



Refugee Journey: Syria



#itsnotagame

Refugee Journey Guide

An educational activity about life as a Syrian refugee for youth and adults (age 12+)



Prepare

You will need:

- Copies of the graphics (optional: enlarge and mount)
- Bible verses on page 2 printed as a handout
- Copies of “backpack” cards located on page 9 and 10 of this book. Print enough for your group – be sure to have some of each color. If printing in black and white, use markers or crayons to indicate color.
- Chairs, easels, or wall space to set up the graphics at stations

Print each of the graphics included in this packet on one sheet of paper each. You may want to enlarge the graphics if you are able, or you might want to mount them on poster board to give them some stability for hanging or propping up.

Create a space to gather and begin. It may be a table, a grouping of chairs, or, if possible, a tent. This will be the “refugee camp” where participants will learn about the Syrian refugee crisis and begin their journey.

Using the graphics, create stations around the room. Most stations will have only one graphic, but note that there are some that have 2 or more. Graphics can be placed on tables, taped to chairs, or hung on walls. Be sure the graphics remain in order. Optional: use tape (gaffers tape or painters tape works best and will not leave residue) on the floor to mark the path from one station to the next.

Gather

Welcome your refugees to the refugee camp. You will begin with a Bible study about welcoming the stranger. Start by reading the Bible verses. You may choose to print them and cut them into strips so individuals can read them, or you may print a sheet of all the verses for each person. Have volunteers read each Bible verse. Once all verses have been read, discuss the questions at the side of the page. If you have time and want to dig deeper, read and discuss the additional Bible verses offered on the following pages. In addition, explore the resources offered on www.globalministries.org/refugeejourney.

Welcoming the Stranger: What Does the Bible Say?

Leviticus 19:33-34

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Matthew 2: 13-15a

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you: for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.”

Matthew 25: 34-37a, 40

Then this king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when ...?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

Hebrews 13:2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Consider these Questions:

1. What are some of the central messages conveyed in these scriptures?
2. How does God view strangers? How does God expect us to treat strangers and aliens?
3. Why did Joseph take Mary and their child, Jesus, into Egypt? How important was it for them to have a place such as Egypt to go to?
4. Who in the Bible was a refugee?* What were they running from? How were they received in the countries to which they fled? How were their circumstances similar to or different from those of modern refugees?
5. Jesus identifies with those in need. How are we to respond?
6. How do these scriptures relate to church involvement in refugee ministries?

* Jesus, David, Moses, Paul, Israelites, early church believers, the Apostle John ...

From the study guide to the United Church of Christ video “In the Eyes of a Stranger.”

Additional Bible Verses About Refugees and Migration

Use these verses for additional study and discussion as time and interest allow.

Genesis 3:22-24

Adam and Eve are forced out of the Garden.

Genesis 7 and 8

Noah builds an ark and takes refuge from the flood.

Genesis 12:1

The call of Abram: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

Genesis 12:10

“Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land.”

Genesis 19

Lot takes his family and flees Sodom.

Genesis 23

Abraham is a stranger and an alien in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 46:1-7

Jacob moves his family to Egypt to escape the famine and reunite with Joseph.

Genesis 47:1-6

Joseph brings his brothers to Pharaoh and they are welcomed and given jobs.

Exodus 1:8-14

Joseph’s generation is gone, and the Egyptians oppress the Israelites. “Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor.”

Exodus 1:15-2:10

Pharaoh orders all the Hebrew boy babies to be killed, but Moses is hidden and is saved by Pharaoh’s daughter.

Exodus 12:37-39

The Israelites were driven out of Egypt so fast they had no time to make provisions and had to bake unleavened cakes of bread.

Exodus 12:49 and Leviticus 24:22

“There shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.”

Exodus 22:21

Moses gives God’s law: “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”

Leviticus 19:9-10 and 23:22

Moses gives God’s law: “You shall not strip your vineyards bare...leave them for the poor and the alien.”

Leviticus 19:33-34 and 24:22

When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

Leviticus 24:23

Moses receives God’s law: “With me you are but aliens and tenants.”

Numbers 9:14 and 15:15-16

“...you shall have one statute for both the resident alien and the native.”

