filers that DNA evidence of certain claimed biological parent-child relationships will be required in order to gain access to a USCIS interview for refugee admission to the United States through the P-3 program. As of May 30, we have received more than 3,700 AORs that are in various stages of processing.

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 qualifying 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.

Qualifying individuals are persons who were admitted to the United States as refugees or were granted asylum, including persons who are lawful permanent residents 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 the individual entered the U.S. 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.

In addition to the qualifying family members of a U.S.-based individual listed 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 2016 Priority 3 Nationalities

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

Afghanistan
Bhutan
Burma

Burundi
Central African Republic
Colombia
Cuba
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Iran
Iraq
Mali
Somalia
South Sudan
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syria
Uzbekistan

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 Petition⁵ with DHS/USCIS for each eligible family member. If the Form I-730 petition is approved by DHS/USCIS (signifying adequate proof of eligibility based on a file review), the National Visa Center then forwards the petition to the USCIS office, embassy or consulate nearest to the location of the beneficiary for travel eligibility.

Cases gaining access to the USRAP through an approved 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. The beneficiaries are not required to

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 Refugee Admissions Program 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.

demonstrate persecution claims, 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 (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 the I-730 or “follow-to-join” process does not allow the relative in the United States to petition for parents as the P-3 process does.

DHS/USCIS REFUGEE ADJUDICATIONS

Section 207(c) of the INA grants the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security authority to admit, at his/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 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. Each quarter of the fiscal year, on average, USCIS deploys approximately 100 Refugee Officers, Supervisory Refugee Officers, and fingerprinters to 12-16 locations around the world to interview refugee applicants. 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 promote the integrity of the USRAP.

The Eligibility Determination

In order to be approved as a refugee, an applicant must meet the refugee definition contained 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 the country of origin. The 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.

The grounds of inadmissibility that apply to refugee applicants include the broad terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds (TRIG) at Section 212(a)(3)(B) of the INA. Beginning in 2005, the Departments of Homeland Security, State, and Justice began to exercise a discretionary Secretarial authority to exempt certain categories of refugee applicants from TRIG inadmissibility based on a determination that they did not represent a threat to the United States and otherwise merited an exemption for humanitarian purposes. In FY 2015, DHS/USCIS began implementing two new exemptions for individuals who provided insignificant or “certain limited” material support (including through routine commercial or social transactions, in the course of providing humanitarian assistance, or under sub-duress pressure), to undesignated terrorist organizations. As of June 2015, more than 15,560 TRIG exemptions have been granted to refugee applicants.⁶

A DHS/USCIS officer conducts a non-adversarial, face-to-face interview of each refugee applicant designed to elicit information about the applicant’s claim for refugee status and any grounds of ineligibility. 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 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 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 certain refugee applicants. PRM, through its overseas Resettlement Support Centers, initiates required biographic name checks, while 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

⁶ Over 6,700 of these exemptions pertained to Burmese refugee applicants. Approximately 6,230 of the exemptions related to applicants who provided material support to a terrorist organization under duress – for example, Iraqi applicants who paid a ransom for a kidnapped family member.

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.

PROCESSING ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Overseas Processing Services

In most processing locations, PRM engages an NGO, an international organization (IO), or U.S. embassy contractors to manage a Resettlement Support Center (RSC) that assists in the processing of refugees 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, 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 2015, NGOs (Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, and International Rescue Committee) worked under cooperative agreements with PRM as RSCs at locations in Austria (covering Austria only), Kenya (covering sub-Saharan Africa), and Thailand (covering East Asia). International organizations (IOM and the International Catholic Migration Commission) supported refugee processing activities based in Ecuador, Jordan, Russia, Nepal, and Turkey which covered Latin America, the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Europe. The U.S. 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 ten languages: Arabic, Burmese, Chin, English, Farsi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili. The previous (2007) edition is still available in nine other languages: Albanian, Amharic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, French, Kirundi, Russian, Spanish, Tigrinya, and Vietnamese. Through this book, refugees have access to accurate information about the initial resettlement period before they arrive in the U.S. The *Welcome to the United States* refugee orientation video is available in ten languages: Arabic, Burmese, Chin, English, Farsi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili. The 2004 version of the video is available in five other languages: Karenni, Kirundi, Russian, Spanish, and Tigrinya. The Department of State also funded the development of an interactive online learning tool that combines cultural orientation with English language learning. Released in early FY2015, *Choosing My Way* is for refugees who would like to interact with orientation material independently or who may not actively engage in formal orientation. It is also designed for use by orientation providers to encourage group discussion and reflection. 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 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*, a video produced in 2013, 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 FY2014, the Department of State released a new curriculum for cultural orientation after 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 U.S. 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 six months.

Reception and Placement (R&P)

In FY 2015, 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 312 affiliated offices in 185 locations to provide services. Two of the organizations also maintain a network of 24 affiliated offices 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.

OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT (ORR)

Through the Refugee Act, 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 U.S. 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 and Wilson-Fish Programs

Under ORR’s state-administered or Wilson-Fish (WF) programs, refugees 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 state-administered programs that operate a publicly administered RCA program (33 States), RCA benefits are based on cash benefit levels established by state TANF programs. In States that operate their RCA program through a Public-Private Program (PPP) model (5 States) and WF States (12 States plus one county), the RCA benefit is based on the higher of the RCA rates outlined in the ORR regulations or the State TANF rates.

The WF program is an alternative to the traditional state-administered program, and is usually administered by local voluntary 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. There are currently 13 WF programs nationwide.

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: employability services, employment assessment services, on-the-job training, English language instruction, vocational training, case management, translation/interpreter services, social adjustment services, health-related services, home management, and if necessary to support employment, childcare and transportation.

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

ORR Matching Grant Program

The ORR Matching Grant program (MG) is provided through the nine 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 (usually within the first month of arrival). 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 per capita to participating national resettlement agencies, which then allocate funds to its local service providers. Agencies provide a 50% 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. Refugees who are unable to attain self-sufficiency by day 120 or 180 may access RCA for the remainder of the eight month eligibility period. In FY 2014, over 29,000 individuals were enrolled in the program, 76% of whom achieved self-sufficiency. Approximately 33% of refugees participate in the ORR Matching Grant Program.

ORR Refugee Health

ORR's Division of Refugee Health (DRH) continued to address the health and well-being of refugees. DRH is working on various initiatives including:

collaborating with states and partners in support of the expansion of Medicaid, administering the Survivors of Torture program; providing technical assistance on medical screening guidelines, mental health awareness and linkages, suicide prevention, emergency preparedness and other health and mental health initiatives (e.g. women's health issues, mental health training, etc.).

ORR Unaccompanied Refugee Minor (URM) Program

ORR provides funds to 15 states who administer over 20 URM programs. States contract with local licensed foster care agencies that provide specialized placements and services to URM. URM 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. URM 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 focus on special initiatives or programs for refugees including: case management, ethnic community development, home-based child care business development, individual development accounts, microenterprise development, and agricultural projects.

In the past year, ORR has expanded its Preferred Communities Program to support long-term case management services to the more at risk populations as the program is seeing an increasing number of women heads of household and refugees with significant medical and mental health needs.

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, health, services to survivors of torture, and TANF state programs.

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

TABLE II

PROPOSED FY 2016 REGIONAL CEILINGS BY PRIORITY

<u>AFRICA</u>	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	15,000
Priority 2 Groups	9,500
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	500
	<u>Total Proposed: 25,000</u>
<u>EAST ASIA</u>	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	1,800
Priority 2 Groups	11,000
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	200
	<u>Total Proposed: 13,000</u>
<u>EUROPE / CENTRAL ASIA</u>	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	990
Priority 2 Groups	3,000
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	10
	<u>Total Proposed: 4,000</u>
<u>LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN</u>	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	950
Priority 2 Groups	2,000
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	50
	<u>Total Proposed: 3,000</u>
<u>NEAR EAST / SOUTH ASIA</u>	
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	16,000
Priority 2 Groups	17,900
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	100
	<u>Total Proposed: 34,000</u>
<u>UNALLOCATED RESERVE</u>	<u>6,000</u>
<u>TOTAL PROPOSED CEILING:</u>	<u>85,000</u>

AFRICA

There are currently some 4.3 million refugees across the African continent, constituting roughly 25 percent of the global refugee population. Refugee numbers in Africa increased by nearly 1 million in 2014 and 2015 to date due to new or intensified conflicts across the continent. At the same time, there have been only limited opportunities in Africa for local integration and refugee repatriation.

