

117TH CONGRESS
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S. RES. 684

Reaffirming the importance of the United States to promote the safety, health, and well-being of refugees and displaced persons.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 21, 2022

Mr. MENENDEZ (for himself, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. KAINÉ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. WARNOCK, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. COONS, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. CARDIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. SMITH, and Mr. BOOKER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Reaffirming the importance of the United States to promote the safety, health, and well-being of refugees and displaced persons.

Whereas June 20, 2022, is observed as “World Refugee Day”, a global event to honor refugees around the globe and celebrate the strengths and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group;

Whereas July 28, 2022, is the 71st anniversary of the signing of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,

done at Geneva July 28, 1951 (and made applicable by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at New York January 31, 1967 (19 UST 6223)), which defines the term “refugee” and outlines the rights of refugees and the legal obligations of states to protect them;

Whereas, in 2022, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (referred to in this preamble as “UNHCR”)—

(1) there are more than 100,000,000 displaced people who have been forced from their homes worldwide, more displaced people than ever before in recorded history, including more than 27,100,000 refugees and at least 53,200,000 internally displaced people, as of the end of 2021;

(2) 69 percent of the world’s refugees came from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, or Burma;

(3) there have been more than 7,500,000 border crossings from Ukraine since February 24, 2022; nearly 5,000,000 refugees from Ukraine have been recorded across Europe as of June 9, 2022; and nearly 12,800,000 people were internally displaced in Ukraine as of May 5, 2022;

(4) there are an estimated 2,700,000 registered Afghan refugees in the world, of whom nearly 2,100,000 are registered in Iran or Pakistan, in addition to another 3,500,000 Afghans who are internally displaced, having fled their homes searching for refuge within the country;

(5) more than 50 percent of the population of Syria (at least 13,500,000 people) have been displaced since the start of the conflict, either across the international border or within Syria, representing the largest displacement crisis in the world today;

(6) 1 out of every 4 people of concern to UNHCR lives in the Americas, which represents an increase from 1 out of every 6 in 2018;

(7) more than 6,000,000 Venezuelans have left their home country since 2014, representing the largest exodus in Latin America's recent history and one of the largest displacement crises in the world;

(8) children account for 31 percent of the world's population and 41 percent of all forcibly displaced people, millions of whom are unable to access basic services, including education; and

(9) 83 percent of all refugees are hosted by developing nations and fewer than 1 percent of vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement have had the opportunity due to lack of resettlement places;

Whereas thousands of our immigrant neighbors in the United States, including people from Ethiopia, Cameroon, Haiti, Mauritania, and South Sudan, face harm if deported to their home countries due to violent crime and political instability;

Whereas refugees are major contributors to local economies and serve as critical frontline healthcare professionals and essential workers combating the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide;

Whereas welcoming the oppressed and persecuted is a core 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, consistent with domestic and international law, all foreign nationals arriving in the United States, regardless

of their nationality, must be given an opportunity to seek asylum;

Whereas the United States must restore a humane and functioning asylum system in order to meet its obligations under domestic and international law with respect to those fleeing persecution;

Whereas the United States supports the UNHCR in its efforts to increase protection for LGBTQI+ refugees overseas and to support their global resettlement;

Whereas the United States Refugee Admissions Program, which was established in 1980, is a lifesaving pillar of global humanitarian efforts, advances United States foreign policy goals, and supports regional host countries;

Whereas resettlement is an essential part of a comprehensive strategy to respond to refugee crises, promote responsibility sharing, and strengthen United States national security by ensuring access to legal migration pathways;

Whereas the infrastructure for the United States refugee resettlement pipeline has been dismantled, limiting access to the United States Refugee Admissions Program globally;

Whereas for the first time in recent history, following the destruction of the United States refugee resettlement pipeline, large numbers of desperate migrants from as far as Cameroon and Ukraine have sought refuge from persecution at the United States border with Mexico;

Whereas in fiscal year 2021, the United States only settled 11,500 refugees, the lowest figure since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, and as of May 31, 2022, the United States had only resettled 12,641 refugees in fiscal year 2022;

Whereas during the first 8 months of fiscal year 2022, only 5,070 refugees were admitted from Africa, only 1,296 refugees were admitted from Latin America and the Caribbean, and only 1,060 refugees were admitted from East Asia;

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

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

Whereas, according to New American Economy, refugees contributed an estimated \$269,100,000,000 to the national economy between 2005 and 2014, far surpassing the \$206,100,000,000 spent by the United States to assist refugees during that period; and

Whereas refugees integrate and quickly become self-sufficient by paying taxes, supporting local commerce, joining the workforce, and creating jobs: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) reaffirms the bipartisan commitment of the
3 United States to promote the safety, health, and
4 well-being of millions of refugees and asylum seek-
5 ers, including the education of refugee children and
6 displaced persons who flee war, persecution, or tor-
7 ture in search of protection, peace, hope, and free-
8 dom;

9 (2) recognizes those individuals who have risked
10 their lives working, either individually or for non-

1 governmental organizations and international agen-
2 cies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner
3 for Refugees (referred to in this resolution as
4 “UNHCR”), to provide lifesaving assistance and
5 protection for people displaced around the world;

6 (3) reaffirms the imperative to fully restore
7 United States asylum protections by terminating
8 policies that deny access to asylum or externalize
9 our asylum obligations;

10 (4) underscores the need for the United States
11 Government to fully rebuild our Nation’s refugee re-
12 settlement infrastructure in order to strengthen na-
13 tional and regional security and encourage inter-
14 national solidarity with host countries; and

15 (5) calls upon the Secretary of State, Secretary
16 of Homeland Security, and the United States Am-
17 bassador to the United Nations—

18 (A) to continue providing robust funding
19 for refugee protection overseas and resettlement
20 in the United States;

21 (B) to revive the United States inter-
22 national leadership role in responding to dis-
23 placement crises with humanitarian assistance,
24 and restore its leadership role in the protection
25 of vulnerable refugee populations that endure

1 gender based violence, human trafficking, perse-
2 cution, and violence against religious minorities,
3 forced conscription, genocide, and exploitation;

4 (C) to work in partnership with the inter-
5 national community to find solutions to existing
6 conflicts and prevent new conflicts from begin-
7 ning;

8 (D) 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 (E) to continue to alleviate pressures on
14 frontline refugee host countries that absorb the
15 majority of the world's refugees through hu-
16 manitarian and development aid;

17 (F) to respond to the global refugee crisis
18 by meeting robust refugee admissions goals;
19 and

20 (G) to reaffirm the goals of “World Ref-
21 ugee Day” and reiterate the United States
22 strong commitment to protect refugees and asy-
23 lum seekers who live without material, social, or
24 legal protections.

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