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CLOSED *DOORS*

Persecuted Christians and the U.S. Refugee
Resettlement and Asylum Processes

world relief 

 **OpenDoors**



A LETTER FROM

Myal Greene, President & CEO of World Relief,
and Ryan Brown, CEO of Open Doors US

The first edition of this Closed Doors report noted soberly that an estimated 80 million people around the globe had been forcibly displaced from their homes and that at least 260 million Christians worldwide lived under the threat of persecution and discrimination.

Just three years have passed, but the statistics are all the more troubling. As of the end of 2022, there were an estimated 108 million people who had been forcibly displaced globally. In the 2023 edition of the World Watch List, Open Doors estimates that more than 360 million Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination, accounting for roughly one in seven Christians globally.

In just a few short years, the number of Christians facing persecution and discrimination has increased dramatically, as has the number of people displaced. Not

every persecuted Christian flees their home, of course, and not every displaced person is persecuted on account of their religion, but these numbers certainly are related: when religious persecution becomes sufficiently acute, often compounded by other pressures, many determine that their only option is to flee, whether within their country or to another country as refugees.

Historically—at least in our best moments—the United States has offered refuge to those fleeing religious persecution, consistent with a commitment to religious freedom that is enshrined within the first clause of the first amendment of our Constitution.

But by 2020, as the [first edition](#) of Closed Doors documented, the number of Christian refugees resettled to the U.S. from the 50 countries on that year's Open Doors World Watch List had declined by roughly 90

percent compared to 2015. Concurrently, the U.S. was considering dramatic new restrictions on eligibility for asylum. We had very nearly closed the door on the persecuted church, along with those persecuted as adherents of other minority religions from countries with severe restrictions on religious freedom.

As both the global displacement crisis and global persecution of Christians have increased, we have revised and updated this report to examine how the admission of Christian refugees from countries where Christians face severe persecution has changed—and to urge policymakers, candidates and everyday American Christians to be mindful of the impact of restrictive refugee and asylum policies on the persecuted church.

As our predecessors at World Relief and the U.S. affiliate of Open Doors International rightly noted in the introduction to the 2020 report, our concern is not only for persecuted Christians. We believe that all human beings—regardless of religion or any other qualifier—are made in God’s image (Gen. 1:27) with inherent dignity and lives worth protecting. We believe that Jesus’ all-encompassing command to love our neighbors clearly extends beyond love for one’s co-religionists, as illustrated by the “Good Samaritan,” who was the model of neighborly love for a vulnerable traveler of a different religious tradition (Luke 10:25-37). U.S. laws rightly offer refuge to those fleeing persecution on account of any religious tradition or for other specific reasons, such as race, political opinion and nationality.

But as this report demonstrates with both statistics and individual stories, followers of Jesus are often among those most at risk of persecution in countries that deny the religious freedom that we believe is a God-given right of each human being. We cannot profess to care for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ if we are unwilling to do what we can to address their physical needs for safety (James 2:14-16). One way we can do so is to be faithful stewards of the voices that God has entrusted to us, by advocating for refugee and asylum policies

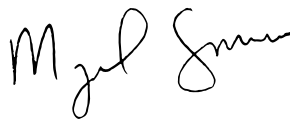
that offer refuge to fellow believers who face persecution.

This report is intentionally non-partisan, precisely because respect for religious freedom should be an American value, never owned by one party. We urge policymakers of all parties to reflect on where our great nation has failed to live up to its promise as a beacon of liberty for those fleeing persecution, and to resolve to restore the American commitment to persecuted Christians and others seeking religious liberty.

But, just as importantly, our hope and prayer is that this report equips and challenges fellow Christians to ensure that their witness in such a time as this—when Christians around the world face persecution and many have been forced to flee their homes—is marked by solidarity with these brothers and sisters in Christ, who desperately need our advocacy and prayers.

In Christ,

Myal Greene



President & CEO
World Relief

Ryan Brown



CEO
Open Doors US

INTRODUCTION

More than [108 million people](#) across the globe are victims of forced displacement. Forty percent of them are children, and 76 percent come from low- and middle-income countries where economic resources to care for the displaced are far more limited than in the United States or other high-income countries. Thirty-five million people meet the formal definition of a refugee, having fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. War, trauma and other major social and economic disruptions drive millions more to migrate in search of better work opportunities and a safer place to call home.

