

The Iraqi Refugee Crisis

Between 4 and 5 million Iraqis - 15 percent of the population - are currently displaced. Returns have been minimal and are usually a response to push factors. The U.S. admitted only 1,608 Iraqi refugees in FY 2007. With one month remaining in FY 2008, it has admitted 10,998 of the 12,000 it has promised to resettle.



Iraqi refugees wait to register at the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Douma, Syria, June 2007.

"I live a daily nightmare. I lost a close relative. I lost my future. I lost hope. I lost everything, except that sense of fear."

Iraqi refugee and former interpreter, January 8, 2007

The Crisis¹

Iraqi refugees outside Iraq	2.2 million
Iraqis displaced inside Iraq	2.77 million²
Iraqis fleeing their homes each month	60,000³
Iraqi refugees in Jordan	450,000-500,000
Iraqi refugees in Syria	1.2 – 1.4 million
Iraqi refugees in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, and Gulf Countries	333,000 – 357,000
Percentage of internally displaced Iraqis that are women and children	82%
Iraqi refugees registered with UNHCR that have special needs, including medical needs and women at risk	More than 33%⁴

The U.S. Response

To the crisis

On October 10, 2007, Assistant Sec. of State Ellen Sauerbrey stated, "We will resettle 12,000 this year. And I have no doubt that we will make that goal." If the U.S. can meet the goal, it will have built the capacity to resettle a greater number next year, more commensurate with its moral obligation.

Iraqi refugees admitted in FY 2006	202
Iraqi refugees admitted in FY 2007	1,608
Iraqi refugees the U.S. has promised to admit in FY 2008	12,000
Iraqi refugees admitted in the first eleven months of FY 2008	10,998⁵
Number of refugees UNHCR has referred to the U.S.	30,000⁶
Time it takes the U.S. to process an Iraqi refugee's application	8 - 10 months⁷

Throughout history

Throughout history, the U.S. has demonstrated the capacity to bring hundreds of thousands to safety in short time frames.

Cuban refugees resettled by the U.S. from 1959 to 1962	200,000⁸
Europeans displaced by WW II and resettled by the U.S. from 1948 to 1952	More than 250,000⁹
Vietnamese refugees resettled by the U.S. from May to December 1975	131,000¹⁰
Soviet refugees resettled by the U.S. from 1980 to 1991	154,630¹¹
Bosnian refugees resettled by the U.S. from 1993 to 2003	143,000¹²
Kosovar refugees resettled by the U.S. in FY 1999	14,156¹³

¹ UNHCR, Iraq Situation Update, March 2008 (all figures in graph except as noted). Estimates differ. The official figure provided by the Syrian government is 1.5 million.

² IDP Working Group Update, March 24, 2008 ([http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SHIG-7D6DBL-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFFiles2008.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SHIG-7D6DBL-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf))

³ International Rescue Committee, December 2007 (<http://www.theirc.org/resources/2007/irc-policy-paper-uprooted-iraqis-121307.pdf>)

⁴ UNHCR, Estimating the Needs of Iraqi Refugees in the Middle East (<http://www.rcusa.org/uploads///pdfs/UNHCR%20Addendum%2002-26-08.pdf>)

⁵ U.S. Department of State (<http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/language/en-US/Default.aspx>).

⁶ UNHCR, January 1, 2007, through August 2008. (<http://www.rcusa.org/index.php?page=unhcr-documents>)

⁷ Ambassador Crocker's Cable "Iraqi Refugee Processing: Can We Speed It Up?" (Available at <http://209.212.64.43:777/asylum/lifeline/docs/crocker-cable-0907.pdf>)

⁸ Library of Congress (<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/cuban5.html>).

⁹ American Foreign Service Association (<http://www.afsa.org/fsi/nov07/cybernotes.pdf>)

¹⁰ International Rescue Committee (<http://www.theirc.org/news/refugee-scandal0614.html>).

¹¹ Migration Policy Institute (<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=585>).

¹² U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (<http://www.state.gov/g/prm/rls/fs/44171.htm>).

¹³ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (http://www.state.gov/www/global/prm/fy2000_budget.pdf)