

# #WhereRtheRefugees

## Top 5 Ways to Protect Refugees & Rebuild U.S. Resettlement Program

An unprecedented 68 million people, including 25 million refugees, have been forced from their homes around the world. **This is the worst refugee crisis in history.** With global need at its highest, the Trump administration has dismantled the refugee resettlement program and reversed our nation's history as a world leader in refugee protection. The administration set a new record-low refugee admissions goal for fiscal year 2019 at 30,000, and what's worse, we are only on [track](#) to resettle 21,000 refugees this year - not even meeting this low goal. Refugees who we promised to protect are still awaiting safety, and families have been separated for years because of these drastic reductions. **As we approach the halfway point in the fiscal year on March 31st**, we have a **moral responsibility to hold the administration accountable** to resettling at least 30,000 refugees this fiscal year, and to urge them to set the admissions goal for FY20 for at least 75,000 refugees. Together, we ask [#WhereRtheRefugees](#)?

### TOP FIVE WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

1. [Join National Call-in Day on March 27th](#)
2. [Host a #WhereRtheRefugees Public Witness Event](#)
3. [Write Opinion Editorials & Letters to the Editor for Local Media Outlets](#)
4. [Engage State & Local Policy Makers to Pass Refugees Welcome Resolutions](#)
5. [Plan a Visit with Your Members of Congress In-District During April 13th-28th Recess](#)

**Join National Call-in Day on Wednesday, March 27th!**

**Tell Congress: Protect Refugees, Asylum Seekers, & Families Seeking Protection**

[Click Here](#) to Receive a Phone Call that Connects You to Your 2 Senators and 1 Representative

**Sample Script:** "I'm your constituent from [CITY/TOWN], and I am outraged that the administration has set the lowest refugee admissions goal in the history of the resettlement program – at just 30,000 – and is not even on track to meet that goal. Resettlement is a core American legacy that allows refugees to rebuild their lives. I urge you to do everything in your power to see that, at the very least, the administration meets this year's admissions goal and commits to resettling at least 75,000 refugees in FY 2020. I also urge you to affirm the right of all people to seek asylum and protection, and see that the administration welcomes asylum seekers and respects family unity. To do otherwise violates U.S. and international law. My community welcomes refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, and I urge you to do the same."

**Amplify on Social Media:** Tweet at your [Senators & Representatives](#). Click here for sample [graphics](#) and [sample messages](#). Here are sample posts:

- FACT: There are 68 million people displaced around the world, including 25 million #refugees - the highest number in recorded history. @realDonaldTrump administration cut #refugees admissions to just 30,000 for FY19. And now the U.S. isn't even on track to meet this goal. #WhereRtheRefugees #RefugeesWelcome
- Meet [Afkab](#), a Somali refugee who is desperately trying to reunite with his wife and child but can't because Trump has cut refugee numbers. Sadly, there so many others like him. #WhereRtheRefugees #RefugeesWelcome

- Halfway into the fiscal year, the U.S. is once again behind on refugee admissions. That means thousands of families are still seeking safety and a new home. Join us asking the administration: #WhereRtheRefugees? #RefugeesWelcome
- The U.S. was once known as a beacon of hope for those fleeing persecution. Today, we are known for backing out of our responsibility to welcome the world's most vulnerable. #WhereRtheRefugees #RefugeesWelcome
- Congress: You must support the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Admissions have been cut to a historic low of 30,000 and it looks like they all won't make it. #WhereRtheRefugees #RefugeesWelcome
- Republicans and Democrats all agree: resettling refugees is part of who we are as a nation. Tell your member to support the refugee resettlement program, which is under attack by the Trump administration. #WhereRtheRefugees #RefugeesWelcome

### **Host a #WhereRtheRefugees Public Witness Event**

*Press conferences, interfaith vigils, actions, and foot washing ceremonies all make a difference.*

We must escalate public pressure on elected officials to press the administration to actually resettle at least 30,000 refugees, rather than only the 21,000 that they are on track to admit. Even small events, multiplied across the country, will send a powerful message to the Trump administration and Congress that welcoming immigrants and refugees is a moral issue that is important to the broader public, people of faith and community partners.