New and ongoing conflicts in four countries – Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, and South Sudan – are responsible for the rapid growth in refugee numbers in 2014 and 2015. In Burundi, 2015 election-related violence forced nearly 200,000 refugees to flee to neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Tanzania; this outflow is expected to continue to grow throughout 2015. In CAR, the overthrow of the government and widespread clashes between armed groups, together with earlier conflict, has now displaced nearly 440,000 Central Africans internally and forced over 460,000 to flee to neighboring Cameroon, Chad, the DRC, and Republic of the Congo. Instability and violence in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger have displaced more than 1.5 million in northern Nigeria and sent some 200,000 refugees to neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Cameroon, Niger and Chad continue to struggle with rising numbers of internally displaced people as well. In South Sudan, conflict erupted in December 2013 between political factions and quickly escalated into a major conflict along ethnic lines. Over 1.5 million South Sudanese are internally displaced and total refugee numbers have now reached nearly 754,000.

Ongoing conflict in the DRC and Sudan has also continued to generate new refugee outflows over the past few years. Intensified conflict in eastern DRC since mid-2012 has led an additional 180,000 Congolese to seek asylum in Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, bringing the total number of Congolese refugees to nearly 514,000. In Sudan, ongoing fighting between armed groups in Darfur has resulted in some 30,000 new Darfuri refugees fleeing to Chad, bringing the total number to nearly 370,000. At the same time, the ongoing Sudanese conflict with rebel groups in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states has forced some 270,000 Sudanese refugees to flee to South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya since June 2011. The steady outflow of Eritreans also continues, not only to refugee camps in Ethiopia and eastern Sudan, but also further north as Eritreans attempt to migrate to Europe. More than 300,000 Eritreans have fled political repression, forced conscription, and economic collapse over the past decade with some 200,000 living as refugees in Africa.

Africa's refugee numbers have been augmented as well by conflicts outside of Africa, 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 160,000 new refugees to the region including 140,000 in Egypt and 18,000 in Libya. The new crisis in Yemen has led some 15,000 Yemenis and Somalis living in Yemen to flee to Djibouti and Somalia in 2015 to date, with higher numbers expected. 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 many cases to effectively economically and/or socially integrate – until voluntary repatriation is possible. Some countries, such as Egypt and Sudan, have forcibly returned refugees over the past year. For countries growing weary of hosting large refugee caseloads, we continue to advocate for hospitality and first asylum for refugees. And, for those countries that lack formal mechanisms for asylum, we continue to advocate for the establishment of systems in consultation with UNHCR. Morocco in particular has made progress in this regard.

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.

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 individuals who are jailed for their religious affiliation at various locations. 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 current estimate is between 1,200-3,000 individuals detained on religious grounds. At least three Jehovah's

Witnesses had been detained for 15 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 place 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, as was demonstrated in the recent case of Ms. Meriam Ishag who was sentenced to death for apostasy. Though the sentence was overturned and she was subsequently released, 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 as “Countries of Particular Concern” (CPC) for particularly severe violations of religious freedom by the Department of State under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998. 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.

Voluntary Repatriation

Despite new and protracted refugee situations, voluntary repatriation to improved conditions in the home country remains the most common and desirable durable solution. With the conclusion of various peace agreements and the support of the U.S. government and other donors, UNHCR has made some progress in promoting and supporting refugee repatriation and reintegration in Africa. Over the past 20 years, net refugee numbers in Africa have fallen by nearly one third (from more than six million at their height in the 1990s to 4.3

million today) even in the face of new outflows. Large-scale organized repatriations to Angola, Liberia, and Rwanda have largely been completed, but residual populations remain. 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.

Smaller-scale repatriation efforts continue throughout the continent. In West Africa, out of an estimated 300,000 who fled the 2010-2011 election-related violence in Côte d'Ivoire, over 230,000 have now returned home. Repatriation was delayed in 2014 and early 2015 due to the Ebola crisis and subsequent border closures. However, UNHCR anticipates assisting with the return of the remaining 60,000 Ivoirian refugees in 2015 and 2016. In Mali, while UNHCR is not yet promoting refugee return to northern Mali, more than 30,000 refugees returned spontaneously in 2014 to safe regions under government control. Returns have been slower in 2015 due to periodic outbreaks of violence in northern Mali.

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 has stopped and the focus has instead shifted to emergency response to the over 622,000 new refugees. UNHCR, the Government of Kenya, and the Government of Somalia signed a Somali refugee repatriation framework in 2013, and UNHCR has supported the return of some 3,500 Somalis to date to pilot areas within Somalia. Most parts of Somalia, however, are not conducive to safe refugee return. Despite the efforts of some asylum countries, including Israel, to repatriate Eritrean refugees, UNHCR has strongly discouraged returns to Eritrea given ongoing political repression and harsh treatment of returnees.

In Central Africa, most organized repatriation to Burundi ended in 2010 and there were over 500,000 returns from 2002 to 2014. The 2015 election-related violence in Burundi, which has generated nearly 200,000 refugees to date, threatens to erase progress on Burundi repatriation. Although the majority of Rwandan refugees returned home in the late 1990's, some 100,000 to 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, 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 eastern DRC erased most

of these gains. Eastern DRC is too insecure for large-scale refugee return at this point. UNHCR was able to conclude its repatriation program for some 130,000 Congolese refugees to western DRC's Equateur Province from 2012 through 2014.

Local Integration

While most African countries adhere to encampment policies for refugees, many have allowed for de facto integration by providing land for refugee farmers or permitting refugees to open small businesses. This integration dynamic has occurred particularly for refugees who fled during the 1960s through the early 1980s to countries that had arable land available, allowing many refugees to move out of camps. Despite such de facto integration, refugees residing among the local population did not necessarily enjoy the rights, entitlements, or economic opportunities available to legal residents. As a result, this piecemeal integration was often an interim, rather than a durable, solution for many African refugees.

More recently, however, a number of African countries have offered more formal integration as a durable solution for residual refugee populations who will not or cannot repatriate. In West Africa, in conjunction with UNHCR, the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone launched a regional local integration program for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in 2007. That program provided refugees opportunities for economic self-reliance; activities to enhance the quality of their social integration; and legal rights and documentation, including access to citizenship in some countries and freedom of movement in all countries under the protocols of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). 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 Mauritians). The card guarantees holders the same rights as Senegalese citizens, including the right to residence in the country and to travel to ECOWAS member states. Mali agreed to provide birth certificates to some 8,000 Mauritanian refugee children, paving the way for them to eventually apply for Malian citizenship.

In Southern Africa, local integration is being provided for up to 15,000 former Angolan refugees. The Government of Zambia pledged in 2012 to offer permanent residence status to 10,000 former Angolan refugees -- mainly refugees who arrived before 1986, were born in Zambia, or are married to Zambians -- and

has already approved 6,000 applicants who meet eligibility criteria. Namibia and South Africa have agreed to legal local integration of 2,400 and 2,500 former Angolan refugees respectively.

In East Africa, the Government of Tanzania offered to provide permanent settlement and citizenship to nearly 200,000 1972-era Burundi refugees; some 160,000 accepted the offer and are now in the process of receiving official documentation. While not offering a formal integration program, Uganda has permitted refugees to live or work outside of camps. 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 3,000 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 2015 U.S. Admissions

We project just over 21,000 African refugee arrivals in FY 2015. This number is primarily a result of increased processing capacity for Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes region. Two countries of origin – Somalia and DRC – account for the vast majority of U.S. refugee admissions from Africa, followed by Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia.

Implementation of the enhanced Congolese Resettlement Strategy – UNHCR’s effort to refer 50,000 DRC refugees for resettlement from Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi to all resettlement countries over the next 5-7

years – continued in FY 2015 with increased processing in Tanzania and Burundi, following on efforts from Rwanda and Uganda. We anticipate strong arrivals of Congolese refugees from all four countries totaling approximately 7,000 arrivals.