A significant share of refugees worldwide are persecuted particularly because of their religion, including many who are persecuted for their Christian faith. Globally, more than [360 million Christians](#) face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. When individuals facing violence and pressure at home determine it is no longer safe to remain, some make the difficult decision to migrate, which is often the result of religious persecution in conjunction with other migratory pressures—hoping and praying to find a safe country that will welcome them.

The United States has long set the standard for the global agenda on refugees and asylum seekers. Yet recent shifts in U.S. policy reveal that America is no longer the safe haven for displaced persons that it once was. The “golden door” that Emma Lazarus poetically described as the gateway to safety and liberty for those “yearning to breathe free” largely closed shut by 2020, and is only slowly reopening.

The COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in shrinking the number of persecuted Christians able to find refuge in the U.S., as embassies abroad were shuttered under public health provisions and asylum

processing for those who reached the U.S.-Mexico border was almost entirely shut down. COVID-19 also exacerbated challenges for refugees abroad, both in terms of public health threats as well as the economic impacts of shutdowns.

But the downward trend in the number of refugees resettled to the U.S.—including many persecuted Christians—preceded the COVID-19 pandemic by several years, and it

Recent shifts in U.S. policy reveal that America is no longer the safe haven for displaced persons that it once was.

has rebounded more slowly than the pace at which most of life in the United States has returned to a post-pandemic normal.

While the United States has made religious freedom a priority of domestic and foreign policy, religious persecution continues to drive the displacement of Christians. The U.S. government’s commitment to religious freedom—rightly proclaimed by both the current administration and the last one, and by bipartisan leadership in Congress—necessitates an equally enduring responsibility toward refugees and asylum seekers.

It is time for global leaders to recognize the dire situation for displaced persons, including persecuted Christians, and take action. And it is vital that American Christians leverage their voices on behalf of the most vulnerable, defending the human rights of displaced people, including brothers and sisters in Christ.

GLOBAL PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

Today, [one in seven](#) Christians worldwide live under the threat of persecution or discrimination in countries that hinder, outlaw or otherwise oppress the expression of the Christian faith. Christians face some of the most severe persecution in authoritarian countries, such as North Korea, Iran, Myanmar, China and Eritrea. These and other oppressive governments restrict Christian freedom of religion and impose harsh, sometimes debilitating, penalties on Christian conduct and expression.

In its [2023 World Watch List](#), a research-based overview of religious freedom conditions for Christians worldwide, Open Doors identified several current global trends that contribute to Christian persecution. Chief among them is the power of anti-Christian governments to arrest and execute Christians for practicing their faith. This past year alone, at least 5,621 Christians were killed for their faith, while many others were arrested and imprisoned. But hostility toward Christians doesn't always come directly from the government.



 IRAN

MEET MANA

Mana* grew up in a nominally Muslim family in Iran. As an adult, she heard the gospel and made the decision to follow Jesus. In time, she began hosting an illegal house church. Eventually, Mana's home was raided, and her oldest son was imprisoned.

Mana concluded that fleeing Iran was necessary to keep herself and her younger son safe. They lived in challenging conditions in Turkey for two-and-a-half years before being accepted by the U.S. refugee resettlement program and allowed to rebuild their lives in northeast Ohio.

Mana has now been apart from her older son for eleven years. He was released from jail in Iran and also escaped to Turkey, where he lived for several years without legal protections. His mother recently became a U.S. citizen and filed a petition for her son, but the wait time will likely be at least eight years through this process. The odds of being selected for refugee resettlement have grown slim in recent years: just 112 Christian Iranians were resettled to the U.S. last year, 95 percent fewer than in 2016, when Mana was resettled. Recently, facing the threat of imminent deportation to Iran, Mana's son embarked on a dangerous journey to seek asylum in Europe. As of this writing, he has made it as far as Albania, with hopes of eventually finding freedom in Germany.

* Some names have been changed to protect the safety of individuals who may still be at risk of persecution for their faith.



Social pressures, cultural norms and religious antipathies can also contribute to persecution.

Tragically, these religious antipathies often find expression in violence against Christians. This kind of violence from militant religious factions is increasingly common across many areas of the globe, but especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast and South Asia, where governments struggle to control extremist groups such as Boko Haram and other ISIS-affiliated clans. In Afghanistan, the Taliban, which returned to power in 2021, targets religious minorities. In Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq and Syria, longstanding conflict has led to the near-extinction of historic Christian communities that have existed since the days of the early Church. Wherever religious extremists can operate unchecked, many Christians fear for their lives and their livelihoods.