**Don't forget to put your event on the map!** To register or participate in an event near you, please visit: <https://www.weareallusa.org/events>. For We Are All America's #WhereRtheRefugees organizing tools, please [click here](#). For more resources, visit: [www.weareallusa.org/wherethererefugees](http://www.weareallusa.org/wherethererefugees).

#### **Steps to a successful public witness event:**

- Coordinate a public witness event with faith leaders, immigrants' rights groups, refugee resettlement agencies, immigrant leaders, community members, and if possible local elected leaders.
- Identify core leaders and speakers, including refugees to help plan and speak at the event.
- Consider inviting officials such as Representatives, Senators, City Council Members, the Mayor, etc.
- Be clear about your goals, what you want to accomplish, and how many people you hope will attend.
- Identify the best location for the vigil - somewhere central such as a symbolic memorial, state capitol, park or city hall.
- Apply for any permits needed for the location; reserve any equipment such as microphones, cameras, banners, candles, projectors; and make sure you can access electrical outlets.
- Choose a time of day best for attendance and media. For a press conference, the best times for media are between 10 AM and 1 PM. For a vigil, most live news reports take place between 5-7 PM.
- Promote the event through social media, public service announcements, flyers, websites, and congregation bulletins.
- Agree on messaging and [talking points](#).
- Bring signs that are consistent with your messaging and agreed upon ahead of time.
- Assign specific talking points to each speaker and ensure they have time limits.
- Host a preparation call before the event to run through the agenda and talking points with speakers.
- Invite the media by issuing a media advisory 1-2 days before your event, and following up with a press release after the event.
- Invite participants to write and call the White House and Congress, and to sign up for further actions.
- If you are able to get a number of organizations together, you could hold a 24 or 48 hour vigil outside the office of your Senator or Representative, signing up each organization with 2 hour blocks of time.

**The set-up for a vigil or foot washing ceremony.** Drawing on the faith traditions and rituals can be very powerful, raising the creative and dramatic tension. herein many Christians observe the tradition of foot

washing to show the importance of living out faith as humble servants. It would be a powerful visual to see footwashings or vigils happening during Holy Week.

- Ask clergy attending to wear collars, stoles, robes and any other appropriate religious attire.
- Make sure refugee leaders can tell their stories.
- Foot-washing of refugees can send a strong message that faith leaders care about refugees.
- Procession with candles to symbolic location.
- Lift up sacred texts and traditions.
- Highlight passages in scripture and present to Members of Congress.
- Collect and deliver prayers to your Senators and Representatives.
- Make visuals – photos, drawings, art, etc., that show the consequences of low refugee arrivals

\*\*\* SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY\*\*\*

**Date of Event, Time, Location**

**As Refugee Arrivals Hit Historic Low, (Faith/ Human Rights Group) Ask: Where Are the Refugees?**

***(Vigil/Rally) (Name of Town)(To ask the Administration to Fulfil FY18 Refugee Admissions Goal***

Your City Name, State Abbreviation – As the (City/Town Name) (Organization/Congregation) will host (event type). This administration has set the lowest refugee admissions goal in history - 30,000 - and is not even on track to meet this number. Faith leaders, refugee agencies and community partners ask the administration, “Where are the refugees?” They will be joined by XX (list other special guests, especially clergy or elected officials).

WHAT: Event type with faith and community leaders to welcome refugees

WHERE: Address of event

WHEN: Date and time of event

SPEAKERS: List of all speakers and their titles

DETAILS: Add event details such as security (if applicable), visuals (religious symbols, art pieces, etc.), and any other important event information.

## **Write Opinion Editorials & Letters to the Editor for Local Media Outlet**

You can also educate your community by writing Opinion Editorials (op-ed’s) and Letters to the Editor (LTEs). A well-placed piece in a local media outlet has the power to influence decision makers. [Click here](#) for the RCUSA Advocacy Toolkit for help with pitching & placing.

**Sample Opinion Editorial:**

### **Where are the Refugees?**

Today, 65 million people around the world are displaced, including 25 million refugees - the highest number in recorded history. Estimates [indicate](#) that a person is displaced every 20 minutes. However, when global need is at its highest, the Trump administration has quickly reversed our nation’s long history as a world leader in refugee protection and resettlement. After only allowing in about half of the 45,000 refugees designated for resettlement in fiscal year 2018, the administration set an all-time low refugee admissions goal for fiscal year 2019 at 30,000. In doing so, we are turning our back on the values of compassion and welcome we claim to represent.

