

**PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS**  
*for*  
**FISCAL YEAR 2009**

**REPORT TO THE CONGRESS**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
TO THE  
COMMITTEES ON THE JUDICIARY  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
AND  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
SECTION 207(e) (1)-(7)  
OF THE  
IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT

**United States Department of State**  
**United States Department of Homeland Security**  
**United States Department of Health and Human Services**



## *INTRODUCTION*

This *Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2009: Report to the Congress* is submitted in compliance with Section 207(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The Act requires that before the start of the fiscal year and, to the extent possible, at least two weeks prior to consultations on refugee admissions, members of the Committees on the Judiciary of the Senate and the House of Representatives be provided with the following information:

- (1) A description of the nature of the refugee situation;
- (2) A description of the number and allocation of the refugees to be admitted and an analysis of conditions within the countries from which they came;
- (3) A description of the plans for their movement and resettlement and the estimated cost of their movement and resettlement;
- (4) An analysis of the anticipated social, economic, and demographic impact of their admission to the United States;<sup>i</sup>
- (5) A description of the extent to which other countries will admit and assist in the resettlement of such refugees;
- (6) An analysis of the impact of the participation of the United States in the resettlement of such refugees on the foreign policy interests of the United States; and
- (7) Such additional information as may be appropriate or requested by such members.

In addition, this report contains information as required by Section 602(d) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292, October 27, 1998, 112 Stat. 2787) (IRFA) about religious persecution of refugee populations eligible for consideration for admission to the United States. This report meets the reporting requirements of Section 305(b) of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-333, October 18, 2004, 118 Stat. 1287) by providing information about specific measures taken to facilitate access to the United States refugee program for individuals who have fled “countries of particular concern” for violations of religious freedoms, identified pursuant to Section 402(b) of the IRFA.

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<sup>i</sup> Detailed discussion of the anticipated social and economic impact, including secondary migration, of the admission of refugees to the United States is being provided in the *Report to the Congress* of the Refugee Resettlement Program, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services.

## *FOREWORD*

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a humanitarian effort that reflects American compassion for some of the world's most vulnerable persons. As Secretary Rice has said, "the commitment of the United States to protecting and assisting refugees is deep and abiding. This commitment is a part of our nation's history and it goes to our very core values." First Lady Laura Bush echoed this commitment on World Refugee Day on June 20, 2008. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program advances U.S. foreign policy and national security interests by championing human dignity. We manage the program to extend our traditional humanitarian values while protecting our national security.

The number of refugees in the world has climbed in the past year to nearly 16 million. Afghans, Iraqis, and Sudanese are among the largest refugee populations. The United States Government has supported one million voluntary refugee returns and reintegration efforts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mauritania, and southern Sudan over the last several years. Over 350,000 Afghans returned from Pakistan and Iran in 2007. Local integration continues to be an important solution for protracted refugee situations in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Third-country refugee resettlement programs are also critical for helping refugees. Resettlement programs help relieve pressure on countries of first asylum, save lives, and forge durable solutions. Because the USRAP identifies persons in often remote and/or dangerous places overseas, there will always be logistical and political challenges. The Administration continues to champion this program because it offers opportunities for saving lives, reuniting families, and ending protracted refugee situations.

The U.S. Government has improved the flexibility of the USRAP. Over the past year, President Bush has signed into law two significant provisions which facilitate the resettlement of legitimate refugees into the United States. First, Subsection 691(a) of Division J of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, Pub L. 110-161, 121 Stat 1844 broadened the discretionary authority of the Executive Branch to exempt an alien from terrorism related bars to his or her admission to the United States. Section 691(b) further provides that certain groups, which the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security had previously determined should not be a bar to admission, shall no longer be considered terrorist organizations for purposes of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) based on their past

activities. These new provisions will permit us to resettle thousands of otherwise eligible and deserving refugees, who had previously been barred. They will also allow for some refugees that were already resettled in the United States to now adjust to legal permanent residency status. Acting jointly, the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security have already used their expanded authority to supplement the relief provided in subsection 691(b) by exempting individuals not otherwise covered by the subsection's provisions from bars to admission arising out of individual actions they undertook in connection with the groups named.

