

*The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.* *Leviticus 19:34*

Millions of refugees around the world are forced to flee their homes due to violence and persecution, and today we are facing the worst displacement crisis in global history with more than 65 million displaced persons worldwide including over 21 million refugees. Following World War II, the U.S. became the world leader in welcoming refugees who seek safety from persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Over time, the system has evolved to have a strong infrastructure grounded in public-private partnerships, where communities across the United States have recognized the important economic and social benefits of resettling refugees, and are active in helping them integrate and thrive in their new homes.

Less than one percent of refugees are ever resettled to a third country. When provided the resources and support they need to rebuild their lives, refugees have opened businesses, revitalized towns, and contribute economically, socially, and spiritually to our communities. Many refugees become U.S. citizens and see their children graduate from U.S. schools. Among communities of faith across traditions, our shared call to “welcome the stranger” has brought us together in support of this life-saving program and the protection of those who seek peace and safety within our borders.

### Core values

- Champion our asylum system so that children, women, and men have access to the protection they need and are not forced to return to deadly or dangerous conditions.
- Build inclusive communities that strengthen our capacity to welcome refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children.
- Invest in expanding protections for refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children in the United States and abroad, and while addressing root causes of their displacement.
- Demonstrate leadership to improve the collective U.S. and international response to the largest displacement crisis in global history.



### The face of refugee resettlement

Norah Bagirinka became a refugee after surviving the Rwandan Genocide. After she survived, she realized that God had given her another chance to live. To give back, she devoted her life to advocating for women and children and worked at several international organizations including directing a sexual and gender-based violence program with International Rescue Committee. In 2007, Norah’s asylum case was approved and she moved to Columbus, Ohio, where she founded Refugee Women in Action, a nonprofit organization where she guides, supports, and provides life skills to refugee families.

Norah graduated from Ohio Christian University with a B.A. in health care management and currently works as a community outreach specialist for the Health Services Advisory Group. Norah was recently appointed to serve as the Delegate for the state of Ohio with the Refugee Congress where she seeks to champion domestic and international refugee issues. Norah has raised two of her children through college. One is currently a business owner and the other will be graduating with a nursing degree in December 2017. She became a naturalized U.S. citizen in March of 2017 and a proud home owner a few months later. She feels she has achieved her American dream.

*And what ails you that you fight not in the way of God, and for the weak and oppressed--men, women, and children--who cry out: "Our Lord! Bring us forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and appoint for us from Thee a protector, and appoint for us from Thee a helper.* *Quran 4:75*

## How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?

Our diverse faith traditions compel us to welcome one another with love and compassion, regardless of place of birth, religion, or ethnicity. All of us are called to love our neighbor – all of our neighbors. Generations of immigrants and refugees have made this country stronger through their ideas, hard work, resilience, and traditions. All communities fleeing to safety – whether they are Syrian, Honduran, Congolese, or anyone else forced to leave because of who they are or what they believe – deserve to be treated with dignity. We recommend the following proposals that provide opportunities for refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children to thrive and that ensure justice and protection for all.

**Invest in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program to protect more refugees each year and support refugee protection overseas.** We are facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history, and resettlement in the United States is one of the key ways that the U.S. can lead by example and encourage other countries to help refugees. Many of the countries temporarily hosting refugees are overwhelmed by the numbers of displaced individuals in need of protection and have closed their borders and implemented policies against those seeking asylum. U.S. leadership is critical to ensure a response by the United States and international community is commensurate with today's global refugee crisis, as well as to support stability and security in countries and regions faced with large-scale forced displacement.

**Improve access to protection for all vulnerable populations.** The United States has moral and legal obligations under international and U.S. law to ensure that individuals seeking protection are not returned to their traffickers and others who seek to exploit them. Asylum-seekers, unaccompanied children, and immigrants, including those paroled into the United States, deserve the opportunity to seek safety and rebuild their lives. It is imperative that we keep intact the existing protections for unaccompanied children, as weakening protections undermine our moral authority and increase vulnerabilities to exploitation. Adequate resources are also needed to ensure our communities are in the best position to help them integrate and succeed.

**Expand public-private partnerships at the local, state, and federal levels to mobilize continued community-driven support for refugee resettlement.** Communities of faith stand ready to welcome more refugees, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children into their hearts and their congregations. We urge our elected leaders to reflect the best of our nation and live out our American values of compassion, hospitality, and welcome.

*In opening our communities to refugees from persecution in other lands, our nation shows forth our core values of respecting human rights and dignity. As bishop of a community who has welcomed as friend and neighbor refugees from places as diverse as Sudan, Iraq, and Myanmar, I know first-hand the gift of life that we provide as well as the great gift we receive from those who come to live among us.*  
Bishop James Mathes, The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

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21 MILLION REFUGEES

Worldwide and growing according to UNHCR estimates

1% OF REFUGEES

Will be permanently resettled

60 MILLION PEOPLE

Forcibly displaced worldwide