As a result, Christians around the world are forced to choose between exposing their families to life-threatening risk at home or fleeing persecution. Many initially flee to another location within their country of origin that they hope will provide safety; others seek refugee status or asylum in foreign countries. Some are initially [internally displaced](#), but when the threat catches up to them, they conclude the only option is to seek refuge across a border. Those who make the difficult decision to flee face an uncertain future, full of its own risks and dangers. But for far too many Christians, choosing the uncertain and vulnerable life of a refugee is the only way to keep themselves and their families safe from harm.

THE U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Under both [U.S.](#) and [international](#) law, a refugee is an individual who has left their country of origin and who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, political opinion, national origin or membership in a particular social group. Refugees are unable to find protection from their local governments and must seek safety and survival elsewhere.

While most refugees would prefer to return home if it were safe, in many cases the ongoing threat of persecution makes that impossible, negating the avenue of voluntary repatriation. Until either local integration becomes a possibility and they are granted permanent protection in the first country to which they fled, or they are offered resettlement in a third country, refugees wait. They wait either in refugee camps or in urban settings, where they usually lack permission to work and provide for themselves. In some cases, Christian refugees face [additional persecution](#) in transitional settings, including relief discrimination and violent attacks targeting Christians and other religious minorities.

Since 1980, when the Refugee Act became law and formalized the U.S. refugee

resettlement program, more than 3 million refugees have been resettled to the U.S. Over the past decade, nearly half of all resettled refugees have been Christians, including many persecuted particularly for their faith. Each individual undergoes a thorough security and health screening prior to resettlement. As a [report](#) from The Heritage Foundation notes, “refugees undergo more vetting than any other immigrants to the U.S.” For the relatively small share of the world’s refugees whom the U.S. government selects and approves for resettlement, the U.S. State Department partners with a variety of faith-based and other nonprofit organizations, including World Relief, to assist refugees in their process of cultural adjustment.

In the past, the U.S. was the global leader in refugee resettlement. Under the authority of the Refugee Act, the president sets an annual ceiling for refugee resettlement. From 1980 through 2016, the [average](#) upper limit for resettlement was set at roughly 95,000, with approximately 81,000 refugees actually arriving annually.

In recent years, however, the U.S. has dramatically reduced its commitment



to refugee resettlement. After resettling roughly [97,000 refugees](#) in calendar year 2016, the refugee ceiling was reduced each year between 2017 and 2020. In 2018, [Canada](#) surpassed the U.S. as the leader in refugee resettlement, welcoming approximately 28,000 refugees compared to America's 22,874, despite a far smaller population overall. In the calendar year 2020, the U.S. resettled fewer than 10,000 refugees for the first time in the resettlement program's history.

In April 2021, shortly after the Biden administration took office, it surprised and dismayed many [refugee](#) and [religious freedom](#) advocates by resetting the refugee ceiling at the historically low level of 15,000 for fiscal year 2021. [U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) Chair Gayle Manchin noted that this historically low refugee ceiling “fail[ed] to reflect that unprecedented numbers of individuals worldwide are forcibly displaced by conflict or persecution, including based on their religion or belief.” USCIRF co-chair Tony Perkins insisted that “to stand by our nation's commitment to religious freedom, the United States should be a safe haven for persecuted religious communities.”

After this pushback, President Biden reset the refugee ceiling at 62,500 for the remainder of fiscal year 2021—but the U.S. still failed to even reach the initial ceiling of 15,000 by the end of the year.

In subsequent years, the overall number of refugees resettled has increased as the overseas processing infrastructure—significantly reduced even before COVID-19 and then entirely halted for a time by the pandemic—gradually rebuilt. In fiscal year 2022, 25,465 refugees were resettled, not including tens of thousands of Afghans, Ukrainians and others who came to the U.S. through parole programs that are technically

separate from the refugee resettlement process. The U.S. is on track to resettle approximately 60,000 refugees in 2023 if trends continue, in spite of a ceiling set at 125,000 refugees.

