

**San Diego Regional Interfaith Collaborative**  
**Refugee Situation in San Diego**  
**HANDOUT**  
**2/28/2017**

*Note: A copy of this handout with active links is on the SDRIC Website under Gatherings:*  
<https://sandiegointerfaith.org/events/>

## OVERVIEW

Refugees are one class of legal immigrant, the others being asylees (those seeking political asylum) and those with SIV's - Special Immigrant Visas. SIV's are mainly Afghanis and Iraqis who assisted US armed forces for 5 years or more in country.

Resettlement agencies may also work with victims of human trafficking and parolees. A parolee is someone only allowed physical entry into the United States, for example, to obtain medical treatment in the U.S.; to visit a sick relative in the U.S.; to attend a funeral in the U.S.; to appear for and participate in civil litigation or criminal prosecution; and to prevent the inhumane separation of families.

*Key facts about refugees to the U.S. --* <http://pewrsr.ch/2jOkXN3>

*San Diego County is Tops in Resettlement --*

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/immigration/sdut-refugees-resettle-syria-iraq-chaldean-saigon-2015oct07-htmlstory.html>

*California Refugee Programs, State of CA - -* <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/RefugeeProgram/>  
<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/Refugee-Services>

*San Diego County Refugee Coordinator - Maggie Fenn Program Manager/CRC County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency CAP/Refugee Services |County of San Diego HHS 1255 Imperial Avenue, Suite 743 San Diego, CA 92101 Phone: (619) 338-2762 [Maggie.Fenn@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Maggie.Fenn@sdcounty.ca.gov)*

*San Diego County Stats - 2 reports that will provide you the number of refugees that were resettled in San Diego County and their countries of origin from federal fiscal year 15-16 and the first four months of the current federal fiscal year. Posted on the SDRIC website: <https://sandiegointerfaith.org/> This report is updated on a monthly basis and can always be found on the San Diego Refugee Forum website located [here](#).*

UN Refugee Agency <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us>

## U.S. Refugee Vetting And Resettlement Process

A refugee is a person forced to flee his or her home because of war or political upheaval and seek safety in another country. They have well-founded reasons to fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in social group or their political opinion. Refugee status is determined by the United Nations. Most refugees who enter the U.S. refugee admissions program are identified and referred for resettlement in the U.S. by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), a U.S. embassy or an approved humanitarian aid organization.

Once those refugees most in need are registered by the U.N. refugee agency, the U.S. then hand-selects every person who is admitted. The U.S. does not recognize as refugees people who have

committed violations of humanitarian and human rights law, including the crime of terrorism, as refugees.

Security screenings are intense and led by U.S. government authorities, including the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and multiple security agencies. The process typically takes up to 36 months and is followed by further security checks after refugees arrive in the States.

The U.S. government works with nine national resettlement agencies to help those refugees, who have been identified by the United Nations refugee agency and cleared for resettlement, to restart their lives in America. Refugees may be placed in a city where they have relatives or friends, or where there's an established community that shares their language or culture. Other considerations include the cost of living and a community's ability to provide medical services.

Before refugees leave the countries where they temporarily reside, they sign promissory notes agreeing to reimburse the U.S. government for travel costs. They also attend a class to learn about what to expect when they arrive in their new country, with briefings on American culture, U.S. laws, health benefits and other critical information.

Refugees are usually greeted and welcomed at the airport by case workers from resettlement agencies to ensure their transition is as comfortable as possible. Agencies are responsible for finding a suitable, affordable home for refugee families, something many of these refugees have gone without for years. Families also receive basic furnishings, food and other immediate assistance.

For the first 90 days, resettlement agencies work with state and local governments and community organizations to help new arrivals settle into their communities. These agencies will work with their clients for 5 years, or until they become citizens. They may also work beyond the 5 years with those who become legal residents.

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

Office of Refugee Resettlement <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/>

Department of State <https://www.state.gov/j/prm/releases/factsheets/2017/266447.htm>  
<https://www.state.gov/j/prm/>

## **AGENCIES WITH CONTRACTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT**

Four agencies in San Diego are contracted by the Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide resettlement services. All provide similar services which include adjusting their immigration status and any application, job prep, readiness and job search; immunizations, ESL, school registration, finding a living space, and transportation. All have similar caseloads, though caseload sizes vary, with the largest groups from Iraq, Syria, the Congo, Afghanistan, Iran and Somalia. Government funding is not sufficient to provide all the needed services, though a standard of care must be maintained.

Most referrals to the 4 agencies come through their respective national offices. Catholic Community Services, for example, receives about one-half from their national office and the other half from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Cuban and Haitian asylees). Catholic Charities is the designated agency for Cuban and Haitian asylees, while the International Rescue Committee is designated for Syrians.

The main need for support from the community is sponsoring a family and donations of either money or inkind. Other types of assistance include volunteer work, internships, hosting a fundraising campaign, encouraging others to get involved, employing refugees.

