

Lifeline for Iraqi Refugees



FACT SHEET A History of Refugee Protection

A History of Refugee Protection

The United States has a long history of refugee protection, but as of July 2007, it has resettled fewer than 100 of the more than 2.2 million Iraqis who have fled violence and persecution in their country since 2003. The U.S. has the capacity to bring hundreds of thousands to safety, as it has done many times in the past.

Overall Picture

- Over 2.6 million refugees have been resettled by the U.S. since 1975.
- 41,300 refugees from over 60 nations were resettled by the U.S. in 2006.
- 98,000 refugees on average have been resettled annually by the U.S., with a high of 207,000 refugees in 1980 and a low of 27,110 refugees in 2002.

Europe

- Over 250,000 Europeans displaced by World War II, including 90,000 Jewish refugees, were resettled by the U.S. between 1948 and 1952.

Former Soviet Union

- 209,000 Soviet Union refugees were resettled by the U.S. under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953.
- 154,630 Soviet refugees fleeing communism were resettled by the U.S. between 1980 and 1991.
- 600,000 refugees from the Former Soviet Union have been resettled by the U.S. since 1975.

Cuba

- 200,000 Cuban refugees were resettled by the U.S. between 1959 and 1962.
- More than 55,000 Cuban refugees have been resettled by the U.S. since 1975. These include former political prisoners, persecuted religious minorities, human rights activists, forced labor conscripts, and those discriminated against or harmed based on their political or religious beliefs.

Vietnam

- Over 900,000 Vietnamese refugees have been resettled by the U.S. since 1975.
- 131,000 Vietnamese refugees arrived in the U.S. between May 1 and December 20, 1975. The first arrivals were ex-military and government officials and their families, who had worked for the U.S. and feared reprisals. Others included former political prisoners and those escaping the fall of the Saigon government, the 1979 Chinese invasion of Vietnam and communist re-education camps.

Somalia

- Over 58,000 Somali refugees have been resettled by the U.S. since 1980. Somalia has faced a protracted crisis of civil war and failed governance.

Ethiopia

- Over 39,000 Ethiopian refugees have been resettled by the U.S. since 1980. Many fled to escape the bloody border conflict with Eritrea, widespread famine, and political repression and violence under former Ethiopian military leader Mengistu Haile Mariam.

Former Yugoslavia

- 143,000 Bosnian refugees were resettled by the U.S. between 1993 and 2003.
- 14,000 Kosovar refugees were evacuated and resettled by the U.S. in 1999. During the conflict in former Yugoslavia, tens of thousands were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, raped, murdered, and otherwise deprived of their human rights. Over 1.5 million persons were forcibly expelled from their homes.