We expect to admit nearly 7,000 refugees from our two largest processing locations in Africa: Kenya and Ethiopia, plus another 600 from other locations in East Africa. Over 3,000 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 interview and adjudication. Applicants return to Dadaab for medical exams and other post-DHS steps until their departure for the United States. Admissions from Ethiopia also continue to be strong with approximately 3,700 U.S. arrivals projected this fiscal year. Populations include primarily Somalis from camps in the east and Eritreans from the northern camps, including approximately 70 Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors. We also will resettle smaller numbers of Sudanese from camps in West. We continue to interview refugees from the Central African Republic in southern Chad and Sudanese Darfuri refugees in Eastern Chad. We expect to admit nearly 500 refugees from Chad in FY 2015, 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 2015.

From Southern Africa, we expect to admit 2,400 refugees consisting primarily of Somalis from South Africa and Congolese from Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Resettlement of these populations will allow UNHCR to decrease its “footprint” in these countries by closing or reducing the size of camps, so that resources can be utilized elsewhere.

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, we anticipate approximately 3,000 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 2015.

FY 2016 U.S. Resettlement Program

We propose up to 22,000 resettlement numbers for African refugees in FY 2016. PRM has actively engaged relevant offices within the Department of State, UNHCR, the NGO community, and DHS/USCIS to identify caseloads

appropriate for resettlement consideration. As a result of these discussions, PRM has identified a number of nationalities and groups for processing during FY 2016.

From East Africa and the Great Lakes region, we expect close to 15,000 admissions. We expect to resettle just over 3,000 refugees each from Kenya and Ethiopia, primarily Somalis and Eritreans. We also expect UNHCR to continue referring Eritrean unaccompanied refugee minors at a rate of about 100 per year from camps in northern Ethiopia. In the Great Lakes region, processing of Congolese in Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania (and Burundi if the situation calms) is expected to result in a total of 8,000 departures. Approximately 3,500 of these admissions will be the result of a P-2 group designation for Congolese refugees in the sole remaining camp for Congolese in Tanzania. Departures from Uganda and Rwanda will likely hold steady with 2,000 and 1,800 departures respectively, but violence in Burundi will result in lower arrival numbers from Burundi in FY 2016.

From southern Africa, we expect to admit 2,000 refugees consisting primarily of Somalis from South Africa and Congolese from Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

In Chad, UNHCR intends to continue its effort to establish an infrastructure for a robust resettlement program for Sudanese Darfuris in eastern Chad. 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 400.

Outside of sub-Saharan Africa, we anticipate 2,500 to 3,500 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 2016 Africa program to include arrivals from the following categories:

<i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i>	<i>15,000</i>
<i>Priority 2 Groups</i>	<i>9,500</i>
<i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i>	<i><u>500</u></i>
<i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i>	<i>25,000</i>

EAST ASIA

Several countries in East Asia host large and diverse refugee populations. Recent years have seen important developments for these groups. Thailand and Bangladesh continue to host large numbers of Burmese refugees and asylum-seekers, and thousands of urban asylum seekers and refugees 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 12,000, including some 4,300 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 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, and limited access to humanitarian and development assistance make large-scale return of refugees in safety and with dignity a slow, gradual process.

The resettlement of more than 100,000 Burmese refugees from Thailand since 2006 – including more than 77,000 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 seven years of large-scale resettlement, we have arrived at the natural conclusion 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 will continue until we have completed the processing of every application received by the deadline in each camp. 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 9,000 projected refugee departures in FY15 and more than 53,000 since 2006. As of the end of March 2015, there were 152,574 persons of concern registered with UNHCR in Malaysia of which 141,568, or 92.8 percent, are from Burma. In addition, some 11,000 asylum-seekers and refugees from various countries – primarily

Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, 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 and continuous 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 Songkhla, Thailand and began cracking down on migrant smuggling operations. Because of this crackdown and significantly higher volumes of Rohingya seeking passage to Malaysia through smuggling networks, smugglers have taken to holding their ships at sea as they await conditions for disembarkation or sometimes abandon them. By May 10 over 4,100 people landed in Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Burma, and Thailand. On May 20, the Foreign Ministers of Malaysia and Indonesia and Thailand agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter to some 7,000 migrants and asked the international community to take responsibility for the repatriation of the migrants or resettlement to third countries within a period of one year. The Administration is actively involved in supporting the 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.

The last large influx of approximately 250,000 Rohingya from Rakhine State to the Cox's Bazar district in southeastern Bangladesh began in July 1991. Since then, steady flows of Rohingya continue to arrive, with a spike following the June and October 2012 violence in Rakhine State when hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled to neighboring countries. 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. No repatriation operation has taken place since. UNHCR currently supports 32,600 refugees who remain in two official refugee camps (Kutupalong and Nayapara) in Cox's Bazar. In addition, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) estimates that 300,000 – 500,000 undocumented Rohingya currently reside in various villages and towns outside the refugee camps and in makeshift settlement sites. These makeshift sites include 42,000 unregistered Rohingya in the makeshift Kutupalong site (adjacent to the official Kutupalong refugee camp), 15,000 at the Leda site, and 9,000 at the Shamlapur site.

The cases of more than 500 Rohingya in Bangladesh, including 300 individuals approved for resettlement have been on hold since October 2010 when the GOB halted third-country resettlement activities pending a review of its

refugee policy. In February 2014, the GOB announced its national strategy on “Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar Nationals in Bangladesh.” The U.S. government is encouraged by GOB commitments made in the national strategy, particularly to survey and list undocumented Rohingya and to allow third country resettlement to continue. We are prepared to resume resettlement activity immediately 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 designated by the Department of State as Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs) under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.

The DPRK severely restricts religious freedom, including organized religious activity, except that which is supervised tightly by officially recognized groups linked to the government. Although the DPRK constitution provides for “freedom of religious belief,” genuine religious freedom does not exist. 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 that is 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. 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 banned groups as “evil cults” and those belonging to them can be sentenced to prison. This includes Falun Gong and some other qigong-based groups, in addition to some Christian groups. Although legislation officially abolished the Reeducation through Labor (RTL) 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. While some deficiencies in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom continued, the government continued to support interfaith dialogue and provided some members of the international community and international organizations greater access to ethnic minority areas. However, the government continues to discriminate against members of religious minorities.

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 antidiscrimination laws. Incidents of violence against Rohingya started to increase in 2012 and carried over into 2014. Racially- and religiously-based discrimination and violence, especially against members of the Rohingya population, continue.

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. Over the past three years, Vietnam’s religious freedom record has been mixed. Progress has been made with regard to the registration/recognition of religious groups and congregations. In addition, religious groups have experienced expanded freedom of assembly. However, there are also reports of harassment at the local level, including through the use of land laws. Several Protestant congregations in rural areas continue to report harassment, including beatings and forced renunciations.

Nationals of the DPRK, Vietnam, China, Laos, and Burma have access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. North Korean and Burmese refugees also have access to family reunification processing through Priority 3.

Voluntary Repatriation

Although the Burmese government has taken steps to implement significant democratic and political reforms, ongoing fighting continues in Kachin and northern Shan States, and tensions remain high in Rakhine State since the June and October 2012 violence. Since 2011, Burmese President Thein Sein's reform-minded administration has been working towards a national reconciliation and peace process. We are hopeful that substantial progress towards this goal will be made in the near future, but the Department of State also recognizes the political realities in Burma given the upcoming election in November 2015. Further, the post-ceasefire peace process will require resolution of unresolved political grievances. Therefore, the voluntary repatriation of most Burmese refugees and asylum seekers in Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, India and elsewhere is not a viable solution in the immediate future.

Local Integration

Due to fears of a "pull factor," countries in the region have traditionally been reluctant to integrate refugees or to grant asylum. We hope that U.S. efforts to resettle large numbers of refugees from the camps along the Thailand-Burma border will encourage the Thai government to allow greater opportunities for livelihood, vocational training and other skills-building activities for those refugees who will not be resettled. The United States and other donor governments continue to engage regularly with the Thai government concerning the future of the nine camps on the Thailand-Burma border. Local integration remains a difficult option, due to opposition from host countries, such as Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and India. UNHCR and the international community continue to advocate for 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 2015, the United States processed UNHCR-referred refugee cases in China, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

FY 2015 U.S. Admissions

We expect to admit over 17,000 refugees from East Asia in FY 2015. This will include nearly 6,000 members of Burmese ethnic minorities (mostly Karen, Karenni, and Kachin) living in camps along the Thai-Burma border, over 11,000 Burmese (of various ethnic minorities) in Malaysia, and a small number of urban refugees of various nationalities in the region.