With these modest increases, the U.S. has yet to return even to the pre-2017 mean resettlement level of approximately 81,000, despite a dramatic increase in the global need for resettlement. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [estimates](#) that 2.4 million refugees will be in need of resettlement in 2024, but last year only 58,457—about 2.5 percent of the global need—were resettled to any third country. As religious persecution around the world rises, more Christians than ever before are facing religious persecution with scant hope of resettlement if they flee.

While refugees of various religious traditions have been harmed by the relatively low levels of refugee resettlement to the U.S., among those disadvantaged are Christian refugees from the countries where Christians face the most severe persecution in the world. In 2022, the number of Christians resettled from the top 50 countries perpetuating Christian persecution on the [2023 World Watch List](#) was down 70 percent from 2016. Last year, 9,528 Christians were resettled from these 50 countries, down from 32,248 in 2016. This does, however, mark a significant rebound from the low point of 5,390 Christian refugees resettled from these countries in 2020.

For Christians from several particular countries that rank high on the 2023 World Watch List, unfortunately, there is less evidence of a return to historically normal resettlement levels. The number of Christian refugees resettled in 2022 from Eritrea (#4 on the 2023 World Watch List), Iran (#8), Myanmar/Burma (#14) and Iraq (#18) was down 85 percent, 95 percent, 92 percent and

“to stand by our nation's commitment to religious freedom, the United States should be a safe haven for persecuted religious communities.”

94 percent, respectively, compared to 2016. Just 1,044 Christian refugees from these four countries were resettled last year, compared to 12,883 in 2016.

Looking forward, overall resettlement levels (for those of all religious traditions and countries of origin) for 2023 are on track to more than double the resettlement levels of 2022, and the Biden administration has [publicly stated](#) that, while it will not hit the 125,000 ceiling in 2023, it does see that number as a goal. Since persecuted Christians make up a significant share of all refugees resettled to the U.S., the positive trend in the number of persecuted Christians being resettled seems likely to continue.

Still, the U.S. has yet to return to the number of persecuted Christians being resettled with relative consistency prior to 2017—and further policy changes, such as a reduction in the overall refugee ceiling, could abruptly slam the door shut on persecuted Christians seeking refuge as occurred beginning in 2017.

The tragic reality is that many areas of the world simply aren't safe for Christians, and Christians fleeing persecution need a safe haven in the United States. With religious persecution of Christians at some of the highest levels ever reported, closing the door to refugees and asylum seekers threatens the lives of Christians—and American Christians must not remain silent.

