

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)
Iraqi Processing – Frequently Asked Questions, 2016

Q: Who is eligible to be considered for the American Refugee Admissions Program?

A: In general; a refugee is a person who is across an international border and is unwilling or unable to return to home because of persecution in the past, or has well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, citizenship, belonging to a specific social group, or political opinion. Individuals who have left Iraq and believe they have been persecuted or have a fear of persecution which they can articulate must apply to the nearest office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to gain protection and assistance. The UNHCR offices are processing refugee applications and might refer their resettlement applications to a third country, including the United States, especially those who are found most exposed to danger and are in dire need to be resettled.

For more information regarding the standards and of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the criterion for resettlement decision as the best solution for refugees, refer to the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, available online: <http://www.unhcr.org/4a2ccf4c6.html>

Q: Is there any way to apply for the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP), if I was not referred by the (UNHCR)?

A: Yes, some Iraqis who have U.S affiliations can apply directly to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) without a need for a referral by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR).

Individuals whose descriptions fall under the categories mentioned below and who believe they are at risk or have experienced serious harm due to their affiliation with the United States Government since March 20th 2003, and who wish to be considered for resettlement in the United States as refugees may do so by initiating a case by contacting the Department of State Resettlement Support Center (RSC) using the contact information below. This program is known by Priority 2 or Direct Access (DAP).

The following individuals and their derivatives (spouse and children under 21) who have verified evidence of their employment affiliation with a United States entity may access the program:

1. Iraqis who were employed or still have full time jobs as interpreters/translators for the United States Government (USG) and the Multi-National Forces in Iraq (MNF-I).
2. Iraqis who were employed or still are with the United States Government in Iraq.
3. Iraqis who were employed or still are by an organization or entity tightly working with the United States mission in Iraq that has received funding by the United States Government (USG) through an official documented contract, award, grant or cooperative agreement.
4. Iraqis who were employed or still are at a United States based Media Organizations or NGOs in Iraq.

5. Spouses, children, siblings and parents of individuals in the four categories mentioned above or of individuals eligible for Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) due to his/her employment tightly with or on behalf of the United States Government in Iraq. Even if the individual is deceased, provided that there is proof of the affiliation
6. Iraqi beneficiaries of the approved I-130 Petition for Alien Relative. Please note that applicants who are qualified for the Direct Access Program (DAP) under this 6th category will be directly contacted by the Department of State in regards of initiating their application, they must not contact the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) directly.

As of February 2016, application processing will be available in the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. We do not anticipate application processing will be available in Syrian or Turkey.

Individuals under the categories 1-5 above and residing in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or United Arab Emirates, can initiate their case by contacting Resettlement Support Center in the Middle East and North Africa (RSC MENA) which is operated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at IC@iom.int

Individuals under the categories 1-5 above and are residing in Lebanon can initiate their case by contacting the Resettlement Support Center in Turkey and the Middle East (RSC TuME) which is operated by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), at info.rsc@icmc.net

Please note that referring the refugee cases in Lebanon by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is unnecessary to enter the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), however, the exit permits by the Lebanese government requires of those individuals to be registered at the UNHCR.

In addition to that, Iraqis are eligible for Priority-3 (P-3) to access the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) if they are outside of Iraq and have immediate family members in the United States who entered initially as refugees or have obtained asylum. The following relatives of a family residing in the United States; are eligible to the Priority-3 (P-3):

Spouse, unmarried children below the age of 21 and/or the parents.

A member of the family residing in the United States can apply for a spouse of the same sex if a legal marriage was conducted and documented. To start an application through this program, a member of the family residing in the United States must contact his/her Resettlement Agency (RA) for assistance in filing an Affidavit of Relationship on behalf of his/her Iraqi relatives residing abroad.

Q: What if I am an Iraqi still residing in Iraq?

A: It is possible for some Iraqis and those who have United States affiliation (mentioned above) to apply for consideration to the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) within the Priority 2 program, rather than having to cross international border.

If you would like for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to refer your case file to access the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) or to be eligible for Priority 3, you must cross the international border and currently be outside of your home country.

Q: I am an Iraqi refugee in Syria. How can I apply for resettlement in the United States?