Additional Bible Verses About Refugees and Migration

continued

Numbers 35 and Joshua 20

The Lord instructs Moses to give cities of refuge to the Levites so that when the Israelites must flee into Canaan they may have cities of refuge given to them.

Deuteronomy 1:16

“Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien.”

Deuteronomy 6:10-13

The people of Israel are made aware that the land had come to them as a gift from God and they were to remember that they were once aliens.

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

“For the Lord your God...loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and 26:12-13

Tithing was begun, in part, for resident aliens.

Deuteronomy 24:14

“You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land...”

Deuteronomy 24:17-18

“You shall not deprive a resident alien...of justice.”

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

Leave sheaf, olives, grapes for the alien.

Deuteronomy 26:5

A wandering Aramean was my ancestor...

Deuteronomy 27:19

“Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien...of justice.”

I Chronicles 22:1-2

Aliens were important in building the temple.

I Chronicles 29:14-15

David praises God: “We are aliens and transients before you...”

II Chronicles 2:17-18

Solomon took a census of all the aliens and assigned them work.

Psalms 105

Remembering their sojourn: “When they were few in number, of little account, and strangers in it, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people...”

Psalms 137:1-6

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept...How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”

Psalms 146:9

“The Lord watches over the strangers...”

Ecclesiastes 4:1

“Look, the tears of the oppressed—with no one to comfort them.”

Isaiah 16:4

Be a refuge to the outcasts of Moab.

Jeremiah 7:5-7

“If you do not oppress the alien...then I will dwell with you in this place...”

Jeremiah 22:3-5

Do no wrong or violence to the alien.

Ezekiel 47:21-22

The aliens shall be to you as citizens, and shall also be allotted an inheritance.

Additional Bible Verses About Refugees and Migration

continued

Zechariah 7:8-10

Do not oppress the alien.

Malachi 3:5

The messenger will bear witness against those who thrust aside the alien.

Matthew 2:13-15

Jesus and parents flee Herod's search for the child.

Matthew 5:10-11

"Blessed are those who are persecuted."

Matthew 25:31-46

"...I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Luke 3:11

"Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none..."

Luke 4:16-21

"...Bring good news to the poor...release to the captives...sight to the blind...let the oppressed go free."

Romans 12:13

"Mark of the true Christian: "...Extend hospitality to strangers..."

II Corinthians 8:13-15

"It is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need..."

Ephesians 2:11-22

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God."

Hebrews 11

"By faith Abraham...set out for a place...not knowing where he was going."

Hebrews 13:1-2

"...show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels..."

James 2:5

"Has not God chosen the poor in the world..."

James 2:14-17

"What good is it...if you say you have faith but do not have works?"

I John 3:18

"...Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."

I John 4:7-21

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God..." We love because God first loved us."

Refugees and the Syrian Crisis

Background

The crisis in Syria dates back to the early days of 2011, when peaceful protesters expressed their hopes for political and economic reforms, in the spirit of the so-called Arab Spring that was sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. The situation became violent within a few months. Since then, more than 500,000 Syrians have been killed, half of the Syrian population has been forced from their homes — either displaced internally or as refugees in neighboring countries, Europe and beyond—and hopes for a resolution of the conflict remain dim.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ have been involved in response to the crisis since the beginning of the conflict, and continue to be involved. Our response includes prayers and education, advocacy for an end to violence and a responsible US role, and support for the work of partners in the Middle East who continue to provide humanitarian aid to those in need.

Setup

Have the info posters printed out and either hung in the room near your gathering place, or placed on the tables. Ask volunteers to read each one aloud. It may help to physically move from poster to poster, especially if you have young people in your group.

1

Refugee

Informational Poster

Ask a volunteer to read the definition from the poster.

Words to Share

It is important to note that in order to be given refugee status a displaced person has to go through the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process, which is conducted by the government of the country of asylum or

the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees are entitled to basic protections under the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention and other international agreements. By law, refugees cannot be sent back to countries where their lives would be in danger.

Discuss

If refugees cannot be sent back, where should they go?

Why should refugees be treated differently than other kinds of migrants?

2

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Informational Poster

Ask a volunteer to read the definition.