In addition, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to apply the exemptions that were previously issued to provide relief to aliens, including refugees who provided material support under duress to terrorist organizations, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), and the National Liberation Army of Columbia (ELN). As was the case under the Executive's previous more limited authority, exemptions under this new authority have been and will continue to be applied consistent with U.S. national interests in a manner that does not compromise national security. More than 5,600 refugees have received exemptions to date permitting them to be admitted to the United States. DHS has issued implementation guidance to its adjudicators on the expanded authority and the Administration is identifying further categories of aliens that should benefit from the exercise of this authority.

On January 28, 2008, President Bush signed the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act as part of the Defense Authorization Act, which created new access categories under the USRAP for certain Iraqis with ties to the United States and directed that in-country processing be made available to these Iraqis. Processing of such Iraqis is already underway in Baghdad. The bill contained other important provisions, including the creation of a substantial number of Special Immigrant Visas for persons affiliated with the United States Government, which will provide an important avenue separate from the USRAP for Iraqis seeking admission to the United States.

A third improvement in the U.S. Government's ability to adjudicate refugee applications has been the expansion of DHS's capacity to interview refugee applicants. The Refugee Corps has expanded to 45 officers, and substantial additional growth is anticipated in FY2009. Complemented with adjudicators from DHS's overseas district offices and staff detailed from other programs, this has allowed us to expand the reach of the program substantially. As a result, during

the past year, the United States has admitted refugees of over 56 nationalities who were processed in over 50 locations.

Refugee advocates and resettlement agencies in the United States have urged us to take steps to even the flow of refugee arrivals into the United States over the fiscal year in order to reduce the historical “spike” in refugee admissions during the final quarter. In order to both increase the numbers of refugees we consider for admission and to even out the arrivals throughout the year, the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) has coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) to conduct more interviews earlier in this fiscal year than in previous years. DHS/USCIS conducted 67% more interviews in the first half of FY08 than in the same period in FY07. We have also scheduled 40% more interviews in the second half of FY 08 than in the same period last year. The cooperation between PRM and DHS/USCIS on these issues is excellent.

Another important dynamic was the very welcome increase in refugee referrals to resettlement countries by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This development is allowing many thousands of vulnerable refugees to be considered for resettlement. In 2007, UNHCR increased its referrals by more than 100% to 98,983 persons, some 74,431 of whom were referred for consideration by the United States. This has had tangible side benefits for other refugees as well. It creates opportunities for UNHCR to work more effectively with host countries to achieve durable solutions including voluntary return and local integration. For example, when the United States committed to resettle several thousand Burundians living in Tanzania, commonly called the “1972 Burundians,” the Government of Tanzania responded by offering some 100,000 Burundians local integration.

There has been significant attention in the last year to the U.S. Government’s commitment to admit 12,000 Iraqi refugees into the United States. Iraqis now represent the third largest refugee population in the world. This goal was established in 2007 with the knowledge that we were building an Iraqi resettlement program from the ground up in countries such as Syria and Jordan where there was limited or no history of, or infrastructure for, refugee resettlement operations. We have worked hard to overcome these obstacles. We are grateful for the cooperation of UNHCR in providing a large number of resettlement candidates to the United States -- more than 27,000. As of July 2008, DHS/USCIS has interviewed more than 24,000 Iraqi applicants and conditionally or fully approved 17,600. We are on track to meet our goal of admitting 12,000 Iraqi

refugees. We appreciate that hosting large numbers of refugees has imposed significant infra-structure costs on Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and other countries, and the U.S. has provided substantial financial resources, primarily through international organizations, to meet refugee needs and to help host countries shoulder this burden.

PRM has continued to maintain vigorous efforts to resolve protracted refugee situations. We are currently undertaking large-scale efforts to resettle Burmese from Thailand and Malaysia as well as Bhutanese from Nepal. We continue to focus on resettlement from Africa, including admitting refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. We will continue to work with UNHCR on group referrals and consult with host governments about such resettlement efforts.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is a source of pride for the American people. Refugees who come to the U.S. have experienced, or have a well-founded fear of, persecution. Some have experienced torture or witnessed the murder of family members. They and their families have felt great despair. This program enables refugees to start new lives in a country that welcomes them. This program enjoys deep bipartisan support because it saves lives and creates opportunities for people in tremendous need. The resettled refugees, the communities that welcome them, and the international and non-governmental organizations that support their resettlement and integration all gain from their participation in this program.

