

Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions Ceiling Comparing current ceiling to those post 9/11

- President Bush deliberately set the refugee admissions ceiling at 70,000 shortly after 9/11 to signify that the U.S. would remain a humanitarian leader and demonstrate that the Administration understood the critical role resettlement plays in supporting our allies, and preventing regional instability. The 70,000 admissions ceiling sent a message to terrorists - that the United States would not sacrifice American values, even in the wake of the worst attack on US soil in history.
- Never before in the history of the program has any particular refugee group been barred from admission to the U.S.
- The actual number of resettled refugees was low during the period immediately following 9/11 while the administration modified screening mechanisms and created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), moving all refugee processing functions from Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to DHS. During that time, the program remained opened to all nationalities.
- While the number of refugees resettled was low in 2002 and 2003, the administration still set an ambitious goal. The Bush administration held ongoing conversations with Congress and resettlement agencies about strengthening the resettlement program and keeping it robust during procedural changes.
- As soon as changes under the Bush administration were implemented, arrivals began to increase and the program is secure to this day.
- The approach Bush took is the opposite of what this administration has done – he worked with his staff, he worked with Congress, and he worked with the organizations and institutions that founded our tradition of resettlement long before the government was involved.
- The Trump administration is not only aiming low in terms of numbers but also dismantling the resettlement program through their many executive orders.
- Setting an adequate refugee admissions number provides the U.S. government with a powerful negotiating tool. Setting it low needlessly hamstringing our government and could make the United States less safe as a result.
- 2018's Presidential Determination (PD) is far below the average annual admissions goal of 95,000 and the average annual arrival figures for the program over its history--of some 80,000 refugees. We urge the Administration to take any needed steps this year to increase refugee admissions back to at least those traditional levels.
- National security experts have stressed that resettlement advances in national security interests by supporting the stability of its allies that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees.
- Presidents from both parties in the past two decades have set robust refugee ceilings as a way to send a strong message to groups that want to sow havoc and fear that the United States remains a leading force for stability and liberty in the world.
- This dramatically reduced refugee ceiling means that fewer persecuted people of all faiths, including Christians, would be able to find safety and refuge in the United States.