

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 258

Reaffirming the importance of the United States promoting the safety, health, and well-being of refugees and displaced persons in the United States and around the world.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 20, 2023

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. COONS, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FETTERMAN, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNOCK, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. WYDEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming the importance of the United States promoting the safety, health, and well-being of refugees and displaced persons in the United States and around the world.

Whereas June 20, 2023, is an international day designated by the United Nations as “World Refugee Day,” to honor refugees around the globe and celebrate the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their homes to escape conflict or persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group;

Whereas July 28, 2023, is the 72nd anniversary of the adoption of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, done at Geneva July 28, 1951, which defines the term “refugee” and outlines the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of nation states to protect such rights;

Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (referred to in this preamble as “UNHCR”) has recently reported that—

(1) there are more than 108,000,000 displaced people who have been forced from their homes worldwide, which is more displaced people than at any other time in recorded history, including more than 35,200,000 refugees and 62,500,000 internally displaced persons;

(2) 67 percent of the world’s refugees originate from just Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, or Venezuela;

(3) more than 50 percent of the population of Syria (at least 13,000,000 people) have been displaced since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, either exiting Syria across the international border or going to other areas within Syria, and this displacement crisis has been exacerbated by major earthquakes that struck Turkiye and Syria in early February 2023;

(4) more than 14,000,000 Ukrainian nationals and other third country nationals are currently displaced as a result of Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine;

(5) there are an estimated 5,700,000 Afghan refugees around the world, of whom more than 90 percent are hosted in either Iran or Pakistan, while an additional 3,500,000 Afghans are internally displaced, having fled their homes searching for refuge within Afghanistan;

(6) Latin America and the Caribbean currently host 84 percent of the more than 7,000,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants globally, and the Americas currently

host approximately 20,000,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people from around the world;

(7) more than 1,800,000 people are currently displaced due to the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and a large majority of such people are women and children who are traveling to neighboring countries; and

(8) 76 percent of all refugees worldwide are hosted in low and middle income countries and fewer than 1 percent of vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement have had such opportunity due to lack of sufficient resettlement places;

Whereas welcoming people from around the world who have been oppressed and persecuted is a central tenet of our great Nation, and the United States is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants who have added to the economic strengths and cultural richness of our communities;

Whereas, since seeking asylum is a protected right under United States domestic and international law, the United States is legally obligated to contribute to the maintenance of a humane and functioning international asylum system;

Whereas the principle of non-refoulement is also a central tenet of the United States refugee and asylum systems, and thousands of people living in the United States who immigrated from countries around the world would be subject to harm if they were deported to their countries of origin due to widespread conflict or persecution in such countries;

Whereas the United States Refugee Admissions Program, which was established in 1980—

(1) is a lifesaving pillar of global humanitarian efforts;

(2) advances United States national security and foreign policy goals; and

(3) supports regional host countries;

Whereas resettlement is an essential part of a comprehensive strategy to respond to refugee crises, promote regional stability, and strengthen United States national security;

Whereas resettlement to the United States is available for the most vulnerable refugees who undergo rigorous security vetting and medical screening processes;

Whereas the United States supports the efforts of the UNHCR to increase protection for, and the global resettlement of, LGBTQI+ refugees overseas;

Whereas women and girls have an increased risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and trafficking while they are traveling to seek safe living conditions;

Whereas through the United States Refugee Resettlement Program—

(1) only 11,411 refugees arrived in the United States during fiscal year 2021, which is the lowest number of refugees for any fiscal year since the program began;

(2) only 25,465 refugees arrived in the United States during fiscal year 2022 despite an admissions goal of 125,000; and

(3) as of May 30, 2023, only 31,797 refugees had arrived in the United States during fiscal year 2023;

Whereas resettlement organizations, businesses, and other community and faith-based groups offer support for refugees who resettle in the United States;

Whereas, between 2005 and 2014, refugees who have resettled in the United States contributed an estimated \$269,100,000,000 to the national economy, which far surpasses the \$206,100,000,000 spent by the United States to assist refugees worldwide during such period; and

Whereas most refugees integrate and quickly become self-sufficient by joining the workforce, paying taxes, supporting local commerce, helping to fill labor shortages in critical industries, and creating new jobs: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes the urgency to establish and fol-
3 low comprehensive, fair, and humane policies to ad-
4 dress forced migration and refugee challenges;

5 (2) reaffirms the bipartisan commitment of the
6 United States to promote the safety, health, and
7 well-being of millions of refugees and asylum seek-
8 ers, including the education of refugee children and
9 displaced persons fleeing war, persecution, or torture
10 in search of protection, peace, hope, and freedom;

11 (3) recognizes the many individuals who have
12 risked their lives working, either individually or on
13 behalf of nongovernmental organizations or inter-
14 national agencies, such as the United Nations High
15 Commissioner for Refugees (referred to in this reso-
16 lution as “UNHCR”), to provide lifesaving assist-

1 ance and protection for people around the world who
2 have been displaced from their homes;

3 (4) reaffirms the imperative to fully restore
4 United States asylum protections enshrined in the
5 Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–212) by reject-
6 ing harmful bans and restrictions that limit refu-
7 gees’ access to protections and due process at the
8 United States border;

9 (5) reaffirms the importance of the United
10 States Refugee Resettlement Program as a critical
11 tool of the United States Government—

12 (A) to strengthen national and regional se-
13 curity; and

14 (B) to encourage international solidarity
15 with host countries; and

16 (6) calls upon the Secretary of State, the Sec-
17 retary of Homeland Security, and the United States
18 Ambassador to the United Nations—

19 (A) to uphold the United States inter-
20 national leadership role in responding to dis-
21 placement crises with humanitarian assistance,
22 and restoring its leadership role in the protec-
23 tion of vulnerable refugee populations that en-
24 dure gender-based violence, human trafficking,
25 persecution, and violence against religious mi-

1 norities, forced conscription, genocide, and ex-
2 ploitation;

3 (B) to work in partnership with the inter-
4 national community to find solutions to existing
5 conflicts, prevent new conflicts from emerging,
6 and tackle the root causes of involuntary migra-
7 tion;

8 (C) to continue supporting the efforts of
9 the UNHCR and advance the work of non-
10 governmental organizations to protect refugees
11 and asylum seekers regardless of their country
12 of origin, race, ethnicity, or religious beliefs;

13 (D) to continue to alleviate pressures,
14 through humanitarian and development assist-
15 ance, on frontline refugee host countries that
16 absorb the majority of the world's refugees,
17 while effectively advocating for refugee well-
18 being, including access to education and liveli-
19 hoods;

20 (E) to meaningfully include refugees and
21 displaced populations in creating and achieving
22 the policy solutions affecting them;

23 (F) to respond to the global refugee crisis
24 by meeting robust refugee admissions goals;

1 (G) to actively participate in the Global
2 Refugee Forum scheduled to take place in Ge-
3 neva in December 2023 to advance United
4 States goals and gain commitments from the
5 global community to expand refugee protection;
6 and
7 (H) to reaffirm the goals of “World Ref-
8 ugee Day” and reiterate the United States
9 strong commitment to protect refugees and asy-
10 lum seekers who live without adequate material,
11 social, or legal protections.

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