

Fact Sheet:

U.S. Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

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- **A refugee, according to international law and U.S. law, is someone who flees his country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.**
- **Refugees undergo extensive checks before resettlement in the United States, often lasting 2–3 years.** They are first screened by the U.N. Refugee Agency, who then refers them to the United States for resettlement. They then undergo a rigorous 13-step process of interviews, background checks, security clearances, and medical screenings, detailed here: <http://goo.gl/lw8qTb>. Beyond this, Syrians get an extra level of scrutiny.
- **At any stage of the process, any refugee deemed to be a security threat is screened out and will not be resettled in the United States**
- **Once refugees arrive, the State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration coordinates their admission and placement, and the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement provides case management services, assists with transitions, and helps with short-term medical and financial needs.** More about this process can be found here. <http://goo.gl/9JizS0>.
- **In other words, authorities know who the refugees are and where they are going.** They will eventually be free to move throughout the United States, just as other citizens do, but it won’t be easy for them to slip under the radar.
- **During the vetting process, refugees referred by the U.N. to the United States for resettlement remain in their countries of first asylum—for Syrians, primarily Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon.** They are not allowed to leave these countries while they are waiting.
- **Many refugees don’t want to be resettled in the United States** because the waiting periods are so long and because the social welfare net is much smaller in the United States than in other countries.
- **Governors have virtually no authority not to accept refugees for resettlement in their states if the federal government says they must do so.** They can make life difficult for refugees by opposing their presence, but doing so would be against states’ interests in keeping public order.
- **Of Syrians resettled in the United States since 2011, half are children, 25 percent are adults over 60, 2 percent are single men of combat age, half are male, and half are female.**
- **For the financial year ending in 2016, the United States has agreed to accept 85,000 refugees, including 10,000 Syrians.** By 2017, the number will increase to 100,000 total refugees, and it is expected that the number of Syrians will increase as well.
- **This is hardly the first time that the United States has accepted refugees from states known to harbor terrorists.** The United States has resettled more than 100,000 Iraqi refugees since the 2003 invasion. Stringent background checks have ensured that they have posed a minimal security threat to the United States. Security clearances for Syrians are even tougher.