



COVID 19 and Refugee Resettlement Frequently Asked Questions

Credit: Vatican/Migrants and Refugees Section

What is the impact of COVID 19 on refugee resettlement to the United States?

There has been international impact from the COVID 19 global health pandemic. Given the global reach of COVID 19, refugees selected by the U.S. government to be resettled in the United States are also being impacted. On March 17, 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) [announced](#) that future refugee travel to the United States and other resettlement countries will be temporarily suspended for virtually all refugees.

When will the suspension of travel to the United States for refugees begin?

The temporary suspension of travel will begin on March 19, 2020.

How long is the suspension of travel to the United States for refugees?

The travel suspension period of suspension is to be temporary but will be “as long as it remains essential.” Every two weeks, beginning on April 7, 2020, the temporary travel suspension will be reviewed to determine whether the travel suspension is still essential.

Will there be exceptions to the temporary travel suspension for refugees?

Yes. Exceptions for travel will be made for refugees who are in “critical emergency” situations. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Why did UNHCR and IOM institute this temporary suspension of refugees travel to the United States?

Some resettlement countries have already halted refugee arrivals due to national limitations on health care due to the COVID 19 response. UNHCR has noted that refugee families who have been recently travelling have frequently been subject to extensive delays due to the COVID-19-related responses. Additionally, UNHCR is concerned that refugees face the risk of exposure on long international flights.

How many U.S.-bound refugees are impacted by the new temporary-travel suspension?

Since we do not know how long the suspension will last, we do not know the number for sure. But with a refugee ceiling of 18,000 for FY2020, we know that so far 7,162 refugees have arrived as of 3/12/2020. This means the remaining 10,838 refugees eligible to come may or may not be able to come by the end of the fiscal year 9/30/2020, depending on the length of the temporary travel suspension period and the number of individuals who can come as part of emergency cases.

How are USCCB and Catholic social service agencies and hospitals dealing with this operational pause?

The Catholic Church is committed to continue working closely with the Administration, local and state officials, local communities and refugee families to meet the health care needs of communities and refugee newcomers in this difficult world health environment.

How can I help support refugee families and stand in solidarity with refugee communities during this crisis?

- **Pray.** Please use and share this [prayer](#), issued by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in response to the coronavirus
- **Advocate for Refugees.** Learn more about supporting [legislation](#) that helps refugees and strengthen refugee resettlement
- **Remote Assistance.** This [resource](#) provides tips as to how you can assist refugees remotely during the COVID-19 epidemic
- **Look to Volunteer in Your Local Community.** If your locale has a [Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees \(POWIR\)](#) program, please reach out to them at mrspowir@usccb.org
- **Join Us.** [Sign Up](#) for Our JFI Newsletter to Learn More



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