The four agencies are:

Alliance for African Assistance

<https://www.alliance-for-africa.org/> (619) 286-9052, [info@alliance-for-africa.org](mailto:info@alliance-for-africa.org)

Catholic Charities

<https://www.ccdsd.org/> 619-287-9454, [NToppozada@ccdsd.org](mailto:NToppozada@ccdsd.org)

International Rescue Committee

5348 University Ave, Suite 205, San Diego, CA 92105 | (619) 641-7510

David Murphy, Executive Director [SanDiego@Rescue.org](mailto:SanDiego@Rescue.org)

<https://www.rescue.org/united-states/san-diego-ca>

Jewish Family Service

<http://www.jfssd.org/site/PageServer> 858-637-3093, [etlevab@jfssd.org](mailto:etlevab@jfssd.org)

**Other Support Organizations**

These organizations may include or focus on one or more activities such as service, education, advocacy, funding or networking. See <http://immigrantsandiego.org/about/> for other organizations supporting refugees not listed here.

American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) - Teach and Learn Literacy

The ADC is the largest and oldest civil rights organization for American Arabs. The San Diego chapter has initiated a program to reach the largest group of new Syrian Americans in the United States! There are over 200 Syrian families and about 1500 individuals who must learn English as a first step to getting their driver's permits and licenses, and finding jobs. The ADC created a pilot program called Teach and Learn Literacy that is currently taking care of about 13 families. We are working under the umbrella of the Syrian Community Network - Heart 4 Refugees. Other partners include PANA (Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans). Teach and Learn Literacy is training volunteer ESL teachers with basic methods of teaching and sensitivity training. We aim to reach 75 families by the end of the summer through teams that go directly to the families' homes. If you are interested in teaching English, accompanying Syrians to ESL centers, and teaching English directly as part of a team, we will add your name to our volunteer list. [619 787-8505](tel:6197878505) [doris.bittar@gmail.com](mailto:doris.bittar@gmail.com)

American Civil Liberties Union

The ACLU has a long history of challenging the serious civil rights violations faced by immigrant communities. <https://www.aclusandiego.org/>

Anti Defamation League

The ADL's effort for refugees is based on 'Once We Were Strangers, Too':

[http://www.adl.org/civil-rights/immigration/c/once-we-were-strangers-](http://www.adl.org/civil-rights/immigration/c/once-we-were-strangers-too.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/#.WK0AwvkrJPY)

[too.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/#.WK0AwvkrJPY](http://www.adl.org/civil-rights/immigration/c/once-we-were-strangers-too.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/#.WK0AwvkrJPY)

<http://sandiego.adl.org/> (858) 565-6896 [mbauer@adl.org](mailto:mbauer@adl.org)

California Immigrant Policy Center

The California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC) is a statewide non-profit organization that advances pro-immigrant policy at the state and local level, focusing on issue areas such as health and human services, worker's rights, detention and deportation, immigrant integration, as well as workforce development and adult education. CIPC plays a leadership role in Sacramento, working alongside lawmakers, advocates, policy makers, and community members to support policies that benefit all Californians. [fgomez@caimmigrant.org](mailto:fgomez@caimmigrant.org) [www.caimmigrant.org](http://www.caimmigrant.org)

### Casa Cornelia Law Center

Casa Cornelia Law Center (CCLC) is a 501(c)(3) public interest law firm providing quality legal services to victims of human and civil rights violations. Casa Cornelia has a primary commitment to indigent persons within the immigrant community in Southern California. It seeks to educate others regarding the impact of immigration law and policy on the community and the public good. The mission and spirit of Casa Cornelia is rooted in the tradition of service of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus and that of its founder, Cornelia Connelly. It encompasses the belief that God has chosen to need men and women in every age to reveal God's love and to make known the reality of God's saving presence through their service to others. <http://www.casacornelia.org/> [LawCenter@CasaCornelia.org](mailto:LawCenter@CasaCornelia.org)

### Christ Ministry Center

Christ United Methodist Ministry Center is an ecumenical, non-profit faith-based urban ministry agency of The United Methodist Church (UMC) and home to several diverse congregations who share worship and education space. CMC has taken a leadership role in responding to Haitians entering San Diego. <http://www.christsd.com/> [parson@christsd.com](mailto:parson@christsd.com) (619) 284-9205

### Episcopal Refugee Network

ERN hosts food distributions, tutoring programs and assists newly-arrived refugees with translation, and transportation services to social service and doctor appointments. ERN has 4 employees, 3 are the caseworkers, and are themselves refugees. ERN is a separate nonprofit and a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese. Lisa DuMolt, Board President. [dumolt@cox.net](mailto:dumolt@cox.net)

### Helping Hands for Relief and Development

HHRD is committed to serve humanity by integrating resources for people in need. We strive to provide immediate response in disasters, and effective Programs in places of suffering, for the pleasure of Allah. <https://www.hhrd.org/> Issam, (760) 681-0755, [issam.lagrichi@hhrd.us](mailto:issam.lagrichi@hhrd.us)