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## ***I. OVERVIEW OF U.S. REFUGEE POLICY***

At the end of 2007, the estimated refugee population worldwide stood at 15.9 million, with 11.4 million under the care of UNHCR. This reflects a continued recent upward trend in global refugee numbers, which at the end of 2006 was 14.3 million. The United States actively supports efforts to provide protection, assistance, and durable solutions to refugees, as these are important foreign policy goals of the United States. Combined with humanitarian diplomacy, U.S. financial contributions to international and non-governmental organizations are vital to achieving these goals. Under the authority in the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, as amended, the United States contributes to the programs of UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other international and non-governmental organizations that provide protection and assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), victims of conflict, and other vulnerable migrants. These contributions address the legal and physical protection needs of refugees as well as their basic assistance needs for water, sanitation, food, health care, shelter, education, and other services. The United States monitors these programs to ensure the most effective use of resources, maximizing humanitarian impact for the benefit of refugees and IDPs.

During FY 2008, the United States has continued to support the achievement of durable solutions for refugees through voluntary repatriation programs around the world. In seeking durable solutions for refugees, the United States and UNHCR recognize that - for most refugees - safe voluntary return to their homelands is their preferred solution. The United States and UNHCR also recognize resettlement in third countries as a vital tool for providing refugees protection and/or durable solutions. Local integration in countries of asylum can also provide a durable solution for many who cannot return to their homes. Refugee repatriation operations to countries including Mauritania, Afghanistan, Liberia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sudan have proceeded during FY 2008, representing significant progress in the protection of refugees, as well as in their home countries' stabilization, reconstruction and development.

Where peace and opportunities for return remain elusive, the United States and partners pursue self-sufficiency and temporary local integration.

The Department of State works diplomatically to encourage host governments to uphold their responsibilities to protect refugees and IDPs through local integration and provides assistance to help meet these humanitarian needs. When peace and opportunities for return are possible but not all refugees wish to avail themselves of the voluntary repatriation solution, the United States and partners pursue permanent local integration. Afghans in India and Pakistan, Liberians and Sierra Leoneans in Nigeria, Mauritians in Senegal, and Colombians in Ecuador and Costa Rica are among those populations for whom opportunities for local integration have recently become possible.

UNHCR estimates that at least some three million people worldwide are not recognized as nationals by any state and are therefore legally or *de facto* stateless. Without citizenship in any country, many exist in refugee-like situations, unable to claim rights and denied even the most basic protections of law. The United States has supported UNHCR's efforts to achieve solutions for stateless persons, including addressing gaps in citizenship laws and promoting fair application of those laws. For example, in FY 2007 the Department of State provided funding to UNHCR's Burma program to provide temporary identification and access to school for stateless Rohingya in Northern Rakhine State. In addition, to focus greater attention on this "hidden" population in need of protection, the Department of State began devoting a distinct sub-section on the issue of statelessness in its annual country Human Rights Reports.

Resettlement to third countries, including the United States, is considered for refugees in urgent need of protection as well as for those for whom other durable solutions are not feasible. For some refugees, resettlement is the best, or perhaps only, alternative. The United States also encourages UNHCR to refer for resettlement stateless individuals and groups for whom other durable solutions are not possible, even if they are located in their country of habitual residence.

Recognizing the importance of ensuring UNHCR's capacity to identify and to refer refugees in need of resettlement, the U.S. Government has for more than a decade provided financial support to expand and improve the organization's resettlement infrastructure. As a result of this initiative, UNHCR has boosted referrals to the U.S. and other resettlement countries by many thousands each year. We will continue to work with UNHCR and consult with host governments on group referrals. We have at

times in the past used targeted response teams to study resettlement needs and organized refugee referral workshops to allow qualified non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to refer refugee applicants to the program. We may continue such efforts in the future.

The United States has also supported UNHCR's efforts to expand the number of countries active in resettlement and engaged bilaterally on the issue. In 2007, UNHCR referred refugees to 25 countries for resettlement consideration. Some 90 percent were referred to the United States, Canada, and Australia. Smaller numbers of referrals were accepted by New Zealand, Chile, Brazil, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Iceland, and Ireland. In addition, Argentina, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Mexico, Spain, and Italy each accepted some refugees for resettlement.

