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## Fact Sheet

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Washington, DC  
April 4, 2005

# Refugee Admissions Program for Near East and South Asia

## Background

Since 1980, more than 143,300 refugees from Near East and South Asian countries have been resettled in the United States. Most have been Iranian (over 65,000), Iraqi (over 37,000), or Afghan (over 37,000). Currently, of the refugees in the region, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mainly refers Iranian and Afghan refugees for resettlement consideration. These refugees are often members of religious and ethnic minorities or vulnerable women at risk who have sought temporary asylum in other countries in the region. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) conducts quarterly refugee interviewing visits to Turkey and Egypt and, as needed, to Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Kuwait. DHS also interviews from permanent offices in India and Pakistan. Although large-scale repatriations have significantly diminished the pool of Afghans in need of resettlement, UNHCR continues to refer for resettlement particularly vulnerable Afghans for whom repatriation is not a viable durable solution to the program.

A total of 2,855 refugees from the region were admitted to the U.S. in FY 2004.

**Iranians.** As persons of special concern to the United States, members of Iranian religious minorities are eligible to apply to the U.S. program. Most Iranian applicants are now processed in Turkey and Austria.

**Afghans.** The U.S. program continues to process Afghan refugees for whom third country resettlement is the appropriate durable solution. Urban Afghan women who have no immediate male family members in the country of asylum have been identified by the Department of State and UNHCR as particularly vulnerable and in need of resettlement. Processing of vulnerable Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Russia, and elsewhere continues.

**Iraqis.** The U.S. program processes Iraqi refugees for whom third country resettlement is the appropriate durable solution.

**Bhutanese.** To date, no cases have been referred to the U.S. resettlement program. UNHCR continues to seek access to these refugees in Nepal in order to conduct a profiling exercise, which would allow identification of potential resettlement cases.

## FY 2005 Admissions Program

The FY 2005 ceiling for refugee admissions from the Near East and South Asia is 2,500. The Department of State is working with UNHCR to identify refugees in the region requiring resettlement, especially women-at-risk. Small numbers of refugees from the Middle East are also processed from central Asian and Caucasus countries.

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