FY 2016 U.S. Resettlement Program

We expect to admit up to 13,000 refugees from East Asia in FY 2016. This will include up to 5,500 members of Burmese ethnic minorities (mostly Karen and Karenni) living in camps along the Thai-Burma border, some 6,000 Burmese (of various ethnic minorities) in Malaysia, and a small number of urban refugees of various nationalities in the region

Proposed FY 2016 East Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

<i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i>	<i>1,800</i>
<i>Priority 2 Groups</i>	<i>11,000</i>
<i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i>	<i><u>200</u></i>
<i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i>	<i>12,000</i>

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Europe continues to host large refugee populations, as well as other persons affected by conflict, who, over the last two decades, have been left in situations of protracted displacement – some in dire conditions. In its 2014-15 Global Appeal, UNHCR reported on its priority of providing protection to millions of asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless individuals, or other persons of concern throughout Europe and Central Asia. Many had fled conflicts outside the region, such as in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, but hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs in the Balkans and Caucasus remain from yesterday's wars.

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, compliance with these instruments remains problematic. UNHCR and other stakeholders continue to build 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.

The 1990's break-up of the Soviet Union also 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 also created later 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.

According to UNHCR, as of December 2014, there were approximately 365,710 refugees and IDPs in the Balkans, almost all of whom have been displaced for a decade or longer. An estimated 206,026 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. There have been over 25,000 voluntary returns of minorities to Kosovo since the conflict ended, but housing, documentation issues, a lack of employment opportunity, and occasional violence directed against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo has limited continuing return prospects.

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, and 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) to support the RHP over five years. The United States has provided \$20 million between FY12 and FY14, 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 FY15 and FY16 to be the years where we see construction commence in earnest.

Despite important steps taken by governments 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 Nagorno-Karabakh War displaced over 800,000 Azerbaijanis in several waves between 1988 and 1994. Today 600,000 IDPs remain, almost 7 percent of Azerbaijan's population. The vast majority live 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 or aid its displaced population. Armenia received 350,000 refugees from Azerbaijan, of whom almost 3,000 remain as refugees. A large number emigrated to other countries, and nearly 90,000 were ultimately naturalized in Armenia. Many refugees and former refugees continue to live in unsuitable collective housing or remote villages with insufficient access to government services. A struggling economy and the recent influx of an estimated 16,000 Syrian-Armenians has left the government few resources to address refugee concerns, and the country remains dependent on international humanitarian and development assistance. Georgia has been affected by large population movements since the 1990s as consequences of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the occupation of two regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although 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, approximately 240,000 remain displaced from the 1993 and 2008 wars.

Finally, in Ukraine, fighting between government troops and combined Russian-Separatist forces continues despite the signing of ceasefire agreements in September 2014 and February 2015. Russia's occupation of Crimea, which is part of Ukraine, and the fighting in parts of eastern Ukraine have resulted in nearly two million people having been displaced from their homes, including over 1.2 million registered IDPs and over 777,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 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 for refugees are increasingly limited for displaced individuals as displacement increases and needs outstrip the response capacity of local governments and community groups.

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 in schools or in public, particularly impacting Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Sikhs.

Several 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.

Uzbekistan's policy is to ban Islamic groups it broadly determines as extremist and to criminalize membership in such groups. In Turkmenistan, there were reports in 2014 of beatings, imprisonment, arbitrary detention, threats of sexual assault, searches, confiscation of religious materials, and verbal abuse against religious minorities, particularly Jehovah's Witnesses. Under Tajikistan's law, persons under the age of 18 cannot participate in public religious activities and a ruling by Tajikistan's highest Islamic religious body ban women from the majority Hanafi Sunni Muslim community from attending public religious services. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan 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.

There is a disturbing increase in anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment 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, mosques, and monuments. 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.

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 its anti-extremism law 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.

In Turkey, some religious minority communities, including Alevis, face difficulties owning property, registering places of worship, training clergy, and training clergy. Conscientious objectors through their faith in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Turkey, and Turkmenistan are sometimes arrested and prosecuted for failing to comply with laws mandating military service.

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 all the means to do so. PRM supported the return process through a grant to Danish Refugee Council in FY15 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 to contribute 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, more than half of whom are members of religious minorities from Russia and Eurasia processed under the Lautenberg Amendment. While Jews comprised an average of 85% of the applicant pool in the early nineties, Evangelical Christians now make up over 90% of the applicant pool. Jewish immigration to Israel from the region continues under the United Israel Appeal Program.

In addition to Lautenberg cases, the United States also accepts UNHCR-referred cases of Somalis, Afghans, Iraqis, and various African and former Soviet Union nationalities through Malta, Emergency Transit Centers (ETCs) in Timisoara, Romania and Humenne, Slovakia, and other locations in Europe and

Central Asia. In an effort to continue processing refugees trapped in countries with deteriorating security situations, the United States transfers a limited number of urgent cases from high-conflict locations, where refugee interviews can no longer take place, to the ETCs for processing. Although limited by the number of slots available (200 in Timisoara and 150 in Humenne) and the many logistical challenges of multiple transfers, the USRAP makes steady use of the ETCs. *(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 2015 U.S. Admissions

In FY 2015 the United States plans to resettle an estimated 2,300 refugees from Europe and Central Asia, the majority of which are Lautenberg cases. Applicants are being processed in Baku, Bishkek, Chisinau, Dushanbe, Kyiv, Valletta, Minsk, Tbilisi, Moscow, Timisoara, and Humenne.

FY 2016 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed FY 2016 ceiling for refugees from Europe and Central Asia is 4,000 individuals. Priority 2 includes individuals who will be processed under Lautenberg guidelines in the states of the former Soviet Union. Approval rates have gone up significantly since FY14 and remain steady. In addition, applications for the Lautenberg program have increased substantially since the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine.

Proposed FY 2016 Europe and Central Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

<i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i>	<i>990</i>
<i>Priority 2 Groups</i>	<i>3,000</i>
<i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i>	<i><u>10</u></i>
<i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i>	<i>4,000</i>

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

In 2015, the number of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and other persons of concern in Latin America and the Caribbean approached seven million. 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 6 million IDPs as of February 2015. Despite an expanded state

presence and improved security in cities and towns throughout Colombia, displacement continues. In 2014 the GOC registered 150,317 newly displaced individuals as a result of confrontations between the GOC and illegal armed groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), criminal gangs (BACRIM) and criminal narco-trafficking networks. According to UNHCR, it is likely that displacement will continue.

In surrounding countries, including Ecuador, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Panama, there are over 400,000 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 December 2013, the Government of Ecuador (GOE) has recognized 54,865 refugees and UNHCR reports an additional 80,243 persons of concern. The asylum process in Ecuador is slow and difficult to access; and the approval rate is around six percent. The GOE administers the pre-admissibility step in addition to the refugee status determination (RSD) process, which creates additional delays. Asylum seekers pending RSD can wait up to a year for a decision. UNHCR highlights a challenging protection environment in Ecuador for refugees, citing delays in registration, revocations of refugee status, 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, including Ecuador, to improve their asylum processes.