While the overall number of refugees referred by UNHCR and the percentage resettled by various countries fluctuate from year to year, the United States aims to provide resettlement consideration to at least 50 percent of all refugees referred by UNHCR worldwide, depending on availability of funds. We have encouraged UNHCR to make further strategic use of resettlement and to expand the number of referrals it makes annually. In calendar year 2007, the United States resettled some 64 percent of the total number of UNHCR-referred refugees resettled in third countries (see Table IX).

The overall foreign policy interests of the United States are often advanced by our willingness to work with first-asylum and resettlement countries to address refugee issues. In some locations, the prompt resettlement of politically sensitive cases has helped defuse regional tensions. During the past few years, U.S. resettlement efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and East Asia have helped energize efforts by UNHCR and other countries to ensure that resettlement is accorded to those in need and that first asylum is maintained for the larger population.

During its 28-year history, the USRAP has responded to changing refugee circumstances. Even before the events of September 11, 2001, the end of the Cold War had dramatically altered the context in which the USRAP operates worldwide. Having shifted its focus away from large groups concentrated in a few locations, primarily refugees from Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and the former Yugoslavia, the program began to offer resettlement to refugees of over 50 nationalities per year. Interviews

are often conducted in remote locations. The USRAP continues to work to balance humanitarian commitments and national security concerns.

Refugees resettled in the United States contribute positively to the diversity and enrichment of our country. The U.S. program emphasizes the goal that refugees become economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Department of Health and Human Services-funded programs administered by individual states and the District of Columbia provide cash and medical assistance, training programs, employment, and other support services to arriving refugees. A variety of institutional providers perform these services, including the voluntary agencies that provide initial reception and placement services under cooperative agreements with the Department of State.

The Department of State works domestically with agencies participating in the Reception and Placement (R&P) program to ensure that they are able to provide services according to established standards. A significant proportion of arriving refugees do not have close family members already living in the United States to help with their adjustment and integration. Refugees are increasingly diverse linguistically, with wide-ranging educational and employment histories. The shortage of available affordable housing, particularly in urban areas, continues. All of these factors challenge the resettlement agencies to adjust their practices to meet the needs of refugees in the program.

## II. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM FOR FY 2009

### PROPOSED CEILINGS

**TABLE I**  
**REFUGEE ADMISSIONS IN FY 2007 AND FY 2008,**  
**PROPOSED REFUGEE ADMISSIONS BY REGION FOR FY 2009**

<b>REGION</b>	<b>FY 2007 ACTUAL ARRIVALS</b>	<b>FY 2008 CEILING</b>	<b>FY 2008 REVISED CEILING</b>	<b>FY 2008 PROJECTED ARRIVALS</b>	<b>PROPOSED FY 2009 CEILING</b>
Africa	17,482,	16,000		8,000	<b>12,000</b>
East Asia	15,643	20,000		18,000	<b>19,000</b>
Europe and Central Asia	4561	3,000		3,000	<b>2,500</b>
Latin America/Caribbean	2,976	3,000	5,000*	4,500	<b>4,500</b>
Near East/South Asia	7,619	28,000		25,500	<b>37,000</b>
Regional Subtotal	48,281	70,000	72,000	59,000	<b>75,000</b>
Unallocated Reserve		10,000	8,000		<b>5,000</b>
Total	48,281	80,000	80,000	59,000	<b>80,000</b>

\* 2,000 admissions numbers from the Unallocated Reserve were allocated during the fourth quarter of FY 2008 to the Latin America/Caribbean ceiling because refugee arrivals were projected to exceed the original ceiling.

In addition to the proposed regional allocations, some refugees are considered for resettlement through in-country refugee programs. Generally, the refugee definition requires that a person be outside his or her country of nationality or, if stateless, outside his or her country of last habitual residence. Under INA § 101(a)(42)(B), however, the President may specify circumstances under which individuals who are within their countries of nationality or last habitual residence may meet the refugee definition. The FY 2009 proposal recommends continuing such in-country processing for specified groups in Iraq, Cuba, Vietnam, and the countries of the former Soviet Union, and stateless individuals referred by UNHCR. Persons for whom resettlement is requested by a U.S. ambassador in any location in the world may also be considered, with the understanding that they will only be referred to the USRAP following PRM consultation with DHS/USCIS.

## ***Unallocated Reserve***

This proposal includes 5,000 unallocated admissions numbers to be used if needed for additional refugee admissions from any region. The unallocated numbers would only be used following notification to Congress.