MEET AROOJ

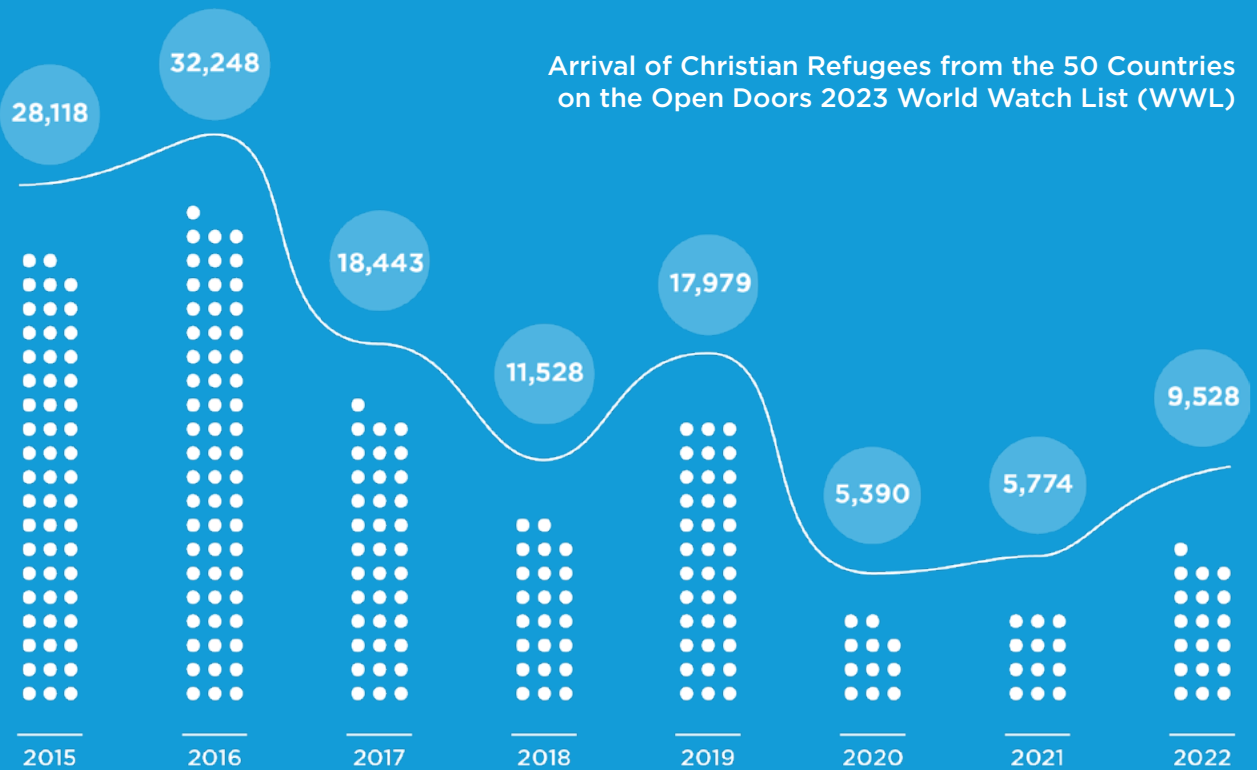


After experiencing threats and fearing for their lives as Christians in Pakistan, Sunny* and his newlywed wife, Arooj, were planning to flee the country—but before they could escape, Sunny was kidnapped, tortured and left to die. Arooj, believing her husband was dead, continued with their plan to escape to Sri Lanka. Only once there did she learn her husband had survived. Because Arooj feared being deported back to Pakistan, she decided to pursue the opportunity to be resettled as a refugee in the United States. Four years later she was welcomed by World Relief to Spokane, Washington.

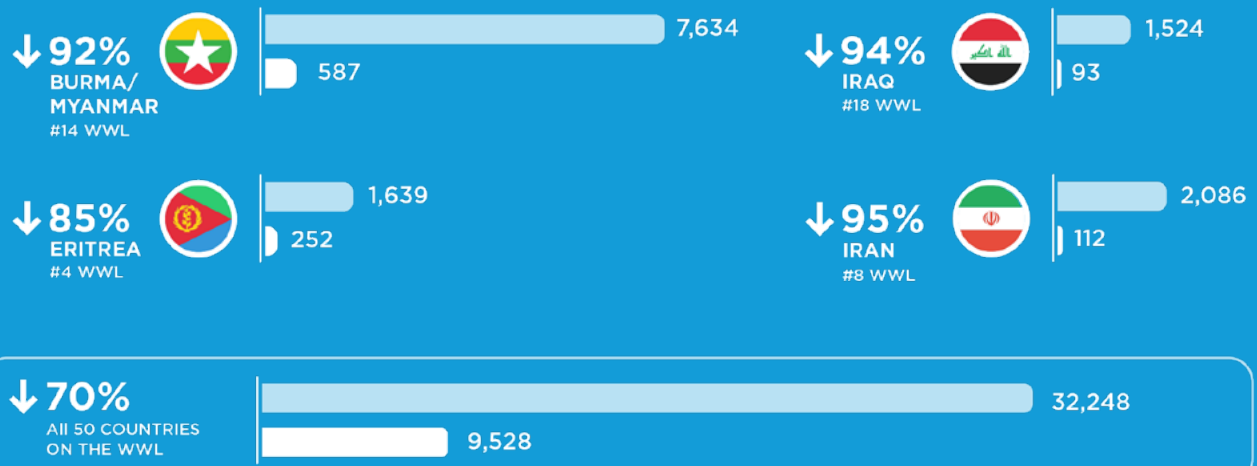
Sunny subsequently reached Sri Lanka. Arooj and Sunny—and many around the world who read about their story, including in the first edition of this report—prayed for years for the day when they would be safely reunited in the United States. Thankfully, Sunny finally arrived in April 2023, after more than a decade of separation, as the U.S. refugee resettlement program had begun to grow again after several years of historically low admissions numbers.