Emphasize that IDPs differ from refugees in that they are displaced within the borders of their country while refugees have fled their country. IDPs have not crossed an international border. While they may have fled for similar reasons as refugees, IDPs stay within their own country and remain under the protection of its government, even if that government is the reason for their displacement. As a result, these people are among the most vulnerable in the world.

Discuss

Can you think of any examples of Internally Displaced People, past or present?

3

Migrant

Informational Poster

Ask a volunteer to read the definition.

Words to Share

Countries are free to deport *migrants* who arrive without legal papers, which they cannot do with *refugees* under the 1951 convention. Migrants are

particularly vulnerable to human rights abuses like terrible working conditions, abuse, forced labor, and trafficking.

Discuss

How do you understand the difference between migrants and refugees?

4 Refugee Stats

Informational poster

Ask a volunteer to read the statistics.

Discuss

Do these numbers surprise you? Why or why not?

5 Violence Erupts in Syria

Informational poster

The Syrian Crisis

Consider sharing some of the video resources on www.globalministries.org/refugeejourney to help understand how the crisis began.

Words to Share

Violence has occurred throughout Syria. Due to limited travel options, many refugees are likely to travel to the country closest to the place they are fleeing. Bordering on northern Syria, Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees at 3.6 million as of Sept 2020. Take a look at the country of Lebanon on the map and notice it's size relative to nearby countries. Note Lebanon's population compared to the Syrian refugee population. One out of every 7 people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. The almost 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon (plus thousands more not registered) are in addition to refugees from other conflicts (Palestinian and some Iraqi) already living in Lebanon.

In comparison, as of December 2019, the U.S. (population 328 million) has accepted almost 25,000 Syrian refugees since the crisis began in

2011. Syrian refugees accounted for less than 1% of refugees admitted into the U.S. in 2019.

As you consider these numbers, keep in mind that it is estimated that 50% of Syrian refugees are children. Half the children of Syria are not attending school. Refugee children are susceptible to disease due to poor sanitation and cold weather. Many refugee children have to work to support their families. Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in unfamiliar and overcrowded camps.

Discuss

What do you notice about the numbers of refugees compared to population in the countries surrounding Syria?

Where would you go if you had to flee your home state? How would you get there?

After reflecting on the Bible verses, what are your thoughts about the numbers of Syrian refugees accepted into the US?

6 Desperate Choices

Informational poster

Consider sharing some of the video resources on www.globalministries.org/refugeejourney.

Discuss

What would you do if you were a Syrian?

7 Life in a Refugee Camp

Informational poster

Words to Share

Many of us imagine refugee camps as tent cities, but in reality most refugees live in cities under very poor conditions. Refugees often do not have the right to work and children are not permitted to attend schools in the host country. Refugees flee with whatever they can carry and lack basic provisions. In the camps, water and food are rationed, makeshift schools are overcrowded, and medical aid is inadequate.

Discuss

What do you think refugees do as they wait in refugee camps? What would you do if you had to wait in a refugee camp?

8 Refugee Journey: Syria Journey Station

Migrate the group to the first journey station poster.

Words to Share

It's now time for us to leave the refugee camp and begin our journey.

Many refugees travel with smart phones so that they can learn from others making the same journey about weather, best routes, and border control. Also, many refugees bring with them their diplomas and certifications as Syrian refugees are often well-educated professionals.

9 Start Here Journey Station

Leader reads the instructions and participants take backpack cards and fill them out. It may be helpful to have a small table here for backpack cards, pens, and a space for participants to write.

As participants think of what to bring, remind them that the items need to fit in a backpack or be carried. Their family will be traveling with them and does not need to be included on the list. You may want to point out that pets are a liability and that if you bring a pet, you will need to bring food and water as your other items, limiting what you can bring for you and your family to survive. Additionally, as a refugee it is almost impossible to cross a border with an animal.

Once all participants have their backpack cards filled in, move to Journey Station 2.

10 Instructions Journey Station

Leader reads the instructions for each backpack color.

Words to Share

From here, you are each on your own journey. Follow the instructions for your backpack card color. When finished, return to the “refugee camp” area.