## **ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES**

### ***Eligibility Criteria***

The Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is responsible for coordinating and managing the USRAP. A critical part of this responsibility is determining which individuals or groups from among the millions of “refugees” worldwide will have access to U.S. resettlement consideration. PRM coordinates within the Department of State, as well as with the Department of Homeland Security U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) and other agencies in carrying out this responsibility.

Section 207(a)(3) of the INA states that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program shall allocate admissions among refugees “...of special humanitarian concern to the United States in accordance with a determination made by the President after appropriate consultation.” Which individuals are “of special humanitarian concern” to the United States for the purpose of refugee resettlement consideration is determined through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program priority system. There are currently three priorities or categories of cases that have access to the USRAP:

- Priority 1 – Individual cases referred to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement;
- Priority 2 – Groups of cases designated as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement;
- Priority 3 – Individual cases from eligible nationalities granted access for purposes of reunification with anchor family members already in the United States.

(Note: Refugees resettled in the United States may also seek the admission of spouses and unmarried children under 21 still abroad by filing a “Following to Join” petition which obviates the need for a separate refugee

claim adjudication. This option is described in more detail in the discussion of Visas 93 below.)

Access to the program under one of the above-listed processing priorities does not mean an applicant meets the U.S. statutory “refugee” definition or is admissible to the United States. The ultimate determination as to whether an applicant can be admitted as a refugee is made by DHS/USCIS in accordance with criteria set forth in the INA. Applicants who are eligible for access within the established priorities are presented to DHS/USCIS officers for interview.

Although the access categories to the USRAP are referred to as “processing priorities,” it is important to note that assignment to a certain priority does not establish precedence in the order in which cases will be processed. Once cases are established as eligible for access under one of the three processing priorities, they all undergo the same processing steps.

#### **PRIORITY 1 – INDIVIDUAL REFERRALS**

Priority 1 allows consideration of refugee claims from persons of any nationality<sup>2</sup>, in any location, for whom resettlement appears to be the appropriate durable solution. Priority 1 cases are identified and referred to the program by UNHCR, a U.S. embassy, or a designated NGO. UNHCR, which has the international mandate worldwide to provide protection to refugees, has historically referred the vast majority of cases under this priority. NGOs providing humanitarian assistance in locations where there are large concentrations of refugees may also undergo training by PRM in order to be eligible to provide Priority 1 referrals.

#### ***Process for Priority 1 Individual Referral Applications***

Priority 1 referrals from UNHCR and NGOs are generally submitted to the appropriate Regional Refugee Coordinator, who reviews the submissions for completeness and to determine whether they meet the standard of being of special humanitarian concern to the United States. If they meet this requirement, the Refugee Coordinator then forwards them to the appropriate Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) for case processing and scheduling of the DHS/USCIS interview. PRM’s Office of Admissions reviews embassy referrals for completeness and to ensure that the cases are

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<sup>2</sup> Referrals of North Koreans and Palestinians require State Department and DHS concurrence before they may be granted access.

of special humanitarian concern to the United States and may consult with DHS in considering these referrals.

A U.S. ambassador may make a Priority 1 referral for persons still in their country of origin if the ambassador determines that such cases meet the general referral criteria. Such an in-country Embassy referral can be made with the understanding that Significant Public Benefit Parole (SPBP – a program administered by the Department of Homeland Security) may be a more appropriate option in most cases.

## **PRIORITY 2 – GROUP REFERRALS**

Priority 2 includes specific groups (within certain nationalities, clans or ethnic groups, sometimes in specified locations) identified by the Department of State in consultation with DHS/USCIS, NGOs, UNHCR, and other experts as being in need of resettlement. Some Priority 2 groups are processed in their country of origin. The process of identifying the group and its characteristics includes consideration of whether the group is of special humanitarian concern to the United States and whether members of the group will likely be able to qualify for admission as refugees under U.S. law. Groups may be designated as Priority 2 during the course of the year as circumstances dictate and the need for resettlement arises.

Priority 2 group referrals are typically developed with the involvement of UNHCR, Refugee Coordinators, NGOs, PRM program officers, or other State Department officials. PRM plays the coordinating role for all group referrals to the USRAP. There is no minimum or maximum number of applicants required for a group referral.

There are two distinct models of Priority 2 access to the program: open access and predefined group access. Under both models, Priority 2 designations are made based on shared characteristics that define the group. In general, the possession of these characteristics is the reason the group has been persecuted in the past or faces persecution in the future.