A: Due to the current ongoing situation and the shutdown of the United States embassy in Syria, the United States officials are currently unable to enter Syria to conduct interviews. While we wish to resume these interviews in Syria in the future, unfortunately that is impossible now with the current security problems.

We would like to thank you for your patience through these difficult times and assure you that the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) did not close in Syria, please note that:

- In regards of the individuals who completed all the steps of the United States paperwork, we continue to arrange your safe travel from Syria to the United States.
- In regards of the individuals who had their interview with the United States official, we are making the necessary steps to process and complete your case file completely.
- In regards of the individuals who have not yet had their interview with the United States official, we advise you to be patient.

We are aware that some refugees had left Syria for security reasons, however, we cannot advise you to leave or stay. Only you can determine your security status in Syria. If you left Syria for your safety and moved to a neighboring country, including Iraq, the United States will continue to process your case in your new location.

If you left Syria, please contact the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in your new country of residence. Please contact the following emails:

- Resettlement Support Center in the Middle East and North Africa (RSC MENA), operated by the International Organization of Migration (IOM): IC@iom.int for refugees in the Middle East and North Africa (except for Lebanon).
- Resettlement Support Center in Turkey and the Middle East (RSC TuME) which is operated by International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC): info.rsc@icmc.net (for refugees in Turkey and Lebanon).

Q: What if I am an Iraqi citizen currently in the United States; unable to return to my home country?

A: Iraqis who are currently in the United States and are unable to return to Iraq as a result of being persecuted or have a fear of persecution based on their race, religion, citizenship, belonging to a specific social group or because of their political views, can file a refugee application to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Information on the application process for asylum in the United States is available on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website at: <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/asylum>

Q: What if I have family members in the United States?

A: There are multiple options available for a chance of family reunification, all which depend on your relative's legal status in the United States.

Citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States may apply for the I-130 Petition for Alien Relative. United States citizens may apply for: Spouse, children (regardless of age or social status), siblings or parents. Lawful permanent residents (LPRs) can apply for: Spouse, unmarried children under the age 21, and unmarried adult children. For more information please visit the following website: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-130>

Iraqis who were admitted into the United States as principle applicants (RE-1) or were granted refugee status as (AS-1) may also file an I-170 refugee/Asylum Relative Petition form (known as follow-to-join Petition or Visa 92/93) for spouse or unmarried children under 21 years of age. This petition must be filed with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within the first two years of your arrival to the United States of America. For more information please visit: <http://www.uscis.gov/i-730>

Moreover, Iraqis that were resettled through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) or were granted refugee status to the United States may file an affidavit of relationship (AOR) for their spouse, parents, and unmarried children under the age of 21 who currently reside outside their home country and that is so they can apply for refugee resettlement through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). This application must be submitted to the Department of State through one of the local partners under the resettlement agency located at the refugee's area of residence. The local partners' directory is available on the following website: <http://snip.state.gov/cdr>

Q: In the case my file is referred to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), how long does the resettlement process take?

A: Resettlement consists of multiple steps, a case referral to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) or Priority-2 or Priority-3 direct access application (if eligible) is considered the first. Upon receiving a referral or the application and the determination has been made of whether the individual is qualified for consideration or not, the United States Department of State then instructs the Resettlement Support Center (RSC), which is funded by the State Department, to prepare the case file.

The next step is for the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) to conduct the pre-screening interview, this process includes biometrics, data collecting and initiating security checks. Afterwards, all applicants must have interviews with an immigration officer from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) which is under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will then make the final decision about

the applicant's eligibility for resettlement. If they are granted refugee status, all applicants must undergo the medical examination and receive cultural orientation. An NGO in the United States will then agree to be the refugee's sponsor.

Once all security checks are clear and medical examinations are completed, the travel trips for the approved applicants to the United States are booked by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), they are also given a loan to cover their travel expenses. The time spent for completing all procedures varies, although the average period it takes for processing worldwide is 18-24 months from the time of referral or application until arrival in the United States. Every case is different, and so is the waiting period.

Q: If my case was referred by the UNHCR or I applied directly, am I guaranteed resettlement?

A: The answer is no, the decision to approve an applicant to the United States as a refugee is made by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after an in-person interview has been conducted by an officer from DHS's United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The decision is based on the various merits of each case. A referral or an application to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) by an eligible applicant only provides access to the interview with the officer from DHS but does not guarantee entry to the United States.