Refugees face the [most rigorous](#) selection, security vetting and medical screening process of any traveler to the United States. Resettlement is reserved only for the most vulnerable refugees. While families remain separated and refugees wait - at times in very dangerous or unsafe regions - the administration has imposed a series of [refugee bans](#) that seek to dismantle refugee resettlement program, jeopardize our national security, and devastate families hoping to reunite with loved ones. We have a moral responsibility to fulfill our commitment to resettle at least 30,000 refugees this fiscal year and resettle at least 75,000 in fiscal year 2020.

[Insert local story of refugee here]

Refugees are contributing to our community and our local economy. Study after study show that refugees and immigrants create new businesses and new jobs. White House aides even tried to suppress a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [study](#), which found that refugees made a net contribution of \$63 billion to government revenue over the last decade.

This country was founded on the hard work, determination, and skills of generations of immigrants from all countries, religions, and backgrounds. We must not let our differences divide us, but instead strengthen us. However, this country also holds a history of discriminatory policies that have become moral stains on our country that we can never forget. These include slavery of African Americans, the genocide of Native Americans, rejection of Jewish refugees, and the Japanese internment camps. We cannot go back to these policies based on discrimination and hate. Exclusionary mindsets only lead to fear and hostility, neither of which have any place in our communities.

Congress has a critical role to hold the administration accountable to keeping its promise to tens of thousands of refugees still waiting to see if they will be resettled this year as they have been promised. After more than 24 months of countless security checks and years of living in a refugee camp, the administration needs to clear out the red tape that has been purposefully placed to gum up the system, and let the refugees be resettled now.

### **Sample Letter to the Editor:**

[Insert relative content to recent article in your newspaper on refugees]

Today, 65 million people around the world are displaced, including 25 million refugees - the highest number in recorded history. Estimates [indicate](#) that a person is displaced every 20 minutes. However, when global need is at its highest, the Trump administration has quickly reversed our nation's long history as a world leader in refugee protection and resettlement. The administration set an all-time low refugee admissions goal for fiscal year 2019 at 30,000 - turning our back on the values of compassion and welcome we claim to represent. Last year, the administration resettled less than half of its then historically low goal of 45,000. This is unacceptable and cannot happen again this year. We have a moral responsibility to fulfill our commitment to resettle all 30,000 refugees this fiscal year and 75,000 next year.

## **Engage State & Local Policy Makers to Pass Refugees Welcome Resolutions**

State and local policy makers have an important role to play in declaring welcome for refugees and immigrants. Welcome resolutions are official, public statements that a community supports refugees and immigrants - regardless of where they come from or what faith they practice. Together we can create a quilt of welcome resolutions that lift up local support and push back against the administration's attacks that are dismantling the refugee resettlement program. To contact your state and local officials, visit: [contactingcongress.org/local](https://contactingcongress.org/local) and [usa.gov/elected-officials](https://usa.gov/elected-officials). To tweet your state and local officials, click to find the twitter handles for your [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

### **Sample Local Welcome Resolution**

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE CITY/COUNTY OF **[NAME]** AS A WELCOMING **[CITY/COUNTY]** THAT CELEBRATES THE GROWING DIVERSITY OF ITS RESIDENTS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT REFUGEES, IMMIGRANTS, AND ALL NEWCOMERS ENHANCE THE CULTURE AND THE ECONOMY

WHEREAS, more than 68 million displaced people have been forced from their homes, more than any time in recorded history, including over 25 million refugees;

WHEREAS, by definition, refugees are people who have fled their country because they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

WHEREAS, resettlement provides safe haven in a third country when refugees cannot return home and cannot rebuild their lives in the country where they first fled due to lack of access to safety, shelter, health care, education, or protection;

WHEREAS, resettlement to the U.S. is available only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection – such as unaccompanied and other at-risk children, female-headed households, victims of torture, the physically disabled, and members of minority groups that are experiencing oppression in the host country (for example, religious minorities or LGBTI individuals) – and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting, and medical screening process;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is home to a diverse population of refugees and immigrants, adding to the economic strength and cultural richness of our community;