The open-access model for Priority 2 group referrals allows individuals to seek access to the program on the basis of meeting designated criteria. To establish an open-access Priority 2 group, PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, and (as appropriate) with UNHCR and others, defines the specific criteria for access. Once the designation is in place, applicants may approach the program at any of the processing locations specified as

available for the group to begin the application process. Applicants must demonstrate that they possess the required characteristic(s) to establish eligibility for inclusion.

The open-access model has functioned well in the in-country programs including the long-standing programs in the former Soviet Union, Cuba, and Vietnam. It was also used successfully for Bosnian refugees during the 1990s and is now in use for Iranian religious minorities and Iraqis with links to the U.S.

The OPE(s) responsible for handling open-access Priority 2 applications, working under the direction of PRM, make a preliminary determination as to whether the applicants qualify for access and should be presented to DHS/USCIS for interview. Applicants who clearly do not meet the access requirements are “screened out” prior to DHS/USCIS interview.

A predefined group is clearly identified both in number and location and linked to a specific list of eligible refugee applicants. Once PRM has established the access eligibility criteria for the group, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, the referring entity provides a list of eligible refugee applicants for processing. This type of group referral is advantageous in situations in which the intensive labor required to generate individual referrals would be impracticable, potentially harmful, or counterproductive. Often predefined groups are composed of persons with similar persecution claims. The predefined group referral process is a step-saver and can conserve scarce resources, particularly for UNHCR. Predefined group referrals with clear, well-defined eligibility criteria and several methods for crosschecking group membership can serve as a fraud deterrent as well, preventing non-group members from gaining access to the USRAP by fraudulently claiming group membership. It can also speed the resettlement process in cases where immediate protection concerns are present.

## **FY 2009 Priority 2 Designations**

### ***In-country processing programs***

The following ongoing programs that process individuals still in their country of origin under Priority 2 group designations will continue in FY 2009:

### Former Soviet Union

This Priority 2 designation applies to Jews, Evangelical Christians, and Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox religious activists identified in the Lautenberg Amendment, Public Law No. 101-167, § 599D, 103 Stat. 1261 (1989), as amended (“Lautenberg Amendment”), with close family in the United States.

### Cuba

Included in this Priority 2 program are human rights activists, members of persecuted religious minorities, former political prisoners, forced-labor conscripts (1965-68), persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs or activities, and persons who have experienced or fear harm because of their relationship – family or social – to someone who falls under one of the preceding categories.

### Vietnam

This Priority 2 designation includes the few remaining active cases eligible under the former Orderly Departure Program (ODP) and Resettlement Opportunity for Vietnamese Returnees (ROVR) programs. In addition, it includes the Humanitarian Resettlement initiative opened during FY 2006 to permit consideration of individuals who, due to no fault of their own, were unable to access the ODP program prior to its cut-off date. It also includes Amerasian immigrants, whose numbers are counted as refugee admissions.

### Iraqis Associated with the United States Government

Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the USG, a USG-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing in Iraq.

### ***Groups of Humanitarian Concern outside the Country of Origin***

The following Priority 2 groups are already designated and, in most cases, undergoing processing with significant arrivals anticipated during FY 2009. (Additional Priority 2 groups may be designated over the course of the year.)

#### Ethnic Minorities and others from Burma in camps in Thailand

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, individuals who have fled Burma and who are registered in nine refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border and who are identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement are eligible for processing.

#### Ethnic Minorities and others from Burma in Malaysia

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, individuals who have fled Burma and who are recognized by UNHCR as refugees in Malaysia and identified as being in need of resettlement are eligible for processing.

#### Burundians in Tanzania

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, UNHCR-identified Burundian refugees who originally fled Burundi in 1972 to other countries and subsequently moved to Tanzania owing to conflict in those original asylum countries and who have no possibility either to settle permanently in Tanzania or return to Burundi are eligible for processing. Most of these individuals will arrive by the end of FY 2008 and we expect very few arrivals under this designation in FY 2009.

#### Bhutanese in Nepal

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, Bhutanese refugees registered by UNHCR in camps in Nepal and identified as in need of resettlement are eligible for processing.

#### Iranian Religious Minorities

Under this existing Priority 2 designation, Iranian members of certain religious minorities are eligible for processing.

