

FACT SHEET: Syrian refugee crisis

Background: Conditions for Syrian refugees (source: UNHCR, as of 04/08/2016)

- More than 50% of the entire population of Syria has been displaced from their homes – by bombardment, civil war, and the growing threat of ISIS.
- Currently, there are 4,803,643 registered Syrian refugees in countries neighboring Syria including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and several countries in North Africa.
- 76% of these refugees are women and children.
- Only 12% of refugees across the region live in formal refugee camps. Most live in urban settings. Refugees are not permitted to work legally in these countries where they first seek asylum; women who head households are especially vulnerable, and, in some cases, the cash allowance provided by UNHCR to help a refugee pay for housing, food, and medical care has been reduced to \$7 per month per person. Syrians now face increasing challenges to find safety and protection in these neighboring countries, which, faced with overwhelming refugee numbers, insufficient international support and security concerns, have taken measures this year to stem the flow of refugees – including restricting access or closer management of borders and introducing complex requirements for refugees to extend their stay.
- In Jordan, the situation for more than half a million Syrians living outside the country's refugee camps is increasingly dire. A recent UNHCR assessment showed that 86% of those in urban and rural areas are now living below the poverty line and are taking increasingly extreme measures in order to cope, such as reducing their food intake or sending family members – including children – out to beg.
- In Lebanon, the preliminary findings of a recent vulnerability study found 70% of Syrian refugee households live far below the national poverty line – up from 50% in 2014.
- Across the region, some 700,000 Syrian refugee children were out of school for the school year just passed. Very soon, many refugees who live in sub-standard shelters will face another winter in exile.
- Though many have crossed European borders, the majority of refugees in Jordan and Lebanon lack the financial resources to contemplate the costly and dangerous journey to Europe.
- Some refugees, who have grown so desperate and have no hope left, risk everything by making a perilous journey by boat to try to reach a future in Europe. Already this year, more than 2,500 refugees have died in the Mediterranean attempting this journey.

U.S. Values

- The principle of protecting refugees is a core part of this country's identity as a nation committed to freedom. 2
- The legacy of our welcome to refugees is that our economy, social fabric, communities and nation as a whole are stronger.
- Since 1968, the U.S. has recognized its international responsibility to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are protected and not returned to face persecution or torture in their countries of origin.
- As a leader of democracy in the world, we have a humanitarian duty to provide those escaping persecution the opportunity to seek protection and safe haven – as do the countries of Europe and others.

Refugees in the U.S.

- Each year the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This determination is based on a consultative process between Congress, the President and various federal agencies.

- The United States has a proud tradition of leading the world in the number of refugees resettled each year.
- The U.S. resettled hundreds of thousands of refugees displaced by World War II and after the end of the wars in Southeast Asia, the United States resettled 111,000 Vietnamese refugees in 1979 and then essentially doubled that number to 207,000 in 1980 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugeeresettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>
- In recent years, the U.S. has accepted between 50,000 to 75,000 refugees per year. Before admission to the U.S., each refugee undergoes an extensive interviewing, screening and security clearance process administered by the Department of Homeland Security.
- Refugees often wait for more than 10 years before they are resettled in the U.S. or other countries.
- Once they are approved for resettlement in the U.S., LIRS and its network of partners (as well as the eight other national refugee resettlement organizations) receive refugees and provide cultural orientation, initial housing, English language training, workforce preparation, getting kids in to school, and medical care. This initial help is supported by funding from the U.S. government and private sources. Most refugees are expected to be financially self-sufficient within 90 days. U.S. Efforts and Assistance in the Syrian Crisis
- The U.S. government works with the international community to provide humanitarian assistance (\$4B - the most from any single donor), non-lethal transition assistance (\$400M) and training and equipment for the moderate Syrian opposition.
- In addition, non-profit and faith-based organizations have mobilized resources, personnel and expertise to provide assistance in the Middle East and Europe. 3
- Since the conflict began in 2011, the U.S. has resettled approximately 1,500 Syrian refugees.
- In September 2015, the U.S. announced that it will accept 85,000 total refugees in 2016, including 10,000 from Syria.
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service stands with the Refugee Council USA, a coalition of non-profits working for refugees of which LIRS is a leading member, in calling for the United States government to resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2016. This is in addition to our urgent call for the admission of 100,000 refugees from other countries (an increase over the 70,000 that the U.S. resettled in FY2015).
- For the U.S. to admit a significant number of Syrian refugees both reflects our values and is politically wise. Increased U.S. admissions would be a helpful step to relieve pressure on countries in the Middle East that are sheltering millions of refugees and would create less incentive for refugees to make the perilous journey by sea to try to reach Europe.
- As the second largest refugee resettlement organization in the U.S., LIRS and its partners are already welcoming hundreds of Syrian refugees who have often waited for resettlement to the U.S. for several years already. Many Syrian refugees are already demonstrating their ability to succeed in their new homes, bolstered by the welcome and support they receive from local congregations and communities that are helping them start their new lives.