WHEREAS, organizations responsible for resettling refugees in our community, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in **[CITY]**;

WHEREAS, the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** has been an example of a hospitable and welcoming place to all newcomers, where the contributions of all are celebrated and valued;

WHEREAS, cities across the United States have declared themselves to be welcoming to refugees and immigrants, joining a national movement for creating an inclusive community;

WHEREAS, residents of **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** aspire to live up to our highest societal values of acceptance and equality, and treat newcomers with decency and respect, creating a vibrant community for all to live in;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE **[CITY/COUNTY]** OF **[NAME]**, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** is hereby declared a Welcoming City, and one that affirms the beauty and richness of our diversity, and one in which all are welcome, accepted, and appreciated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the **[CITY/COUNTY]** of **[NAME]** hereby urges other local and state communities to join us in a stronger national effort to resettle the most vulnerable refugees worldwide and help them integrate and thrive.

Adopted this the X day of **[MONTH YEAR]**.

**Plan an In-District Visit with Your Members of Congress from April 13th-28th**

Members of Congress will be in their home districts from **April 13th-28th**. Establishing and strengthening relationships with your Senators and Representatives are crucial to protecting refugee resettlement and holding the administration accountable to resettle at least 30,000 refugees this year and at least 75,000 next year. Every Senator and Representative has an office – often multiple offices – in their home state.

Find step-to-step instructions in the [RCUSA Toolkit](#) for setting up a local congressional visit, recruiting a powerful team, planning an effective meeting, and urging your Senators and Representative to be champions for refugees. The toolkit also has talking points and links to handouts that you can use for the meeting, as well as contact information for advocacy staff.

**Get a team together:** A team ideally includes resettlement staff, refugee leaders, faith leaders from different traditions, volunteers, other community leaders, etc. Be strategic in finding team members who best represent your community's call to affirm refugee resettlement and whom the Member may already know or respect. Your team should commit to building an ongoing relationship with the office. Check with the scheduler to see how many people their office can accommodate and be sure to plan well, so that you are focused on your message and everyone knows their specific roles.

**Learn about who represents your community in Congress:** Go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) to find out which Members of Congress represent you and your surrounding community. Their websites and a "Google" search will show how they have voted before and what they have said about refugees, as well as biographical sketches, campaign statements, past occupations, religion, political and social memberships, areas of interest and positions on other issues, all of which can inform your approach to the meeting.

**Have a plan:** Meet with the other participants to assign roles, including the facilitator, the personal story, specific points, and the "ask." Practice by role-playing before the meeting so that everyone feels comfortable and knows what to do. Review your talking points and prepare your leave behind materials. In order to show the broad support, and consider bringing resources contained in the RCUSA Toolkit and media clips of local events and fact sheets showing your community's support for refugee resettlement.

#### **Roles:**

*The Facilitator* will kick off the meeting by introducing the group, explaining the purpose for the meeting, and providing space for each person to briefly introduce themselves. The facilitator will also jump in if the meeting goes off-track and redirect the conversation.

*The Personal Story* is key to every meeting. Someone should be present who has either been directly impacted by the resettlement program, or has worked closely with impacted individuals. Telling these stories will show how people's lives are impacted and how your community would benefit from resettlement, as well as the negative consequences of anti-refugee proposals.

*Point People on Specific Issues:* There will be specific issues your group will want to discuss, which you should decide while planning the meeting.

*The Ask* is the critical part of the visit when you ask for the Member of Congress to hold the administration accountable to resettling at least 30,000 refugees in FY19 and setting the FY20 goal at at least 75,000. Listen carefully and ask for clarification if what they say is vague.

**Schedule a meeting:** Call your Member's local office to request a meeting (local office numbers can be found on their websites). Make sure to tell them how many other community members would like to attend. If the member is unavailable, ask to meet with staff who work on refugee issues. You may have to send an email or fill out an online form. Don't be discouraged if you need to follow-up for a response. Plan for a 30-45 minutes meeting and agree on speaking time with each speaker ahead of the meeting.