

# Answering Tough Questions About Refugees

Contributed by [HIAS](#)

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**WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THIS AS A JEW?** The Jewish people has been a refugee people since biblical times. In the United States, we know the devastating consequences of turning away refugees. Less than a century ago, refugees fleeing the Holocaust were marked as security threats to the U.S., denied entry, and sent back to Europe to be brutally murdered. Furthermore, the value of welcoming, protecting, and loving the stranger appears in the Torah 36 times according to the Talmud – more than any other value.

**ARE REFUGEES A SECURITY THREAT?** Refugees complete extensive security and medical screenings more rigorous than those for any other entrant to America – involving 5 U.S. government agencies – before they step foot on American soil. No person admitted through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has ever been implicated in a major fatal terrorist attack in the United States.

**WHY DOES THE UNITED STATES NEED TO WELCOME REFUGEES? CAN'T OTHER COUNTRIES DO IT?** When the U.S. welcomes refugees, the rest of the nations of the world follow suit. Other countries are also doing their part. Millions of refugees first flee to and make a life in the countries closest to them. For example, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have all taken in millions of Syrian refugees.

**AREN'T REFUGEES A DRAIN ON OUR ECONOMY? WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR HELPING THEM?** Refugees pay taxes, get jobs, and start businesses; they contribute much more to our economy than they take from it. According to one study, in Cleveland, local refugee services agencies spent about \$4.8 million in 2012 to help refugees get established, but the boon to the economy generated by those refugees weighed in at about \$48 million, roughly 10 times the initial resettlement costs.

**BUT AREN'T MANY OF THESE REFUGEES ANTI-SEMITIC?** Many refugees arriving in the United States have never met Jews before. The welcome they receive from Jewish organizations, individuals, and congregations combats anti-Semitism that may exist, breaks down their assumptions, and helps them more quickly become part of the diverse fabric of this country. Additionally, all refugees resettled in the U.S. receive mandatory cultural orientation helping them embrace their new multi-faith, multi-ethnic nation. Finally, we should not be a people who withhold refuge based on religion.