

Presidential determination on refugee admissions signed amid highest level of forced displacement ever recorded

WASHINGTON - Earlier this year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees announced that the total number of forcibly displaced persons in the world has reached 100 million for the first time in history, a number exacerbated by food insecurity, climate change, and ongoing conflicts. On September 27, President Biden signed a Presidential Determination (PD) of 125,000 refugee admissions to the United States for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. The PD serves as the target for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). The number authorized by the President for FY 2023 is the same PD set for FY 2022, which ends on September 30. The number of refugees resettled in the United States over the past year will surpass 20,000 for the first time since 2019, even while excluding large numbers of Afghans and Ukrainians who have entered the United States through alternative pathways, such as humanitarian parole.

Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, welcomed the announcement of the new PD, stating, "This is an ambitious and worthwhile goal for our nation, which has benefitted from many blessings throughout its history, including the generations of refugees who have already enriched American communities. My brother bishops and I remain fully committed to our Church's centuries-old tradition of welcoming newcomers in this country, especially those fleeing the devastations of war, violence, persecution, political instability, and natural disasters. As we embrace this ministry given to us by Jesus, we look to the President and Congress for their continued support of a robust resettlement program, consistent with our national values. Let us truly strive toward this goal of resettling 125,000 refugees."

The USRAP was established by the Refugee Act of 1980. Since its creation, the USCCB has served as one of nine national resettlement agencies collaborating with the U.S. government to carry out the program. To achieve this, the USCCB partners with a dedicated network of Catholic Charities agencies and other community-based organizations across the country, from Portland, Maine, to Anchorage, Alaska. In its more than 40 years of existence, USRAP has provided lifesaving protection to almost 3.5 million refugees—about one-third of whom have been aided by the USCCB network. Through this work, the Catholic Church in the United States answers Christ's call to welcome the stranger and carries out the Church's commitment to protecting the life and dignity of every human person, from the moment of conception to natural death.