11 Turkey Journey Station

12 Raft Deaths Journey Station

13 Greece Journey Station

14 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Journey Station

Leader may consider leaving this panel out depending on the age of your participants.

15 Western Balkans Journey Station

16 Western Europe Journey Station

17 North America Journey Station

18 Screening Process Journey Station

Conclusion

Once participants gather back at the “refugee camp,” engage in a discussion about the experience. Use the guiding questions here if needed.

Words to Share

- What surprised you during this experience?
- What were your feelings?
- What challenged your perception of refugees? What validated your perception?
- What would you like to share about the experience?

19 What are the UCC and Disciples doing? Journey Station

20 What Can I Do? Journey Station

Share the posters about what the UCC and Disciples are doing and what you can do. Discuss what you as a group can do. Ask those who feel comfortable to share how they feel called to respond.

Backpack Cards

Print enough of these pages to have cards for all your participants



Write down 5 things you'd bring with you if you were forced to leave home quickly and didn't know when you'd be able to return. The 5 things must be able to fit into a backpack.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



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5. _____



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Posters for Display

The following pages should be printed and used in conjunction with the booklet.



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Refugee

[ref-yoo-jee]



A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, and violence.

Refugees could be persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal, and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. Climate change is a growing reason people flee their homes.



Internally Displaced Persons



Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are people who have been forced to leave home, but remain somewhere within the borders of their country, hoping to return home when the situation improves.

Most people flee with the barest of essentials and must soon find food, shelter, and clothing to survive. Some move to other towns or cities where they have family or friends with whom they can stay. Many are forced to live on the road, in the open, or under temporary barriers to the elements. Most need humanitarian assistance, but sometimes can't be reached due to fighting.



Migrant

[mī-grənt]



Anyone who moves from one country to another is considered a migrant unless they are specifically fleeing war or persecution. Migrants may be fleeing dire poverty, or may be well-off and merely seeking better opportunities, or may be migrating to join relatives who have gone before them.



Refugee Stats



5,562,904

refugees from Syria who have registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of September 2020.

6,600,000

internally displaced Syrians in need of assistance as of April 19, 2018.

2,980,000

Syrians in hard-to-reach areas as of April 19, 2018

26,000,000

refugees in the world as of June 19, 2020, the highest number of refugees in history.

79,500,000

forcibly displaced people worldwide as of June 18, 2020, including refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and asylum seekers.

5,600,000

Palestinian refugees in the world as of June 18, 2020, the largest refugee population.



Violence Erupts in Syria



Since conflict broke out in 2011 between the Syrian government and opposition groups demanding reforms, over 500,000 Syrians have been killed and more than half of the country's 23 million people have been uprooted from their homes.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that around 5.6 million Syrians have registered as refugees in neighboring countries while 6.6 million are estimated to be internally displaced within Syria. Even those who had previously come to Syria for help, such as Iraqi and Palestinian refugees, have now been forced to seek safety in other countries.

Country Population Syrian Refugees

Turkey	82 million	3.6 million
Jordan	11 million	659,673
Lebanon	5.5 million	879,598
Egypt	104 million	130,047
Iraq	39 million	243,011

*Country populations estimated July 2020 (CIA World Fact Book) Refugee totals September 2020 (UNHCR)



Desperate Choices

Should we stay or should we go?



Violence and destruction have left more than half of Syria's population vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance. Homes and infrastructure have been destroyed and basic services have been reduced, making routine life and work impossible. Syria's developed economy and civil society have been completely disrupted.

People living in Syria face desperate choices:

- remain where they are and risk danger
- flee for areas of the country less marred by violence
- seek refuge in a nearby country that may not welcome them and may prove to be just as violent and unstable

What would you do?



Life in a Refugee Camp



Refugee camps are generally near borders and far from urban areas, which leave refugees isolated and dependent on the goodwill of the host country and humanitarian organizations.

However, not all people who have registered as refugees live in refugee camps. Many actually live in cities, towns, and villages, forcing them to live in poverty due to high costs of living. In the countries bordering Syria, refugees don't have the right to work and are dependent on the host country government and humanitarian organizations for food, shelter, and other necessities.





