

U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Frequently Asked Questions - Iraqi Processing

Who is eligible for USRAP consideration?

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is currently expanding its capacity to consider Iraqi refugees for resettlement in the United States . In general, a refugee is a person who has crossed an international border and is unwilling or unable to return home because of past persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

What if I am an Iraqi still in Iraq ?

We are currently only able to process Iraqi applicants outside of Iraq . Individuals who have experienced or fear serious harm in Iraq must make the difficult decision about whether or not to remain in Iraq or to seek asylum or temporary protection in a neighboring country. Former employees of the U.S. Government who seek protection in a third country should inform us by contacting refquestions@wrapsnet.org. It should be understood that forwarding information to this address is not an application for resettlement in the United States and will not guarantee that the individual will have access to an interview for resettlement consideration.

What if I am an Iraqi Citizen currently in the United States and am unable to return home?

Iraqis currently in the United States who are not able to return to Iraq because they have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion may apply for asylum with the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) through one of their offices in the United States. Information on the process of applying for asylum in the U.S. can be found at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' website: www.USCIS.gov. To view the asylum information, click on the *Services and Benefits* link, then *Humanitarian Benefits* and then *Asylum*

What if I am an Iraqi who has sought refuge outside of Iraq ?

Refugees and asylum seekers should seek to comply with all legal requirements of the country in which they are located, including registration with host governments if required. In addition, all Iraqi asylum seekers located in third countries should register with the nearest United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office. UNHCR has the international mandate to provide protection and assistance to refugees and can provide a protection document and possibly other assistance if needed. For a small number of extremely vulnerable individuals, this could include referral to the USRAP or another country's resettlement program. UNHCR will identify individuals for resettlement referral based on an assessment of their vulnerability at the time of registration.

What is the significance of the number 7,000?

UNHCR has made the commitment to the U.S. to refer 7,000 Iraqis in Jordan , Syria , Egypt , Turkey and Lebanon to the U.S. Refugee Admission Program for consideration for resettlement by September, 2007. This is the number that is expected to be received in the first tranche of referrals. However, the U.S. expects to receive additional referrals after the first 7,000 have been submitted, and 7,000 is not a limit on the number of Iraqis the U.S. will consider for the USRAP. We are also exploring other avenues of access to the USRAP in addition to UNHCR referrals.

Do I need a G series passport to be processed for admission to the U.S. as a refugee?

Individuals who are approved by the U.S. as refugees do not need a passport to enter the United States . Travel documents which are accepted for entry in the United States are prepared for the refugee and provided at the time of travel. However, some countries of first asylum in the region do require G series passports for entry.

What if I worked for the U.S. Government or a company affiliated with the U.S. Government in Iraq ?

In addition to registering with UNHCR, Iraqi asylum seekers who have previously worked for the United States Government in Iraq can provide us information about their employment. Iraqis who believe they are at risk or have experienced serious harm as a result of association with the MNF-I or the official U.S. government presence in Iraq, should register with UNHCR, as indicated above. In addition, such individuals may forward the following information to refquestions@wrapsnet.org :

- Full name (exactly as reflected on Iraqi ID cards, citizenship certificates, and badges issued by employers; if more than one name has been used, all should be provided) and date of birth of individual claiming association with the U.S. Government;
- Full names and dates of birth of spouse and minor children and any other dependent members of his/her household;
- USG association: Employer's name (company name or U.S. Government agency), job title, name of immediate supervisor, and dates and location(s) of service;
- Current location and contact information;
- A brief description of his/her situation – status with UNHCR (including UNHCR registration number if available) and reasons for leaving Iraq.

It should be understood that forwarding such information to this address is not an application for resettlement in the United States and will not guarantee that the individual will have access to an interview for resettlement consideration. The information provided may lead the USG to seek confirmation of the claimed association.

What if I have immediate family members in the U.S. who are American citizens?

Any Iraqi with relatives in the United States who can file an immigrant visa petition on their behalf should do so. A pending application for immigration does not preclude consideration of an individual for refugee admission.

If I am referred to the program for processing how long does it take?

Iraqis determined to be eligible for resettlement consideration by the U.S. will be given access to an interview with an official of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS). This does not guarantee approval for admission to the United States. Processing may take approximately 4-6 months, and, in addition to the face-to-face interview with DHS/USCIS, includes medical and security screenings.

If I am granted refugee status how long can I stay in the U.S. ?

U.S. resettlement through the USRAP is permanent. Those who are found to be refugees and admissible will be relocated to the United States to start new lives. They will be provided short-term assistance with housing, medical appointments, and other services upon arrival, but will be expected to seek employment and become fully self-sufficient as soon as possible. Eligible refugees must apply to adjust status to that of lawful permanent resident after one year and may apply for U.S. citizenship after five years.

How may an American help to resettle Iraqis coming to the United States ?

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in coordination with the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, has provided permanent resettlement to over 2.6 million refugees since 1975. PRM funds ten public and private non-profit organizations to help provide initial services and assist refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. All refugees approved for admission to the United States are provided with sponsorship and resettlement services appropriate to their personal circumstances by one of these organizations.

These organizations provide airport reception; basic needs support including housing, furnishings, food, and clothing; community, health, and employment orientation; school registration for children; and referrals to public benefit programs and other community services for which refugees are eligible. The program would not succeed without volunteers in communities across the United States to assist with these activities. Below are the websites for the U.S. resettlement agencies. On these sites you can identify affiliate offices of these agencies in your area. If you would like to become part of this effort, please contact the one of the agencies on the following list to find out how you can help.

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Agencies

Church World Service (CWS)

www.churchworldservice.org

Domestic & Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS)

Episcopal Migration Ministries

www.episcopalchurch.org/emm/

Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)

www.ecdcinternational.org

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

www.hias.org

Bureau of Refugee Programs

Iowa Department of Human Services

www.dhs.state.ia.us/homepages/dhs/refugee

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

www.intrescom.org

Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service (LIRS)

www.lirs.org

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

www.refugees.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

www.usccb.org/mrs

World Relief (WR)

www.wr.org

How do I obtain more information about Iraqi refugee processing?

If you have a question that is not answered here, please e-mail your question to

Refquestions@wrapsnet.org. However, please remember that ***all Iraqi asylum seekers should register with UNHCR***. Submission of information to refquestions@wrapsnet.org should be considered an additional step in making individual circumstances known and is not a substitute for registration with UNHCR.