Arooj (Photo: Jordan Halland)

RESETTLEMENT OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN REFUGEES ON THE DECLINE



Decline of Christian Refugee Arrivals, FY 2016 - FY 2022

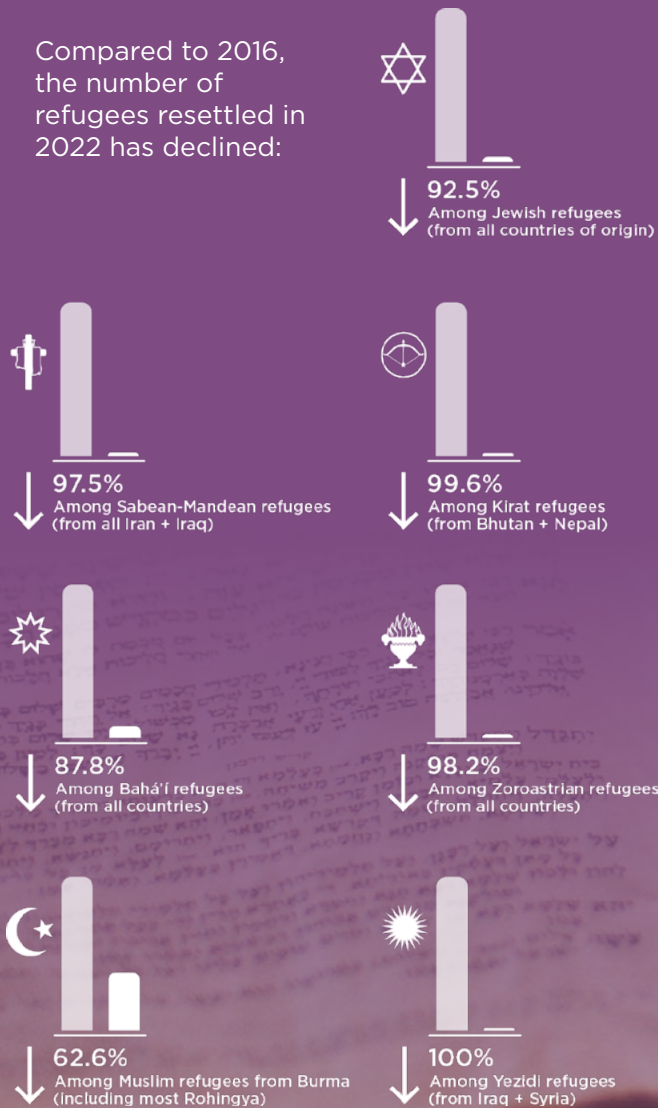


All data is provided by the U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center through the end of fiscal year 2022, which ended on September 30, 2022. Religious affiliation provided by the Refugee Processing Center is self-reported. Jehovah's Witnesses and other religious groups that self-identify as Christians are included in that category, even though some Christians would classify them as a distinct religious tradition. Note that numbers vary in some cases from those reported in the first edition of this Closed Doors report because (a) these figures are reported based on the federal government's fiscal year, not the calendar years that were used in the first edition, and (b) because the countries on the Open Doors World Watch List have changed in some cases from the 2023 list used for this report compared to the 2020 report used in the first edition of this Closed Doors report.

Resettlement of Other Persecuted Religious Minority Refugees

While this report focuses primarily on the effects of changes to U.S. refugee and asylum policy on persecuted Christians, various other persecuted religious minority groups have also been largely shut out of refugee resettlement in recent years, in some cases even more dramatically than Christians. As Christians, we believe that all people have the right to religious freedom, and that religious minorities of any sort—not just those who share our Christian faith—should be protected.

Compared to 2016, the number of refugees resettled in 2022 has declined:



THE U.S. ASYLUM PROCESS

Whereas refugees who are resettled to the U.S. are identified and screened abroad—and subject to the annual ceiling on refugee resettlement set by the president—the Refugee Act of 1980 also formalized the process by which an individual who reaches the U.S. can request asylum. An asylum seeker is someone who professes to meet the definition of a refugee—having fled his or her country of origin because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, political opinion, national origin or membership in a particular social group—but whose claim has not yet been verified by an appropriate governmental authority. Because asylum seekers have not been given an official status yet, they are often vulnerable to hardship, exploitation and injustice as they wait to be recognized by a host country.

Under U.S. law, there is no limit on the number of individuals who can receive asylum in a given year. The U.S. has committed itself, both in the Refugee Act and as a party to an international convention, not to return someone who can establish that they qualify for asylum to a situation of potential danger. However, because one must physically reach the U.S.—whether on an airplane, a ship or by reaching a land border—asylum is generally accessible only

to those who are geographically proximate to the U.S. or who are among the relatively few who qualify for a tourist or other non-immigrant visa, which is generally necessary to board an airplane.