### ICNA

ICNA Relief USA seeks to alleviate human suffering by providing caring and compassionate service to victims of adversities and survivors of disasters. ICNA Relief USA strives to build healthy communities, strengthen families and create opportunities for those in despair while maintaining dignity and advocating for basic human needs. <http://icnarelief.org/site2/index.php> [mohamed@icnarelief.org](mailto:mohamed@icnarelief.org)

### Leichtag Foundation

Multifaith Giving Circle is a Leichtag Foundation program supporting Syrian refugees new to San Diego with pooled donations. The circle will provide those of different faiths the chance to meet, study shared values, and work toward a common philanthropic vision. In a constructive and supportive environment, participants will learn about and from each other as well as from field experts. Logistics and giving amounts will be part of the group's start-up with administrative support provided by the Leichtag Foundation. We would love to have your congregation's participation. Sharyn Goodson at [sharyn@leichtag.org](mailto:sharyn@leichtag.org) to learn more. <http://www.leichtag.org/>

### Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees

The Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees (MFA) is the United States' leading interfaith response to the Syrian refugee crisis. [www.multifaithalliance.org](http://www.multifaithalliance.org) [Sana.Shtasel@multifaithalliance.org](mailto:Sana.Shtasel@multifaithalliance.org)

### New Americans Museum (NAM)

The Museum strives to promote understanding and interaction between newcomers and native-born Americans while helping our newest citizens connect with and prosper in their new homeland. The New Americans Museum is located at NTC Liberty Station and admission continues to be free. As a public forum, we invite community organizations to partner with the New Americans Museum on programming that may include: Oral and visual history projects, Visual and performing arts, Cultural events, Lectures and speaker series, Conferences, and arts Exhibitions. [contactus@namuseum.org](mailto:contactus@namuseum.org)  
<http://www.newamericansmuseum.org/> 2825 Dewey Rd. San Diego CA (619)756-7707,

### Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)

The Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA) is a research, public policy, and community organizing hub dedicated to advancing the full economic, social, & civic inclusion of refugees. <http://www.panasd.org/> (619) 732-6793, [Ramla@panasd.org](mailto:Ramla@panasd.org)

### St. Luke's Episcopal Church - North Park Project

The North Park Project is an effort to connect with the wider community to offer a vision of new Christian communities in the 21st century. This is being done through outreach with the goal of creating small groups and mentoring potential leaders. One effort is directed at refugee women based on work with the wider refugee community in San Diego. There is a bi-weekly bible study that is mostly Christian African refugee women and is held in translation (Arabic and English) and this will soon expand to include a more social group for refugee women hailing from anywhere and professing to any religion. <http://www.stlukesnorthpark.org/standwithrefugees>

### San Diego Immigrant Rights Consortium

The Consortium works to support comprehensive immigration reform, stop the spread of local policies and practices that target and violate the civil and human rights of immigrants, educate immigrants about their rights and the legal and other resources available to them, and educate the public about the important contributions of immigrants and counter the myths and misstatements made about immigrants. <http://immigrantsandiego.org/> (619) 363-3423, [hiram@alliancesd.org](mailto:hiram@alliancesd.org).

### San Diego Refugee Forum

The San Diego Refugee Forum is a professional association of organizations and advocates serving all populations fleeing persecution and seeking refuge in San Diego. The San Diego Refugee Forum meets monthly to exchange information and advocate on issues of concern to the community of people displaced by war and violent conflict who are now in San Diego. <http://www.sdreffugeeforum.org/> [SDRefugeeForum@gmail.com](mailto:SDRefugeeForum@gmail.com)

### Somali Family Services

Somali Family Service, guided by its community champions, helps Somali and other refugee and Immigrant families in becoming responsible, independent and contributing members of San Diego through its programs that promote health, educational and economic success, and leadership efforts. <http://www.somalifamilyservice.org/> 619-265-5821

### Syrian Community Network

SCN goals are to partner with refugee resettlement agencies in providing support to the newly-arrived Syrian refugees; connect refugees with appropriate services and community resources available; foster a relationship between the Syrian refugees and the larger San Diego community; and, establish cultural competency for staff working with Syrian refugees as well as for Syrians who need to learn about their new culture in the US. Congregations can be involved in the Adopt a Family or Mentorship program, where people can be matched with families and help them with doctor appointments, SSI appointments, transportation. This can be as much or as little as people are able to do. <http://syriancommunitynetwork.org/web/> [bayanne@syriancommunitynetwork.org](mailto:bayanne@syriancommunitynetwork.org)

### Survivors of Torture

The mission of Survivors of Torture is to facilitate the healing of torture survivors and their families; educate professionals and the public about torture and its consequences; and, advocate for the abolition of torture. <http://notorture.org/> 619-278-2400, [survivors@notorture.org](mailto:survivors@notorture.org)