#### Sudanese Darfurians in Iraq

Under this Priority 2 designation, Sudanese Darfurians living in a refugee camp in Anbar Governorate in Iraq would be eligible for processing if a suitable location can be identified.

#### Iraqis Associated with the United States Government

Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the USG, a USG-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing.

### Eritreans in Shimelba

Under this new Priority 2 designation, all Eritrean refugees in Shimelba Camp, Ethiopia (except those Kunama who previously went through refugee processing), and who were registered with UNHCR prior to August 6, 2008 are eligible for processing.

### **PRIORITY 3 – FAMILY REUNIFICATION**

The Priority 3 category affords USRAP access to members of designated nationalities who have immediate family members in the United States who entered as refugees or were granted asylum. At the beginning of each fiscal year, PRM, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, establishes the list of nationalities eligible for processing under this priority. The list may be modified by the PRM Assistant Secretary during the year, but additions or deletions are generally made to coincide with the fiscal year.

Fundamentally, inclusion on the Priority 3 list represents a finding by PRM that the nationality is of special humanitarian concern to the United States for the purpose of family-reunification refugee processing. Eligible nationalities are selected following careful review of several factors. UNHCR's annual assessment of refugees in need of resettlement provides insight into ongoing refugee situations which could create the need for family-reunification processing. In addition, prospective or ongoing repatriation efforts and U.S. foreign policy interests must be weighed in determining which nationalities should be eligible.

To qualify for access under Priority 3, an applicant must be outside of his or her country of origin, have an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR) filed on his or her behalf by an eligible "anchor" relative in the United States during a period in which the nationality was included on the eligibility list, and be cleared for onward processing by the DHS/USCIS Refugee Access Verification Unit (RAVU).

In March, in consultation with DHS/USCIS, PRM suspended P-3 processing and issued a moratorium on P-3 arrivals of certain nationalities due to indications of extremely high rates of fraud obtained through a pilot program for DNA testing. PRM and DHS/USCIS are currently examining how additional procedures including biometric measures may be incorporated into P-3 processing on a more regular basis so that we can resume family reunification among these nationalities while safeguarding the integrity of the program.

The following relatives of the U.S.-based anchor are eligible for inclusion on the case: spouses, unmarried children under 21, or parents. Qualifying anchors are persons who were admitted to the United States as refugees or were granted asylum, including persons who are lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens who were initially admitted to the United States as refugees or were granted asylum.

### **FY 2009 Priority 3 Nationalities**

Nationalities identified for P-3 access in FY 2009 are listed below.

Afghanistan  
Bhutan  
Burma  
Burundi  
Central African Republic  
Colombia  
Cuba  
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)  
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
Haiti  
Iran  
Iraq  
Somalia  
Sudan  
Uzbekistan  
Zimbabwe

### **VISAS 93 – FAMILY REUNIFICATION FOLLOWING-TO-JOIN PETITIONS**

Under 8 CFR Section 207, a refugee admitted to the United States may request following-to-join benefits for his or her spouse and unmarried children under the age of 21 if the family has become separated. Once in the United States, and within two years of admission, the refugee may file a Form I-730 Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition<sup>3</sup> for each eligible family

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<sup>3</sup> This petition is used to file for the relatives of refugees and asylees – known as Visas 93 and Visas 92 cases respectively. The Refugee Admissions Program handles only Visas 93 cases, which are counted within the annual refugee admissions ceiling. Visas 92 cases are not considered to be refugee admissions cases and are not counted in the number of refugees admitted annually.

member with DHS/USCIS. If the Form I-730 is approved by DHS/USCIS (signifying adequate proof of a qualifying family relationship), the National Visa Center then forwards the petition for processing to the embassy or consulate nearest to the location of the beneficiaries of the petition. (Note: In locations where the USRAP has a significant processing operation, these cases are often forwarded to the OPE for initial processing and presentation to DHS/USCIS rather than the consular section within the embassy.)

Cases gaining access to the USRAP through an approved I-730 petition are interviewed by DHS/USCIS or consular officers to verify the relationships claimed in the petition, as well as to examine any applicable bars to status and admissibility to the United States. These interviews are not refugee adjudications. The applicants are not required to demonstrate a persecution claim, as they derive their status from the refugee (or asylee) relative in the United States who filed the petition. Beneficiaries of I-730 petitions may be processed within their country of origin or in other locations.