Refugee Journey: Syria



**START
HERE**

Begin your refugee experience here

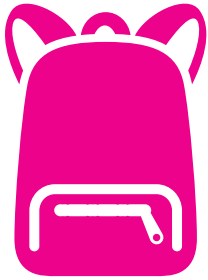
Grab a backpack card.

Write down 5 things you'd bring with you if you were forced to leave home quickly and didn't know when you'd be able to return. The 5 things must be able to fit into a backpack.

Go to the next station to see what Syrian refugees experience on their journey to escape war and violence.



Your journey as a refugee starts now



If you have a pink backpack, you have fled from your home to a refugee camp in a neighboring country where you decide to stay until the war is over and you can return home. Your journey ends here, but please feel free to explore the other journeys.



If you have a blue backpack, you have fled from your home, but were unable to take anything with you. Take your list of items and throw it away. You arrive to a refugee camp in a neighboring country where you are lucky enough to be resettled after 3 years of waiting. Please continue on to your final destination, North America. Your journey ends there, but feel free to explore the other journeys.



If you have a purple, yellow, black, or red backpack, you have fled from your home to Turkey where you will attempt to travel to Europe by land and sea. Please continue on to your next destination, Turkey.



Turkey



There are about 3.6 million Syrian refugees registered in Turkey, but only 10% are living in a refugee camp. Out of desperation for their situation, many refugees from Syria and other countries risk their lives to travel to Europe where they hope to have a better life. Many have family already living there who can help.

The closest Greek island is about 5 miles away from the Turkish coast and the journey can take as little as 1 hour, but can be deadly, particularly in bad weather. In order to cross to Greece, a smuggler will charge approximately \$1000 for a spot in an overcrowded, inflatable boat that one of the refugees has to pilot.





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What color is your backpack?



If you have a purple, yellow, or red backpack, you pay a smuggler and attempt to cross the Aegean Sea to Greece. Your boat manages to make the crossing. Please continue to your next destination, Greece.



If you have a black backpack, you pay a smuggler and attempt to cross the Aegean Sea to Greece, but your boat is too full and capsizes. Everyone on board dies. Your journey ends here, but please feel free to explore the other journeys.

Boat Deaths

2016 was the deadliest year on record for migrants and refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe with 3,557 deaths recorded. Many boats are overcrowded and capsize before they reach land.

1,159 deaths at sea were recorded in 2019, which equals

3 DEATHS PER DAY



Greece



Refugees coming to Greece by boat land on an island beach wet, cold, and hungry. They are greeted by locals or volunteers who help them.

They then go to a screening camp where they are asked questions, fingerprinted, registered, and provided with a 72-hour transit pass that allows freedom of movement within Greece. They have the option to claim asylum in Greece, but most want to continue on to other countries in Europe.

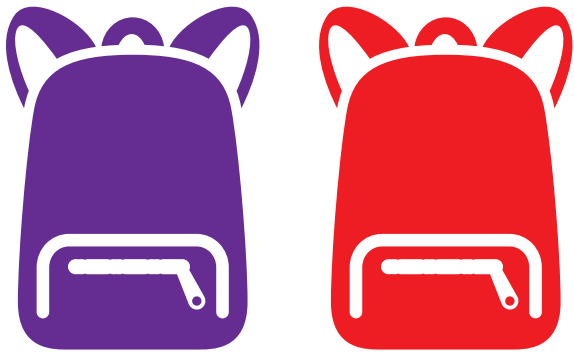
Many pay to take the ferry to Athens. In Athens, they pay for a bus or train ticket that will take them to a town near the Greek border. Then, they attempt to walk across the border into North Macedonia in order to continue by land through the countries of the Western Balkans.





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What color is your backpack?



If you have a purple or red backpack, you have been able to board a ferry to Athens and travel to the Greek border. Please continue to your next destination, the Western Balkans.



