



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **World Relief Calls for Greater Protection For Persecuted Populations Seeking Refuge in the U.S. With Release Of Lowest Recorded Numbers of Resettled Refugees In U.S. History**

BALTIMORE – Today, [newly released](#) data shows that the United States resettled the lowest number of refugee admissions in U.S. history at a total of 11,411 refugees in Fiscal Year 2021. World Relief continues to call on the Biden administration to sign the Presidential Determination for FY22 of 125,000 and follow through on this commitment to refugees by strengthening the program and providing the resources that are necessary to 125,000 refugees in FY22. While a refugee ceiling of 125,000 for Fiscal Year 2022 is a significant increase from the historic low ceiling set last year at this time of just 15,000 refugees for FY2021, much work remains to be done to rebuild the program to have the U.S. lead again in refugee resettlement.

“This past year’s refugee resettlement numbers show the lowest number of refugees resettled in the history of the U.S. refugee resettlement program,” **says Myal Green, president and CEO of World Relief.** “The U.S. is taking in fewer refugees than ever at a time when there are more refugees in the world than at any point in recorded history, which is unacceptable. The Biden administration will need to prioritize creating more efficient and equitable methods of processing for refugees in order to reach the ceiling of 125,000 refugees for the fiscal year that’s just begun”

The global pandemic highlighted the clear vulnerability of persecuted populations and aggravated existing conditions of hardship for the world’s refugees and other displaced people. It also presented a barrier to the U.S. government’s process of processing refugees overseas. But the larger factors influencing the stark decline in refugee admissions include the historically low refugee ceiling and the slowdown in overseas processing as well as the U.S. refugee resettlement infrastructure that preceded the global pandemic. In order to rebuild the refugee resettlement program to return to historically normal admissions level, the Biden administration will need to continue to invest in rebuilding both the overseas and domestic components of the program.

Refugees admitted to the U.S. have, by definition, fled a credible fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, political opinion, national origin or social group. In recent years, World Relief has sought to particularly highlight the decline in the number of refugees persecuted on account of their status as religious minorities, including partnering with Open Doors USA last year to publish a report, “[Closed Doors: Persecuted Christians and the U.S. Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Processes](#),” that documented a roughly 90% or greater decline in the number of persecuted Christians and various other religious minorities resettled since 2015.

After the publication of this report, the State Department [stopped](#) making the religious affiliation of resettled refugees publicly available, making it difficult to precisely track the further decline in the



resettlement of specific religious minority groups. But as the overall number of refugees admitted has continued to decline from FY 20 to FY 21, the number of persecuted religious minorities able to access safety and religious freedom in the U.S. as refugees has clearly declined as well. From the ten countries [identified](#) by the Secretary of State as “countries of particular concern” for severe violations of religious freedom — including Burma, Iran and Pakistan — just 1,271 refugees (of all religious traditions) arrived in FY 21, **56%** fewer than in FY 20 and **93%** fewer refugees from those countries than in FY 16.

“For decades, the United States led the world in refugee resettlement, but the precedent set by U.S. policy over the last five years, both in terms of refugee resettlement and asylum, has marred our global reputation as a safe haven for persecuted people,” **said World Relief U.S. director of church mobilization and advocacy Matthew Soerens.** “We are praying that the United States will quickly step back into the position of welcoming more refugees, whether they are persecuted for their faith, their ethnicity, their protest of tyrannical governments, their affiliation with the U.S. military in Afghanistan or Iraq or any other reason.”

World Relief thanks the Biden administration for setting the refugee ceiling at 125,000—the highest since 1993—and urges continued leadership and investment in both overseas processing and in rebuilding the resettlement infrastructure within the U.S. so that resettlement organizations have the capacity to welcome and serve 125,000 refugees, in addition to the many Afghans being admitted with parole or with approved Special Immigrant Visas who do not count toward this ceiling.

“We have an uphill battle ahead repairing our refugee resettlement program. But setting the refugee ceiling at 125,000 sets the right framework in which we can continue to expand protections to those fleeing persecution overseas. We urge President Biden to sign the Presidential Determination as quickly as possible and to continue the critical interagency work that is necessary to build both federal and broad public support to help refugees arriving this fiscal year.” **said World Relief senior vice president of policy and advocacy Jenny Yang.**

World Relief offices around the country are eager and ready to welcome more individuals who have fled persecution in their countries of origin. As World Relief staff and volunteers continue to welcome refugees, the most urgent needs are housing and additional volunteers and funding.

### **About World Relief**

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world’s greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we’ve partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable. Learn more at [worldrelief.org](http://worldrelief.org).

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