An individual in the United States may request asylum either “affirmatively,” submitting a request to the Department of Homeland Security if they are already present lawfully in the U.S. on a temporary basis, or “defensively,” when facing a removal hearing before an immigration judge, as is usually the case for those who arrive without a visa at the U.S. border. In fiscal year [2019](#), approximately 46,000 individuals were granted asylum either by the Department of Homeland Security or by an immigration judge. By 2021, the total number of individuals granted asylum had declined by more than 60 percent, in large part due to COVID-19-related restrictions both on access to asylum and to the pace of asylum adjudication. While full data is not yet available for 2023, [preliminary data](#) suggests that the overall number of asylum determinations has rebounded and is likely to reach or even exceed pre-pandemic levels.

Asylum cases can be difficult to win, even when the asylum seeker has legitimately fled persecution. This is because the burden of



proof in an asylum case is on the asylum seeker, and often they lack documentary evidence of what they claim to have experienced.

While an asylum seeker has the right to an attorney at their own expense, they are not generally provided with an attorney by the immigration court. Those without representation—who are generally seeking to navigate a complex law in a foreign language—are at least [2.5 times](#) less likely to be granted asylum than those represented by counsel.

While data on the religious demographics of asylum seekers or on the particular legal ground(s) of persecution on which asylum requests were based are not readily available, asylum has certainly been an important tool for persecuted Christians able to escape their countries of origin and reach the United States. In 2022, more than [11,600](#) individuals were granted asylum by U.S.

“...the burden of proof in an asylum case is on the asylum seeker, and often they lack documentary evidence of what they claim to have experienced.”

immigration judges from the 50 countries on the 2023 World Watch List, accounting for about 61 percent of the cases adjudicated from those countries. Nearly half of those asylum approvals came from just two populous countries, India (#11 on the 2023 World Watch List) and China (#16). However, recent changes and proposed changes to asylum eligibility could pose significant new barriers to persecuted Christians being granted asylum in the



MEET DOUGLAS

As a teenager, Douglas Sadit Oviedo had lost both of his parents to AIDS and his older brother to violence. But he found hope and purpose in a relationship with Jesus. He eventually became a youth pastor, wanting to use his faith to help the youth in Honduras.

As he saw too many of the young people he pastored killed by gang violence, he began to speak out. The gangs started to threaten his life, upset by the youth pastor who very effectively drew young people out of their gangs and to Jesus. Ultimately, Pastor Douglas made the difficult decision to flee his country, traveling through Guatemala and Mexico to lawfully request asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

After eleven months of waiting in Mexico under policies in effect at that time, a U.S. immigration judge approved his request for asylum in September 2019. As of this writing, he is safe, living and working lawfully in Houston, Texas. “Although it was a difficult process, I’m thankful to the U.S. judge who considered the facts of my case and approved my request for asylum,” says Douglas. “I pray that the United States will continue offering protections to others who have been threatened with death on account of the practice of their faith in Jesus.”



U.S. going forward. In May 2023, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security implemented a new [regulation](#) that, with limited exceptions, restricts eligibility for asylum for those who enter the United States other than at a lawful port of entry. A new app designed to request asylum appointments at ports of entry, however, offers significantly fewer appointment slots than the number of individuals seeking to request asylum, creating a situation that some have [described](#) as an “asylum lottery.”

The administration concurrently launched a parole process for individuals from a few particular countries—including two of the four Western Hemisphere countries on the World Watch List—that provides an alternate mode of lawful entry to the U.S. While this has already been an avenue of relief for many, potential parolees are required to have a U.S.-based sponsor—something those who face a well-founded fear of religious persecution may not have. Furthermore, the parole program is capped at 30,000 slots per month. As of [April 2023](#), the Department of Homeland Security was receiving approximately 12,000 applications per day.

“potential parolees are required to have a U.S.-based sponsor—something those who face a well-founded fear of religious persecution may not have.”