If you have a yellow backpack, you passed through the screening camp successfully and made it to Athens on a ferry. You then decide to buy false documents from a forger so you can fly directly to your final destination. However, at the airport your documents are discovered to be fake and you are arrested and put in a detention facility. You then formally claim asylum in Greece and wait for a decision to be made. Your journey ends here, but please feel free to explore the other journeys.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

All along their journey, refugees are exposed to sexual and gender-based violence. In Syria (as in many countries), soldiers and fighters have used rape as a weapon of war. Single women and young girls have been forced to marry in order to have a safe way to escape the violence in Syria. Others are forced to have sex with smugglers or traffickers as a way to pay for their travel or forged documents.

Most refugee welcoming facilities in Europe are not separated by gender, are overcrowded, and do not provide private sanitation and health areas which put women and children, in particular, at risk for violence. At the beginning of this crisis, men had been the majority of refugees fleeing to Europe. Now, more than half are women and children traveling with their families.



Western Balkans



Once refugees walk across the border, a bus takes them to a reception facility where they can spend the night, clean up, and eat before continuing on the journey. The next step is to take a train or bus north to get to the next border, where they walk across the border, and take a bus to a reception facility. These steps are repeated in each country until they reach their final destination in Western Europe.

Borders are closing to migrants and refugees. Hungary closed its border with Serbia in September 2015 and built a border fence. Austria restricted the number of refugees who could claim asylum as well as the number of people who could travel through to another country in February 2016. As of March 2016, the borders are closed in North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. In late May 2016, the Greek government began relocating people along its border with North Macedonia to its formal established camps. However, refugees remain on the Greek islands, which are ill-equipped for winter weather. Europe's largest refugee camp is Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos, which has, at times, housed up to 20,000 people despite being built to house 3,000.

Government and humanitarian officials are concerned about the conditions in camps at closed borders and the rise in smugglers who are paid by refugees to get them into Western Europe, sometimes with deadly consequences.



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What color is your backpack?



If you have a purple backpack, you manage to make it through the countries of the Western Balkans to your final destination. Please continue to Western Europe.



If you have a red backpack, you get stuck at a border crossing that was just closed. Now you have to wait in an informal camp on the border for the government to decide whether to send you back to a refugee camp in Turkey or resettle you somewhere else. Your journey ends here, but please feel free to explore the other journeys.

Western Europe



Many refugees who decide to travel to Western Europe have family already living there they are trying to reach. Upon arrival to their final destination, refugees can either request asylum or refugee status in that country.

1 million refugees registered in Germany in 2015, and in 2016 the German government received 745,545 asylum applications. Due to this influx, the European Union made an agreement with Turkey that they would resettle more refugees who are in Turkey if the Turkish government would crack down on smugglers and help close the route to Greece, as well as take back refugees from Europe who didn't meet the resettlement criteria.

The number of migrants and refugees arriving by sea to Greece dropped dramatically after 2016. However, more are trying to cross now from Libya to Italy; a more difficult and dangerous route, although now the EU has an agreement with Libya as well to stem the flow of people crossing the Mediterranean. In 2016, a record number of 3,557 people died crossing the Mediterranean Sea. In 2019, 110,669 people successfully crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe while 1,159 people died in the attempt.

Since the beginning of the refugee crisis, there has been a rise of anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe and North America. This has led to the rise of far-right political candidates, protests, demonstrations, and sometimes violence. A number of populist and far-right politicians have been elected to higher office in many countries in Europe and have blamed refugees and migrants for their country's problems, providing an excuse to limit refugees and migrants.



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What color is your backpack?



If you have a purple backpack, congratulations! You made it to your final destination, Western Europe! You apply for refugee status and wait for a decision from the host country government.

Remember, though, that you are now in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar language and customs, and far from friends and extended family.

North America



In the 2016 fiscal year (which ended September 30, 2016), the US resettled 12,486 Syrian refugees, which was more than the committed 10,000. Canada committed to resettling 35,000 Syrian refugees in 2016, and the actually resettled around 40,000. President Obama raised the overall refugee ceiling for fiscal year 2017 (Oct 2016 - Sept 2017) from 85,000 to 110,000 with no formal target for Syrians stated.

