

Appendix G

OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY – 2013

In 2013 the estimated refugee population worldwide stood at 15.4 million, with 11.1 million receiving protection or assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The United States actively supported efforts to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions to refugees because these measures meet both the humanitarian objectives and the national security interests of the United States. The U.S. government worked with other governments, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide protection and assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons, victims of conflict, and other vulnerable migrants. These efforts included the legal and physical protection of refugees, and the provision of water, sanitation, food, health care, shelter, education, and other services.

In seeking durable solutions for refugees, the United States and UNHCR recognized for most refugees, safe voluntary return to their homelands was the preferred solution. Where opportunities for return remained elusive, the United States and its partners pursued self-sufficiency and temporary, indefinite, or permanent local integration in countries of asylum. The Department of State worked diplomatically to encourage host governments to protect refugees through local integration, and provided assistance to meet integration needs through promoting refugee self-sufficiency and community-based social services.

UNHCR estimated approximately 12 million people worldwide were not recognized nationals of any state and were therefore legally or *de facto* stateless. Without recognized citizenship in any country, many stateless persons existed in refugee-like situations, denied even the most basic protections of law. The United States supported UNHCR's efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness, including addressing gaps in citizenship laws, eliminating provisions discriminating against women, and promoting fair application of those laws.

The United States and UNHCR also recognized resettlement in third countries was a vital tool for providing refugees protection and/or durable solutions, particularly for those for whom other solutions were not feasible. For some refugees, resettlement was the best, and perhaps only, alternative. The United States was the world's leader in refugee resettlement, admitting more than three million refugees since 1975, including nearly 70,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 through the

U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP). The United States encouraged UNHCR to refer for resettlement individuals or groups of stateless refugees for whom other durable solutions were not possible. UNHCR or a U.S. embassy could refer nationals of any country to the U.S. program for reasons of religious persecution. The United States also supported UNHCR's efforts to expand the number of countries active in resettlement, and engaged bilaterally on the issue. In FY 2013, UNHCR referred refugees to 28 countries for resettlement consideration.

An increasing proportion of refugees arriving in the United States either did not have close family members already living in the United States to help with their adjustment and integration, or their family members were recent arrivals themselves. The refugee population was increasingly diverse linguistically, with wide-ranging educational and employment histories among the 65 nationalities admitted in FY 2013. The shortage of available affordable housing, particularly in urban areas, continued. These factors created significant challenges for resettlement agencies in meeting the needs of refugees in the program. The Departments of State and Health and Human Services worked closely with private voluntary resettlement agencies to enhance capacities to provide effective services.

AFRICA

The USRAP continued to be available through Priority 1 individual referrals of Sudanese, Eritrean, and other refugees who were victims of religious intolerance. Refugees from Eritrea and Sudan with refugee or asylee family members in the United States also had access to the USRAP through the Priority 3 refugee family reunion program. In FY 2013, 15,980 refugees from 24 African countries were admitted to the United States.

EAST ASIA

Nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Vietnam, China, Laos, and Burma, including victims of religious intolerance, had access to the USRAP through Priority 1 individual referrals. A significant number of Burmese will be processed in FY 2014 under a Priority 2 group designation for certain Burmese ethnic minorities in Thailand and Malaysia. North Korean and Burmese refugees also had access to family reunification processing through Priority 3. In FY 2013, 16,537 refugees from seven countries in East Asia were admitted to the United States.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Certain religious minorities in Europe and Central Asia had access to USRAP processing. A Priority 2 designation applied to Jews, evangelical Christians, and Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox religious adherents identified in the “Lautenberg Amendment” (Public Law Number. 101-167, § 599D, 103 Stat. 1261 (1989), as amended) 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. In FY 2013, the United States admitted 580 refugees from 11 countries in Europe and Central Asia, including those under the Lautenberg Amendment in-country processing program.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The USRAP in Havana offered the opportunity for permanent resettlement in the United States to Cubans who were persecuted on a number of grounds, including their religious beliefs. The Government of Cuba declined to provide the necessary exit visas to some individuals. In FY 2013, 4,439 refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean were resettled in the United States, including 4,205 Cubans and 230 Colombians.

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The USRAP provided resettlement access to refugees in the Near East and South Asia who suffered religious persecution, accepting UNHCR and embassy Priority 1 referrals of religious minorities of various nationalities in the region. The Specter Amendment (Public Law Number 108-199, first enacted as sec. 213, Division E, of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004) permitted Iranian religious minorities designated as category members to benefit from a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution. Iranian refugees also had access to the program through Priority 3. In FY 2013, 32,390 refugees from 16 countries in the Near East/South Asia region were admitted to the United States, including 9,134 Bhutanese, 19,488 Iraqis, and 2,579 Iranians.