In Panama, many of the 1,808 recognized refugees and over 15,000 persons of concern are Colombians (as of June 2014). After more than a decade of ineffective handling of the temporary humanitarian protection status holders (PTH) situation, Panama's Office for Assistance to Refugees (ONPAR) delivered permanent resident documentation to most PTH holders in March 2014. As of December 2014, in Costa Rica, there are 12,858 recognized refugees and 9,582 of persons of concern to UNHCR. The recognition rate for asylum applications is approximately 7.5%. Decisions in asylum cases in Costa Rica can take up to a year yet asylum seekers have the right to work while they are waiting for a decision. UNHCR reported in December 2014 that there are 4,340 recognized refugees in Venezuela, and UNHCR estimates there are more than 200,000 persons live in a refugee-like situation in the country. As of mid-2014 in Brazil, there are almost 6,000 recognized refugees from 75 countries; the largest numbers are from Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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. These factors, including the desire to reunify with family members residing in the United States, contributed to an unprecedented number of unaccompanied children and families with young children arriving in the United States in 2014. In FY 2014 51,700 unaccompanied children and 61,300 individuals in family units from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala were apprehended by United States Border Patrol. This was a sharp increase compared with 4,400 unaccompanied children from these same countries apprehended in FY 2010. In the first half of FY 2015 authorities apprehended 11,200 family units and 9,800 unaccompanied children from these same countries.

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 U.S. Refugee Admissions Program 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.

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.

Local Integration

The Governments of Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela have maintained policies that theoretically allow Colombians 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 in these countries struggle to find stable employment or income opportunities, competing with the large number of poor in host communities. Colombians seeking international protection face high levels of discrimination and xenophobia, and the ability to locally integrate is difficult. Furthermore, refugees do not live in camps, but rather the large majority live in urban areas. Some Colombian persons of concern (including refugees and asylum seekers) in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, and Venezuela continue to experience harassment by persons associated with armed Colombian groups operating in these countries. Security remains a major concern for the Government of Panama, and Panamanians often equate refugees with drug trafficking and crime.

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 the agency's 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. Only 3% of cases were approved in 2013 and none were approved in 2014. We also remain concerned that individuals at risk of statelessness due to the September 2013 Constitutional Tribunal ruling may be expelled upon resumption of deportations on June 15.

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. Currently, the United States accepts referrals from UNHCR and embassies in the region and processes these cases principally in Ecuador, with occasional cases in Costa Rica and other countries throughout the region. 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. The Department of State is providing technical support to bolster Uruguay's resettlement program. The United States also facilitates the resettlement to third countries of persons 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. The number of persons seeking refugee resettlement has decreased, and the backlog of cases pending review by the Department of State for access to the USRAP has been eliminated. New applications reflect a shrinking pool of qualified applicants. Some approved refugees do not have sufficient funds to pay for the medical exams and passports needed to depart Cuba, delaying their departure. As previously noted, the exit permit requirement was abolished on January 14, 2013. The Refugee Section has not received any recent information regarding individuals who have been prevented by the Cuban government from traveling.

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 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. If the second parent is resident in the country of origin with the child and is married to the parent who is resident in the United States, that parent can also be considered for resettlement, but would have to establish an independent refugee claim. The U.S. government established the program to provide a safe, legal, and orderly alternative to the dangerous journey that some children are currently undertaking to join their parents in the United States. To apply, an eligible parent who is lawfully present in the U.S. must complete the DS-7699 with the assistance of a State Department-funded resettlement agency. Applicants found by DHS to be at

a risk or harm but not eligible for refugee resettlement will be considered on a case-by-case basis for parole. Unlike refugee status, parole is temporary and does not confer any permanent legal immigration status or path to permanent legal immigration status in the United States.

FY 2015 U.S. Admissions

We anticipate admitting approximately 2,300 refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean during FY 2015. Cubans compose the overwhelming majority of refugees resettled from the region. Historically, most Cuban admissions were former political prisoners and forced labor conscripts. The program was expanded in 1991 to include human rights activists, displaced professionals, and others with claims of persecution, which currently compose the majority of admissions. We expect about 600 Colombian refugees to be admitted to the United States during FY 2015.

FY 2016 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed 3,000 ceiling for Latin America and the Caribbean for FY 2016 comprises Cuban refugees eligible for the in-country Priority 2 program; Central American Minors eligible for the in-country Priority 2 program; UNHCR-referred Priority 1 Colombians; as well as a small number of Priority 3 family reunification cases.

Proposed FY 2016 Latin America program to include arrivals from the following categories:

<i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i>	<i>950</i>
<i>Priority 2 Groups</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i>	<i><u>50</u></i>
<i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i>	<i>4,000</i>

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The Near East/South Asia region remains host to more than twelve million refugees, primarily Afghans, Bhutanese, Iranians, Iraqis, Palestinians, Sri Lankans, Tibetans, and Syrians. 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, ICRC, IOM, WFP, UNRWA, 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 Iraqis in Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and the Gulf States; Bhutanese in Nepal; Afghans in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and India; and Iranians in Turkey. In 2014, UNHCR also began to refer several thousand vulnerable Syrian refugees residing in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt to a number of resettlement countries.

As of February 20, 2015, more than 189,000 Iraqi refugees were registered with UNHCR in the region. There is no internationally agreed-upon number of Iraqi refugees and IDPs due to the fact that not all are registered with UNHCR and they are dispersed throughout the region. Prior to the current conflict, UNHCR reported that approximately 950,000 Iraqis remained internally displaced by sectarian violence following the Samarra Mosque bombing of February 2006. IOM reports that over three million Iraqis have been displaced since January 2014 by violence in Iraq. As of February 2015, there are nearly 250,000 Syrian refugees in Iraq, as well as approximately 36,000 refugees and 6,500 asylum seekers of other origins (including Palestinians and Iranian Kurds). The U.S. government is providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced Iraqis and refugees from Iraq across 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, and education. Since the start of Fiscal Year 2014, the U.S. has provided nearly \$478 million in essential humanitarian assistance.

Intense fighting in Syria has caused massive displacement, both internally and to countries in the region. Inside Syria, more than 12.2 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance, 7.6 million are internally displaced and 5.6 million children are in need. Nearly five million Syrians are living in areas that are difficult to reach. Some 440,000 people, and perhaps many more, remain

besieged predominantly by the regime and the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The regime has long besieged nearly 170,000 civilians in the Damascus suburbs, consistently barring aid agencies from reaching them, including in the Yarmouk neighborhood, which has been besieged for two years. Outside of Syria, neighboring countries are hosting nearly four million refugees. Hospitals are filled to capacity, schools are running double shifts, the availability of water has decreased, and housing rents are rising in communities hosting Syrians. The crisis has pushed the number of Lebanese living in poverty to 170,000, rising by nearly two-thirds since 2011. Meanwhile, Turkey has spent over \$6 billion to support refugees, through construction and services in high quality camps and other support to non-camp 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, UNRWA, UNFPA, IOM, ICRC, and WFP, 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. As of July 6, 2015 the U.S. government, the single largest global donor, had provided over \$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 and Iran continue to host, respectively, approximately 1.5 million and 950,000 registered Afghans, many of whom have resided in these countries for 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. In addition to Afghan refugees, some 2-3 million Afghans are believed to live and work in Pakistan and Iran as economic migrants without documentation. 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 host countries.

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 17 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 96,000 of the

original population of 108,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal have departed after spending two decades in camps in eastern Nepal; of which more than 81,000 have resettled in the U.S. 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 remaining refugees to work, gain legal status, and access public education, health care, and other services.

Religious Freedom

Persecution of religious groups is common in many countries in the Middle East and South Asia that are countries of origin for refugee populations entering the United States. State and local government responses to violence against members of religious groups, particularly Muslims and Christians, are often inadequate. Although many of these countries do not have Jewish populations, anti-Semitism is prevalent, and often espoused by governments or religious leaders.

In Afghanistan, religious freedom is limited due to constitutional contradictions, legislative ambiguity, and interpretations of Islamic law that punish apostasy and blasphemy.

In Pakistan, the penal code includes blasphemy laws that carry punishments ranging from imprisonment to the death penalty. Frequent abuses of these laws negatively affect religious minorities, both Muslims and non-Muslims. In 2014, 12 new cases were registered under the blasphemy law, and the courts sentenced at least three people to death, six people to life-imprisonment, and three people to two-year jail terms, and acquitted one person for committing blasphemy. The government has yet to carry out a death sentence for blasphemy. Nevertheless, at least 17 people are awaiting execution for blasphemy, and at least 20 others are serving life sentences.