Shortly after taking office, President Trump lowered the ceiling for fiscal year 2017 from 110,000 to 50,000 and put a ceiling of 45,000 for fiscal year 2018, 30,000 for fiscal year 2019, and 18,000 for fiscal year 2020, the lowest ceiling since the passage of the US Refugee Act in 1980. The ceiling has not yet been set for fiscal year 2021 and some administration officials have stated the ceiling should be zero. During fiscal year 2019 (Oct 2018-Sept 2019), the US resettled 30,000 refugees of which there were only 631 Syrian refugees due to the restrictions from the travel ban President Trump enacted in 2017.

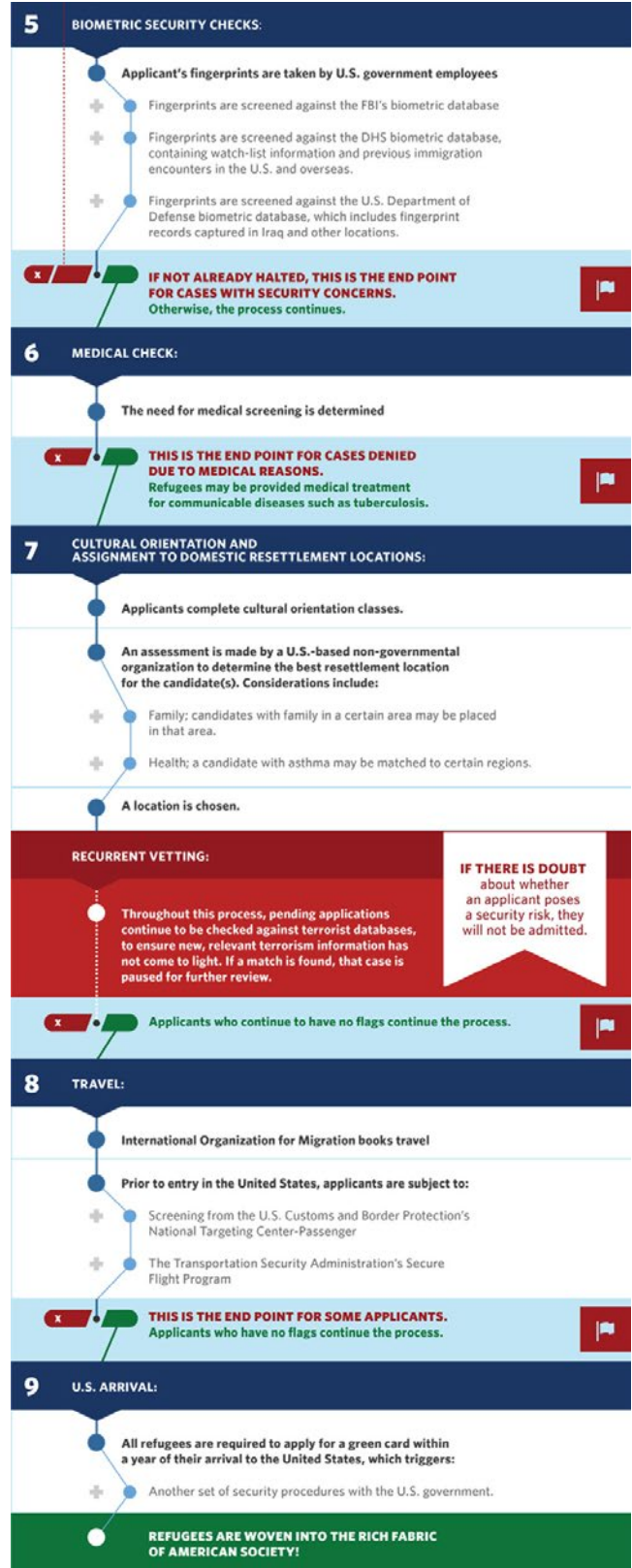
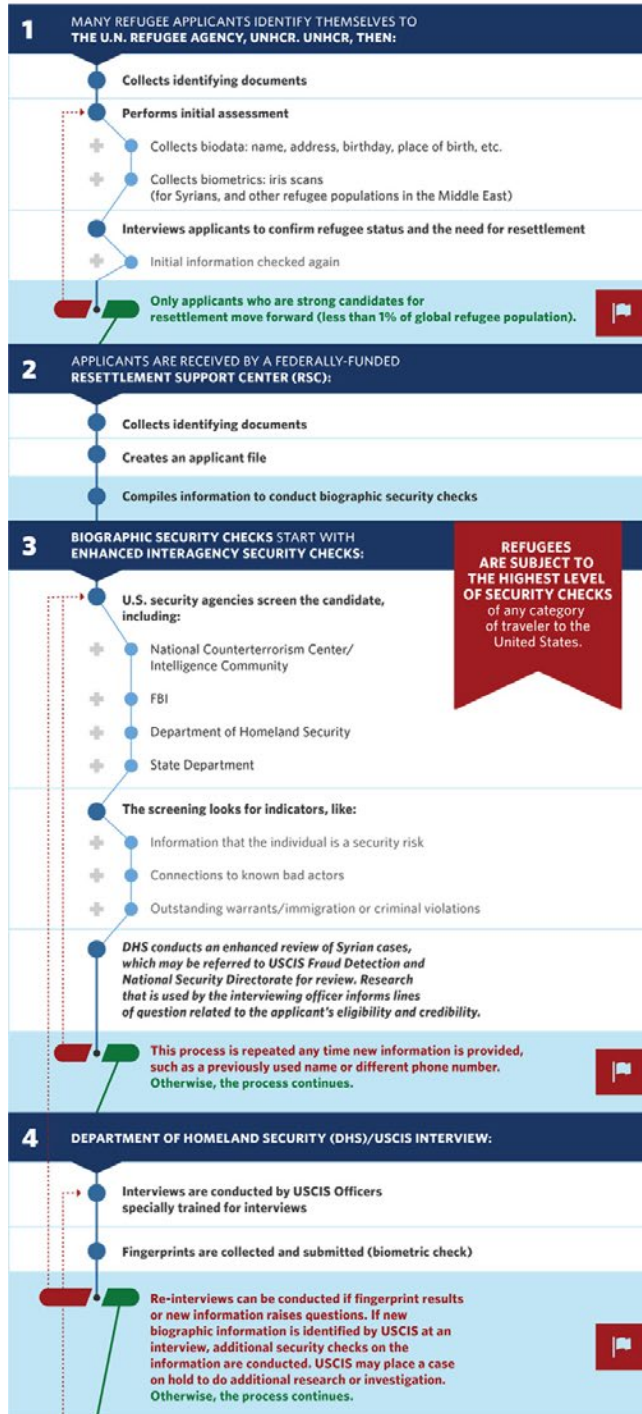