Beyond these administrative changes affecting due process for asylum seekers fleeing religious persecution—which have been challenged in court by multiple plaintiffs who argue the new rules violate the language of existing statutes—Congress has also considered legislative changes to asylum eligibility, including [H.R. 2](#), which was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in May 2023 but has not, as of the time of this report’s publication, been considered by the U.S. Senate. The bill would severely restrict asylum eligibility, particularly for individuals who seek to apply at the U.S.-Mexico border, and would add a new fee that could be a barrier to some fleeing persecution, among other changes.



MEET SALAM †

Salam became a target for persecution for multiple reasons. As an artist, he had created art depicting the Taliban's brutal treatment of women. He had run exhibitions that were sponsored by foreign military powers. And, perhaps most critically, he had become a Christian.

An acquaintance from his region of Afghanistan shared a Bible with Salam, and he read it discreetly over a period of two years. "The love of Jesus' followers also impressed and attracted me. I wanted to learn more. That is why I kept reading the Bible," Salam explained.

But having chosen to follow Jesus, Salam knew that his life was at risk in Afghanistan, particularly when the U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed and the Taliban returned to power in 2021. He first fled to Iran, but could not find work, so he secretly crossed back through Afghanistan and into Pakistan, then traveled on to Qatar. From there, he was able to travel to Brazil, then eventually set out for the United States, crossing through multiple countries and the dangerous, 90-mile Darien Gap in Panama, where vulnerable migrants are regularly preyed upon both by an unforgiving natural environment and by criminals, narcotraffickers and corrupt police.

Upon reaching the U.S.-Mexico border, Salam requested asylum. Now, he waits for his case to be reviewed—but that process can take years for a final adjudication, which would be necessary to petition for the wife and children whom he left behind. Even employment authorization generally takes at least six months, and often much longer, for an individual with a pending asylum case, which makes finding work and making ends meet extremely difficult. Salam is grateful for the American Christians who have welcomed him, but he still often feels isolated and uncertain about the future.

† This story is drawn from the forthcoming *Afghans, Culture & Jesus*, by Miriam Adeney and Mohammad Qadam Shah (William Carey Publishers, 2023), and names have been changed to protect the safety of individuals who may still be at risk of persecution for their faith.

TAKE ACTION

We believe that U.S. Christians have an important role to play in standing with persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, and with others who face persecution, both in prayer and in advocacy.



We encourage you to pray:

- For persecuted Christians throughout the world, that they would be protected from danger, allowed to practice their faith freely and strengthened to persevere despite hardship.
- For persecuted and displaced people of any faith, that their dignity and value would be affirmed by all.
- For the global Church, that we would stand in solidarity with those who are persecuted so we can be a credible witness standing with those in situations of vulnerability.
- For those in positions of governmental authority, both in the U.S. and in other countries, that they would pursue justice and respect the religious freedom and other human rights of all.
- For those pursuing positions of authority in upcoming elections, that each candidate would understand and articulate the connections between religious freedom and forced migration, advocate for the protection of those persecuted for their faith and consistently employ rhetoric that affirms their dignity.



We encourage the U.S. government, and for you to advocate for your elected officials:

- To consistently prioritize the advancement of international religious freedom, and to leverage diplomatic influence to urge all countries to reduce religious persecution and discrimination.
- To restore the U.S. Refugee Resettlement program, both consistently setting the annual refugee ceiling at a high level such as 125,000 and rebuilding the overseas processing and domestic resettlement infrastructure to ensure that this goal is met.
- To ensure that those persecuted for their faith continue to have access to the U.S. Refugee Resettlement program alongside those persecuted for other reasons.
- To reject changes to asylum processing that reduce access to due process and present new barriers to those with credible fears of persecution from accessing protection in the United States.

About World Relief & Open Doors US

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization whose mission is to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable.

The organization was founded in the aftermath of World War II to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of war-torn Europe. Since then, for nearly 80 years, across 100 countries, World Relief has partnered with local churches and communities to develop sustainable, locally-driven solutions to some of our world's greatest problems, including partnering with the U.S. State Department and with thousands of local churches to resettle more than 300,000 refugees to the United States since 1979.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.

Open Doors US is part of the global ministry of Open Doors. Open Doors originated in 1955 when its founder, Brother Andrew, began smuggling Bibles to Christians behind the Iron Curtain. Now, Open Doors works in more than 70 countries, supplying Bibles; training church leaders; providing practical aid, emergency relief, and long-term support; and strengthening Christians who suffer persecution and discrimination for their faith. For more information, visit OpenDoorsUS.org.

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