In Sri Lanka, religious tensions continue to be a problem, and Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities often distrust one another. In 2014, under the previous government, local authorities failed to respond effectively to communal violence, including attacks on members of minority religious groups, and perpetrators were not brought to justice. In June 2014 at least three Muslims were killed and scores injured in clashes with hardline Buddhists in Aluthgama and Beruwalla. The incident occurred after the Bodu Bala Sena, a hardline violent ethnic Sinhala Buddhist organization with links to the previous government, held a large rally in the streets of Aluthgama. Non-governmental organizations alleged that senior and local government officials provided assistance to or, at a minimum, tacit support for the actions of societal groups targeting religious minorities.

In Bhutan, Buddhism is the state's "spiritual heritage," although in the southern areas many citizens openly practice Hinduism. There is subtle pressure on non-Buddhists to observe the traditional Buddhist values and some limitations on constructing non-Buddhist places of worship remain. Some societal pressures toward non-Buddhists are reflected in official and unofficial efforts to uphold the "spiritual heritage" (Buddhism) of the country.

In Iran, religious groups, including Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Sufis, Jews, Zoroastrians, Yaresanis, 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 convictions and executions 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.

In Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant targeted many of its attacks and abuses on the basis of religious identity, declaring an intention to exterminate or displace Shia Muslims for example and prompting mass displacement of religious minorities, including but not limited to Yezidis, Christians, Shabaks, and Kaka'is. Ongoing sectarian tensions and discrimination impact all of Iraq's religious and ethnic communities. Some 20 percent of registered Iraqi refugees are members of religious minorities, a figure appreciably larger than their percentage of the overall Iraqi population. 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 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 targeted against religious minorities, including Christians, Druze, Alawites, and others as the current civil war continues. Large-scale internal and external displacement of all sectors of the population is ongoing.

In Egypt, the government generally failed to prevent, investigate, or prosecute crimes against members of religious minority groups, which fostered a culture of impunity. Christians, Shias, Bahais, and atheists faced personal and collective discrimination, especially in government employment and the ability to build, renovate, and repair places of worship. The government failed to protect Christians targeted by kidnappings and extortion, and there were reports that security and police officials sometimes failed to respond to these crimes,

especially in Upper Egypt. The government used “reconciliation sessions” following sectarian attacks against Christians rather than prosecuting the perpetrators of the crimes.

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 Sharia courts decide personal status cases, which generally forbid conversion by Muslim citizens. 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.

The USRAP provides resettlement access in various ways to refugees who suffer religious persecution. Under the 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. Iranian refugees have also gained access to the program through Priority 3. In addition, the USRAP accepts UNHCR and embassy referrals of religious minorities of various nationalities in the region. Nationals of any country, including CPCs, may be referred to the U.S. program by UNHCR or a U.S. embassy for reasons of religious 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. The era of mass returns has largely ended, however, with about 12,991 returning in 2014. The substantial repatriation represents roughly 20 percent of Afghanistan’s total population and has taxed the country’s capacity to absorb them, let alone additional refugee returns.

It is unlikely that all of the remaining 2.5 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. UNHCR is working with the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran and the international community to develop policies and programs to sustain 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 the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is working to increase its capacity in helping returnees fold back 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, continue to work toward implementing the *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 reintegrate returned refugees into their communities fully.

Stabilizing the displaced Afghan population – e.g., reintegrating 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 plans to begin implementing the IDP policy in 2015.

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. With the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka in 2009, approximately 6,000 refugees have returned. However, the number of Tamils seeking to return from India has decreased. So far in 2015, UNHCR assisted in the voluntary return of 147 Tamil refugees to Sri Lanka.

Local Integration

The SSAR promotes enhancing support for refugee-hosting communities and providing some alternative stay arrangements for refugees in Afghanistan and Iran. While some progress is being made, few countries in the region offer local integration to refugees. In July 2013, the Government of Pakistan endorsed the policies found in the *National Policy on Management and Repatriation of Afghan Refugees beyond 30th June, 2013*. At the same meeting, the Cabinet extended the validity of Afghan Proof of Registration cards and the Tripartite Agreement (among the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and UNHCR) until December 31, 2015. As part of the Pakistan implementation of the SSAR and in partnership with the Government of Pakistan and UN agencies, UNHCR launched the Refugee-Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative in 2009. This

program is widely regarded as a success in addressing Afghan refugee and Pakistani host community needs by rehabilitating areas that have been adversely affected by the presence of Afghan refugee communities over the past 30 years. 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 24,000 UNHCR-registered Iraqi refugees as of February 20, 2015. Iraqis do not need a visa to enter Syria. Jordan and Lebanon host approximate 45,000 and 14,500 Iraqi refugees respectively. Both countries closely manage their borders, requiring Iraqis to obtain visas before entering, which effectively limiting 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. The 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 donor support, 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. Refugees in Lebanon and Syria are not legally allowed to work, though some do so in the grey economy. Although the Government of Jordan allows Iraqis to work legally in several labor sectors, few have obtained work permits because these required possession of residency permits, which the GOJ is not issuing to Iraqis.

With the incredible rise in the number of displaced since January 2014 and the continuing violence throughout Iraq, many Iraqi IDPs will not be able to return to their home communities. While it is still too soon to seek local integration support, it is important for displaced Iraqis to be able to access services in their areas of displacement. The Government of Iraq, the Kurdish Regional Government, and the UN are working together to ensure the safe and voluntary return of IDPs to liberated areas.

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 most 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 31, 2015, there were over 200,000 refugees, as well as those pre-registered and registered with UNHCR Turkey, the majority from Iraq (65%), Afghanistan (18%) and Iran (8%). In addition to the Syrian influx into Turkey over the past year, Turkey has also seen substantial, increased arrivals of Iraqis due to the increased violence in neighboring Iraq. UNHCR-recognized refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey are assigned to one of 64 satellite cities. Provincial governments are responsible for meeting their basic needs, including by providing access to employment, healthcare, and education although support varies from one location to another.

On April 4, 2013, the Turkish Parliament passed the “Foreigners and International Protection Law,” which will regulate 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. The law created a new entity, the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), within the Ministry of Interior. 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.

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 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 every five years, 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.

UNHCR has negotiated an agreement with the Government of India whereby India would facilitate access to citizenship for Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees who meet the standard criteria to acquire Indian citizenship. Naturalization clinics were established to support the citizenship process for

Hindu and Sikh Afghans, and UNHCR intensified its efforts to ensure that all eligible refugees had submitted applications for Indian citizenship by December 31, 2009. As a result, over 4,400 applications were submitted and over 680 Afghans have naturalized.

Third-Country Resettlement

The USRAP anticipates the continued large-scale processing of Iraqis, and, to a lesser extent, Bhutanese and Iranians, and will continue to increase the number of Syrians processed during FY 2016. RSC pre-screening and USCIS adjudications in Baghdad were suspended in June 2014 due to the relocation of personnel outside Iraq, however, as of April 17, 2015, both of these operations have resumed. As of June 1, a large backlog of more than 58,000 U.S.-affiliated Iraqis remains. As the situation permits, USCIS team sizes will be increased to accommodate additional interviews. During the period when interviews were not conducted, out-processing was expedited for those cases that had already had their USCIS interview. Those applicants continue to depart as security and medical checks are cleared.

In late 2013, UNHCR announced its intention to refer 30,000 Syrian refugees for resettlement in third countries by the end of 2014 and up to 100,000 additional Syrian refugees by 2016. The United States will play a significant role in this effort. The majority of Syrian referrals will be processed in Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt, and to a lesser extent in Lebanon and elsewhere. UNHCR has referred over 13,000 Syrians for U.S. resettlement consideration. As of May 30, 2015, the U.S. has admitted 701 Syrian refugees in FY 2015 and expects to admit 1,000-2,000 Syrians by the end of the fiscal year. In FY 2016, admissions are expected to be somewhat higher, though still in the low thousands.

According to UNHCR, Turkey is the largest refugee-hosting country in the world with nearly two million Syrians and 200,000 Iraqis. It is UNHCR's largest refugee resettlement operation in the world. In FY14, USRAP resettled over 5,600 refugees from Turkey, mainly Iraqis, Iranians, and Afghans. With UNHCR's decision in 2014 to start referring Syrians for resettlement, the United States is ramping up our program in Turkey, and has agreed to accept 14,000 refugees of various nationalities into the 2015 resettlement pipeline.

