

The Human Consequences of the Executive Order on Refugee Resettlement

January 2025

What is an executive order?

An [executive order](#) is a written directive that assigns actions on specific issues to various federal departments. An executive order uses the President's [executive authority](#) and is outside of legislation approved by Congress. All executive orders must be published in the Federal Register with certain exceptions.

What is the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program?

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is the decades-long partnership between the federal government, states and localities, and nonprofit partners to vet, process, resettle, and support refugees arriving in the United States.

Refugees pass rigorous background checks and are interviewed overseas to determine their status as a refugee facing persecution in their home countries.

Through the USRAP, the federal government partners with nonprofit organizations to provide integration support, such as English language classes and job training.

What is the EO on refugee resettlement and what does it do?

"[Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program](#)" is an executive order signed by President Trump on January 20, 2025. The EO indefinitely suspends the USRAP beginning at 12:01 A.M. Eastern on January 27. After that time, refugees will generally not be resettled into the country, although certain individuals may be admitted on a case-by-case basis. No decisions on refugee applications will occur during the suspension.

Within 90 days of the order, the Secretaries of Homeland Security and State will submit a report through the Homeland Security Advisor to the President on whether to resume the USRAP, further advising the president every 90 days thereafter on whether to end the suspension until it is granted.

What does the executive order mean for state and local economies?

The suspension of the USRAP will harm state and local economies. Refugees and asylum seekers had a [positive net fiscal impact on U.S. revenue and expenditures](#) of \$124 billion from 2005 to 2019.

What does the executive order mean for employers?

Local employers and businesses rely on newcomer populations to fill gaps in the workforce. Refugees are automatically eligible for work authorization and have a durable status under U.S. immigration law. A pause of refugee resettlement negatively affects the ability of employers to

bring on employment-authorized and hard-working talent to fill essential jobs in communities across the country, particularly in remote locations or in difficult-to-staff industries.

What does the executive order mean for faith-based groups?

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom [recommends](#) that a strong and robust USRAP is critical to protecting religious liberty overseas. Domestically, refugee resettlement has long been undertaken by religious groups in the United States as a way to live out observers' faith. In accordance with their religious beliefs, congregations, parishes, synagogues, and faith-based organizations often pool their resources to help welcome refugees and other newcomers. These groups will be left in uncertainty for refugee cases they are sponsoring amid a USRAP suspension.

What does the executive order mean for diaspora communities?

Refugee resettlement supports the reunification of families, particularly among ethnic and diaspora communities whose countries have experienced cycles of violence and instability. Suspended refugee resettlement will dramatically disrupt these communities scattered across the United States and will contribute to inter-generational family separation.

What will the executive order mean for refugee applicants?

Refugees approved for resettlement will no longer be able to arrive in the United States through the USRAP from January 27 until at least April 20—when the Secretaries of Homeland Security and State are to first advise the president on lifting the suspension.

However, arrivals could be affected for a longer period of time. Arrivals rely upon the coordinated overlap of valid medical examinations and exit visas that may lapse. The USRAP often resettles vulnerable individuals with medical and other complications. The USRAP suspension leaves refugees in limbo and in unsafe conditions overseas.

How many refugees will be affected?

Thousands of refugees are currently booked for travel in the USRAP system. Barring exceptions, their travel will be indefinitely delayed, leaving these individuals in limbo.

What will the executive order mean for refugees already in the United States?

Refugees already admitted through USRAP have lawfully entered the United States. Barring a change in federal law, they remain lawfully admitted and remain on a path to lawful permanent residency and eventual citizenship here in the United States. They will remain eligible for federal resettlement benefits if they meet the criteria for those programs.

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