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The screening process may not be as easy as you think

THE SCREENING PROCESS

FOR REFUGEE ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES



What are the UCC and Disciples doing?

Through Global Ministries—a joint mission of the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—with funding from Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing, we have supported the work of partners in the region who are providing aid to those in need:

- The Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches; Syria
- The Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue; Syria
- The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East; Syria
- International Orthodox Christian Charities; Syria, Lebanon, Jordan
- Middle East Council of Churches/Orthodox Initiative; Jordan
- National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon; Syria, Lebanon
- Syriac Orthodox Archbishopric of Mardin; Turkey
- Perichoresis, the Evangelical Church of Greece; Greece
- The Reformed Church in Hungary; Hungary

We advocate for an end to the violence and a responsible U.S. role in ending the conflict and providing aid. We educate the public about what is going on in the region and what is needed. Through the Middle East Initiative of Global Ministries, webinars were held with our partners so they could tell us about their perspectives on the conflict and the situation of refugees in the region. We pray for an end to the violence and the opening of hearts to the plight of refugees.



What can I do?

Donate to reputable organizations that provide aid to refugees such as Global Ministries, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Week of Compassion.

Tell your local and federal leaders to support refugee resettlement in the U.S. and to increase funding to assist refugees and their communities around the world.



Pray for an end to the violence and the opening of hearts to the plight of refugees.

Invite refugees to a welcome dinner to cross divides and build bridges of trust to create welcoming communities.

Volunteer at your local refugee resettlement agency. You can find the list at www.wrapsnet.org/rp-agency-contacts/

Visit “The Syria Crisis and Our Churches’ Response” Global Ministries webpage for up to date information, resources, and advocacy tools: www.globalministries.org/syria_crisis