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, Damascus, and Istanbul, although interviews are not currently taking place in Beirut or Damascus. While many Iraqis gain access to the USRAP via a referral from

UNHCR, we are also facilitating direct access to the USRAP for Iraqis with close U.S. affiliations 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 (P-2) to the USRAP, both inside and outside Iraq. Currently, beneficiaries of P-2 categories who may seek access to the USRAP in Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, and the UAE include:

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;
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; and
6. Iraqis who are the spouses, sons, daughters, parents, brothers, or sisters of a citizen of the United States, or who are the spouses or unmarried sons or daughters of a Permanent Resident Alien of the United States, as established by their being or becoming beneficiaries of approved family-based I-130 Immigrant Visa Petitions.

Refugee processing in Iraq is a high priority for the United States as it directly benefits Iraqis associated with U.S. efforts in Iraq. Although security and logistical challenges associated with operating a RSC in Iraq limit in-country processing capacity, both the RSC and USCIS have resumed interviews in small numbers.

Middle Eastern and South Asian refugees in most of Europe avail themselves of the asylum systems of the countries in which they are located. In Vienna, however, certain Iranian religious minorities (Baha'is, Zoroastrians, Jews, Mandaeans, and Christians) may be processed for U.S. resettlement using special procedures authorized by the Government of Austria. The Lautenberg Amendment was reauthorized December 2014, allowing new applications to be filed and adjudicated under Lautenberg guidelines. The United States also

processes Iranian religious minorities (primarily Baha'i) and other Iranians in Turkey through special procedures involving fast-track refugee status determination and referral by UNHCR.

Resettlement processing for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal is continuing smoothly and the United States remains committed to considering for resettlement all Bhutanese refugees who expressed interest to UNHCR by June 30, 2014. As of April 2015, UNHCR had referred over 110,000 Bhutanese refugees for resettlement to eight countries and some 95,000 of these Bhutanese refugees have been resettled to these countries – more than 81,000 resettled in the United States – since late 2007. Processing of Bhutanese refugees who have declared interest in resettlement will take several more years.

The United States works with other countries- mainly Australia, Canada and New Zealand – to preserve protection space and to coordinate the resettlement of Afghans from Pakistan. UNHCR has almost doubled its referral capacity since 2012 with a 2015 target of referring 2,200 refugees for third country resettlement; approximately half will be referred to the U.S.

In India, UNHCR currently refers some 400 individuals per year, with priority given to those they deem 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 2015 U.S. Admissions

We estimate the admission of approximately 27,700 refugees from the region in FY 2015. These will include some 6,000 Bhutanese, 15,000 Iraqis, 3,000 Iranians, 1,500 Syrians, and several hundred Afghans, including women who had been living in Iran processed through the UNHCR Emergency Transit Center in Slovakia.

FY 2016 U.S. Resettlement Program

The proposed regional ceiling for refugees from the Near East and South Asia for FY 2016 is 34,000, including vulnerable Iraqis, Bhutanese, Iranians, Syrians, Pakistanis, and Afghans. We expect individual UNHCR referrals of various religious and ethnic groups in the region, including Assyrians, Mandaeans, Iranian Kurds, and Syrian Kurds. In addition, Ahmadi Muslims in many locations and Afghans in the former Soviet Union, Pakistan, India, and elsewhere will be included.

Proposed FY 2016 Near East/ South Asia program to include arrivals from the following categories:

<i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i>	<i>16,000</i>
<i>Priority 2 Groups</i>	<i>17,900</i>
<i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i>	<i>100</i>
<i><u>Total Proposed Ceiling</u></i>	<i><u>34,000</u></i>

DOMESTIC IMPACT OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS

In FY 2014, the USRAP admitted 69,987 refugees from 57 countries. More than half were originally from either Iraq or Burma. (See Table III.)

The demographic characteristics of refugee arrivals from the 20 largest source countries (representing close to 100 percent of total arrivals) in FY 2014 illustrate the variation among refugee groups. The median age of all FY 2014 arrivals was 26 years and ranged from 19 years for arrivals from the Republic of South Sudan to 37 years of age for arrivals from Iran. In FY 2014, 47.46 percent of all arriving refugees were female and 52.54 percent of all arriving refugees were male. Males predominated among refugees from Sudan (69.5 percent), Burundi (60.2 percent), and Eritrea (57 percent). (See Table IV.)

Of the total arrivals in FY 2014, some 9.6 percent were under the age of five, 25.6 percent were of school age, 64.9 percent were of working age, and 3.6 percent were of retirement age. (See Table V.) Considerable variation among refugee groups can be seen among specific age categories. Refugees under the age of five ranged from a high of 20.9 percent among Syria arrivals to a low of 2.6 percent of those from Iran. The number of school-aged children (from five to 17 years of age) varied from a high of over 40.7 percent of arrivals from the Democratic Republic of Congo to a low of 10.8 percent of those from Iran. The number of working-aged refugees (16 to 64 years of age) varied from a high of 78.4 percent of those from Vietnam to a low of 50.4 percent of individuals from Syria. Retirement-aged refugees (65 years or older) ranged from a high of 11.8 percent of arrivals from Iran to a low of less than one percent of those from Burundi, the Republic of South Sudan, and Sri Lanka.

During FY 2014, 62 percent of all arriving refugees resettled in 12 states. The majority were placed in Texas (10.3 percent), followed by California (8.7 percent), New York (5.8 percent), Michigan (5.7 percent), Florida (5 percent), and Arizona (4.2 percent). The states of Ohio (4 percent), Pennsylvania (3.9 percent), Georgia (3.8 percent), Illinois (3.6 percent), Washington (3.5 percent), and North Carolina (3.4 percent) also were in the top twelve states where refugees were resettled. (See Table VI.)

TABLE III
Refugee Arrivals By Country of Origin
Fiscal Year 2014

Country of Origin	Arrival Number	% of Total
Afghanistan	753	1.08%
Algeria	2	0.00%
Bangladesh	2	0.00%
Bhutan	8,434	12.05%
Burma	14,598	20.86%
Burundi	68	0.10%
Cambodia	44	0.06%
Cameroon	5	0.01%
Central African Republic	25	0.04%
Chad	21	0.03%
China	53	0.08%
Colombia	252	0.36%
Congo	30	0.04%
Cuba	4,062	5.80%
Dem. Rep. Congo	4,540	6.49%
Egypt	21	0.03%
Eritrea	1,488	2.13%
Ethiopia	728	1.04%
Former Soviet Union*	958	1.37%
Gabon	1	0.00%
Gambia	1	0.00%
Guinea	9	0.01%
Haiti	4	0.01%
India	7	0.01%
Indonesia	1	0.00%
Iran	2,846	4.07%

Iraq	19,769	28.25%
Ivory Coast	42	0.06%
Jordan	7	0.01%
Kenya	21	0.03%
Korea, North	8	0.01%
Kuwait	12	0.02%
Lebanon	1	0.00%
Liberia	31	0.04%
Mali	2	0.00%
Mauritania	4	0.01%
Nepal	47	0.07%
Nigeria	4	0.01%
Pakistan	240	0.34%
Palestine	141	0.20%
Philippines	1	0.00%
Republic of South Sudan	57	0.08%
Rwanda	45	0.06%
Saudi Arabia	1	0.00%
Sierra Leone	6	0.01%
Somalia	9,000	12.86%
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	57	0.08%
Sudan	1,315	1.88%
Syria	105	0.15%
Tanzania	1	0.00%
Togo	26	0.04%
Tunisia	2	0.00%
Uganda	5	0.01%
United Kingdom	1	0.00%
Vietnam	79	0.11%
Yemen	3	0.00%

Zimbabwe	1	0.00%
TOTAL	69,987	100.00%

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

TABLE IV

Median Age and Gender of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2014