Q: If I am granted refugee status, how long can I remain in the United States?

A: Resettlement through the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is permanent. Those whom were found to be refugee and were granted entry will be relocated to the United States to start new lives. They will be provided with assistance for a short period in regards of housing, medical appointments, and other services upon arrival. However, it is expected of them to search for work and become fully independent as soon as possible. Eligible refugees must apply adjust status which is of lawful permanent residents (LPR) after one year and apply to get the United States citizenship after 5 five years.

Q: What are the benefits that I will get if I become a refugee?

A: Individuals entering the United States as refugees are sponsored by one of the nine resettlement agencies participating in the Refugee Admissions Reception and Placement (R&P). The sponsoring agency is responsible for providing primary services which include housing and basic furniture, food supplies, necessary seasonal clothing, cultural orientation, and assistance to receive other services whether they are social, medical, or employment services during the first 30-90 days for the refugees in the United States.

For more informations regarding the Reception and Placement Program (R&P) please visit the website: <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/index.htm>

In addition to the Reception and Placement Program (R&P), refugees may also be eligible to receive additional services from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). For more information

regarding the HHS benefits please visit the Office of Refugee Resettlement (OOR)'s website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr>

Q: How can I find out the status of my resettlement case?

A: All inquiries regarding the status of a case that was referred by the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) must be addressed to the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) which is assisting with your case. Arab language speakers are available to answer questions.

If your case is being processed in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates, please contact your Resettlement Support Center in the Middle East and North Africa (RSC MENA) operated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), at IC@IOM.int or by calling the number +962 (6) 520 6130. You can also inquire into your case status through the following

website: <http://www.jordan.iom.int/refinfo>

If your case processing is in Lebanon or Turkey, please contact the Resettlement Support Center in Turkey and the Middle East (RSC TuME) which is operated by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), at info.rsc@icmc.net or by calling (0.212) 219 20 55

You may also check the status of your case on the website:
rsc.icmc.net

Please be prepared to provide the Resettlement Support Center (RSC) with your complete name, date of birth, and your case number which consists of 6 digits for example (JO-123456). The RSC will not share information about your case status with any other entity including your family members, and that is due to strict confidentiality guidelines.

The United States Department of State and its Resettlement Support Centers (RSCs) cannot provide information on cases still pending referral after approval by the UNHCR. Individuals must contact the UNHCR directly for their case status.

Q: How can I receive more information regarding the Special Immigrant Visa Program (SIV) for those who were employed with or on behalf of the United States Government?

A: The Special Immigrant Visa Program (SIV) was ratified under the provision 1244 of the refugee crisis in Iraq law in 2008, with some adjustments. The final date of application for this program was on September 30th 2014; in result the program in Iraq no longer receives new applications. Iraqis who applied previous to that will still be considered for the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). For more information regarding the SIV for Iraqis, please visit the following

website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/immigrate/iraqis-work-for-us.html>

What if I am writing on behalf of a member of the Congress?

A: All inquiries regarding case status should be directed to the Department of State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H). If a question is addressed to the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), a representative of the suitable office will respond at the appropriate time.

Q: I live in the United States and would like to assist resettled refugees. How can I help?

A: Every refugee admitted to the United States is sponsored by one of the nine resettlement agencies in partnership with local partners which provide direct services to the refugees in 175 locations spread across the country. Initial services funded by the Department of State include: reception of the refugees upon arrival at the airport, arrangement for housing and basic furniture, food, clothing and cultural orientation, in addition to assistance to be able to access other social, medical, and employment services. The local partners have their own procedures regarding working with volunteers and collecting donations. We encourage you to contact the local partner(s) available in your area to learn about how you could help. In most areas there are more than one refugee resettlement local partner. Although this does not count as an endorsement, but you can check out the directory of the local partners available on:

<http://snip.state.gov/cd>

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Q: How can I receive more information about Iraqi Refugee processing?

A: Additional information on Iraqi refugee assistance and resettlement is available on the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration (PRM) website: <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/index.htm>

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is free of charge for all applicants. There is no need for the involvement of a third party such as an attorney or advocacy organization, regarding access.