Rank (# of Arrivals)	Country of Origin	Refugees Admitted	Median Age	% Females	% Males
1	Iraq	19,769	28	46.73%	53.27%
2	Burma	14,598	23	45.99%	54.01%
3	Somalia	9,000	21	47.31%	52.69%
4	Bhutan	8,434	29	50.08%	49.92%
5	Dem. Rep. Congo	4,540	20	51.50%	48.50%
6	Cuba	4,062	36	49.38%	50.62%
7	Iran	2,846	37	49.19%	50.81%
8	Eritrea	1,488	22	42.94%	57.06%
9	Sudan	1,315	25	30.49%	69.51%
10	Former Soviet Union*	958	30	53.24%	46.76%
11	Afghanistan	753	23	54.58%	45.42%
12	Ethiopia	728	23	48.35%	51.65%
13	Colombia	252	25	52.38%	47.62%
14	Pakistan	240	24	43.33%	56.67%
15	Palestine	141	28	43.26%	56.74%
16	Syria	105	23	51.43%	48.57%
17	Vietnam	79	29	46.84%	53.16%
18	Burundi	68	22	39.71%	60.29%
19	Rep. of South Sudan	57	19	56.14%	43.86%
20	Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	57	26	49.12%	50.88%
21	All Other Countries	497	25	49.90%	50.10%
TOTAL		69,987	26	47.46%	52.54%

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

TABLE V

Select Age Categories of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2014

Rank (# of Arrivals)	Country of Origin	Under 5 Yrs	School Age (5-17)	Working Age (16-64)	Retirement Age (=or > 65)
1	Iraq	9.38%	23.62%	65.74%	4.42%
2	Burma	12.60%	24.14%	64.82%	1.49%
3	Somalia	11.66%	34.82%	57.33%	1.03%
4	Bhutan	8.05%	20.68%	68.95%	6.26%
5	Dem. Rep. Congo	9.85%	40.77%	54.38%	0.93%
6	Cuba	4.33%	19.52%	71.98%	8.22%
7	Iran	2.67%	10.82%	76.46%	11.84%
8	Eritrea	8.67%	32.33%	64.65%	0.27%
9	Sudan	9.43%	21.06%	71.86%	0.15%
10	Former Soviet Union*	8.87%	25.37%	61.48%	8.66%
11	Afghanistan	6.24%	35.33%	65.47%	1.33%
12	Ethiopia	10.85%	30.63%	62.36%	0.69%
13	Colombia	5.95%	36.11%	61.51%	1.19%
14	Pakistan	8.75%	30.00%	62.92%	1.25%
15	Palestine	7.80%	22.70%	69.50%	3.55%
16	Syria	20.95%	26.67%	50.48%	3.81%
17	Vietnam	5.06%	17.72%	78.48%	1.27%
18	Burundi	8.82%	29.41%	66.18%	0.00%
19	Rep. of South Sudan	15.79%	33.33%	57.89%	0.00%
20	Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	7.02%	19.30%	73.68%	0.00%
21	All Other Countries	7.85%	26.96%	69.22%	0.80%
TOTAL		9.60%	25.63%	64.91%	3.64%

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 VI**Refugee Arrivals By State of Initial Resettlement, Fiscal Year 2014**

STATE	Refugee Arrivals	Amerasian Arrivals	Total Arrivals	% of Total Arrivals to U.S.
Alabama	107	0	107	0.15%
Alaska	141	0	141	0.20%
Arizona	2,964	0	2,964	4.24%
Arkansas	7	0	7	0.01%
California	6,108	0	6,108	8.73%
Colorado	1,813	0	1,813	2.59%
Connecticut	543	0	543	0.78%
District of Columbia	29	0	29	0.04%
Florida	3,519	0	3,519	5.03%
Georgia	2,694	0	2,694	3.85%
Hawaii	2	0	2	0.00%
Idaho	978	0	978	1.40%
Illinois	2,578	0	2,578	3.68%
Indiana	1,614	0	1,614	2.31%
Iowa	692	0	692	0.99%
Kansas	490	0	490	0.70%
Kentucky	1,849	0	1,849	2.64%
Louisiana	211	0	211	0.30%
Maine	388	0	388	0.55%
Maryland	1,227	0	1,227	1.75%
Massachusetts	1,937	4	1,941	2.77%
Michigan	4,006	0	4,006	5.72%
Minnesota	2,232	0	2,232	3.19%
Mississippi	7	0	7	0.01%
Missouri	1,392	0	1,392	1.99%
Nebraska	1,076	0	1,076	1.54%
Nevada	569	0	569	0.81%
New Hampshire	345	0	345	0.49%
New Jersey	363	0	363	0.52%
New Mexico	163	0	163	0.23%

STATE	Refugee Arrivals	Amerasian Arrivals	Total Arrivals	% of Total Arrivals to U.S.
New York	4,082	0	4,082	5.83%
North Carolina	2,443	0	2,443	3.49%
North Dakota	582	0	582	0.83%
Ohio	2,815	0	2,815	4.02%
Oklahoma	389	0	389	0.56%
Oregon	1,019	0	1,019	1.46%
Pennsylvania	2,739	0	2,739	3.91%
Puerto Rico	2	0	2	0.00%
Rhode Island	188	0	188	0.27%
South Carolina	121	0	121	0.17%
South Dakota	523	0	523	0.75%
Tennessee	1,467	0	1,467	2.10%
Texas	7,209	5	7,214	10.31%
Utah	1,085	0	1,085	1.55%
Vermont	317	0	317	0.45%
Virginia	1,310	0	1,310	1.87%
Washington	2,483	0	2,483	3.55%
West Virginia	28	0	28	0.04%
Wisconsin	1,129	3	1,132	1.63%
Total	69,975	12	69,987	100.00%

Note: Arrival figures do not reflect secondary migration.

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

TABLE VII
ESTIMATED AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR REFUGEE PROCESSING AND RESETTLEMENT
FY 2015 AND FY 2016 (\$ MILLIONS)

AGENCY	ESTIMATED FY 2015 (BY DEPARTMENT)	ESTIMATED FY 2016 (BY DEPARTMENT)
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY <i>United States Citizenship and Immigration Services</i>		
Refugee Processing ¹	\$32.3	\$36.5
DEPARTMENT OF STATE <i>Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration</i>		
Refugee Admissions ^{2,3}	\$507.1	\$ 503.7
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES <i>Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement</i>		
Refugee Resettlement ⁴	\$609.1	\$652.6
TOTAL	\$1,148.5	\$1,192.8

¹ FY 2016: Includes cost factors to reflect Headquarters facilities rent related to the refugee resettlement program, projected staffing enhancements, and following-to-join refugee processing, in addition to certain ICASS costs. Additional funding in FY 2016 is pending leadership approval and availability of fee account resources.

² FY 2015: Includes FY 2015 MRA appropriation of \$394.2 million, \$42.2 million in PRM carryover from FY 2014, \$55.7 million in projected IOM loan collections/carryover, and an estimate of \$15 million in prior year MRA recoveries. A portion of these funds will be carried forward into FY 2016.

³ FY 2016: Includes FY 2016 MRA budget request of \$442.7 million, \$55 million in projected IOM loan collections/carryover, and an estimate of \$6 million in prior year MRA recoveries. Funds carried forward from FY 2015 will also be available in FY 2016.

⁴ FY 2015 and FY 2016: 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 Domestic Trafficking. The estimated FY 2016 figures above reflect the President's FY 2016 Budget request.

TABLE VIII
UNHCR Resettlement Statistics by Resettlement Country CY 2014 Admissions

RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY	TOTAL	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESETTLED
United States	48,911	67.0%
Canada	7,233	9.9%
Australia	6,162	8.4%
Germany	3,467	4.7%
Sweden	1,497	2.1%
Norway	1,188	1.6%
Finland	1,011	1.4%
Netherlands	743	1.0%
New Zealand	632	.87%
United Kingdom	628	.86%
France	378	.52%
Denmark	332	.45%
Austria	269	.37%
Switzerland	139	.19%
Ireland	98	.13%
Uruguay	52	.07%
Brazil	44	.06%
Romania	44	.06%
Belgium	32	.04%
Spain	30	.04%
Luxembourg	28	.04%
Japan	23	.03%
Argentina	21	.03%
Portugal	14	.02%
Rep. of Korea	14	.02%

Liechtenstein	5	.01%
Czech. Rep.	4	.01%
Hungary	4	.01%
Iceland	4	.01%
Mexico	1	.00%
TOTAL	73,008	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.