Anchor relatives in the United States may file an I-730 Refugee/Asylee Relative Petition and seek Priority 3 access (if eligible) simultaneously. In some cases, the I-730 will be the only option as the family members are still in their country of origin. It is also important to note that the I-730 or “follow-to-join” process is more limited than Priority 3 in that it does not allow the relative in the United States to petition for parents.

## **DHS/USCIS REFUGEE ADJUDICATIONS**

Section 207(c) of the INA grants the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security authority to admit, at his/her discretion, any refugee who is not firmly resettled in a third country, who is determined to be of special humanitarian concern, and who is admissible to the United States. The authority to determine eligibility for refugee status has been delegated to DHS/USCIS. Beginning in FY 2006, DHS/USCIS restructured the Refugee Affairs Division and established the Refugee Corps. The Refugee Corps is staffed by DHS/USCIS officers dedicated to adjudicating applications for refugee status. The Refugee Corps provides DHS/USCIS with the necessary resources and flexibility to respond to an increasingly diversified refugee admissions program. DHS/USCIS has also substantially enhanced its anti-fraud, training, and policy-setting capacity related to refugee processing.

## ***The Eligibility Determination***

In order to be approved as a refugee, an applicant must meet the refugee definition contained in § 101(a)(42) of the INA. That section provides that a refugee is a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or last habitual residence and is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. As mentioned above, the President may specify special circumstances under which a person can meet the refugee definition when he or she is still within the country of origin. The definition excludes a person who has ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Further, an applicant who has been “firmly resettled” in a third country may not be admitted under INA § 207. Applicants are also subject to various statutory grounds of inadmissibility, including criminal, security, and public health grounds, some of which may be waived.

A DHS/USCIS officer conducts a non-adversarial, face-to-face interview of each applicant designed to elicit information about the applicant’s claim for refugee status and any grounds of ineligibility. The officer asks questions about the applicant’s experiences in the country of origin, including problems and fears about returning (or remaining), as well as questions concerning the applicant’s activities, background and criminal history. The officer also considers evidence about conditions in the country of origin and assesses the applicant’s credibility and claim.

## ***Background Checks***

DHS/USCIS and PRM, through its OPEs, share responsibility for initiating background checks on refugee applicants, including name checks and biometrics (fingerprints) for applicants age 14 and older.

## **PROCESSING ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

### ***Overseas Processing Services***

In most processing locations, PRM engages a NGO, an international organization (IO), or U.S. embassy contractors to manage an OPE that assists in the processing of refugees for admission to the United States. OPE staff pre-screen applicants to determine preliminarily if they qualify for one of the applicable processing priorities and to prepare cases for DHS/USCIS adjudication. The OPEs assist applicants in completing documentary requirements and schedule DHS/USCIS refugee interviews. If an applicant is approved for resettlement, OPE staff guide the refugee through post-adjudication steps, including obtaining medical screening exams and attending cultural orientation programs. The OPE obtains sponsorship assurances and, once all required steps are completed, refers the case to IOM for transportation to the United States.

In FY 2008, NGOs (Church World Service, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee) worked under cooperative agreements with PRM as OPEs at locations in Austria, Ghana (covering West and Central Africa), Kenya (covering East and Southern Africa), and Thailand (covering East Asia). International organizations and NGOs (IOM and the International Catholic Migration Commission [ICMC]) support refugee processing activities based in Egypt, Russia, Nepal and Turkey covering the Middle East, South and Central Asia and Europe. The admissions program operates under “in-house” arrangements at U.S. Government (USG) installations in Cuba and Vietnam. If necessary, PRM will establish additional OPEs in FY 2009.

### ***Cultural Orientation***

The Department of State strives to ensure that refugees who are accepted for admission to the United States are prepared for the significant life changes they will experience by providing cultural orientation programs prior to departure for the United States. It is critical that refugees arrive with a realistic view of what their new lives will be like, what services are available to them, and what their responsibilities will be.

Every refugee family receives *Welcome to the United States*, a resettlement guidebook developed with input from refugee resettlement workers, resettled refugees, and state government officials. *Welcome to the*

*United States* is produced in 15 languages: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, Farsi, French, Karen, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Nepali, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Through this book, refugees have access to accurate information about the initial resettlement period before they arrive. The *Welcome to the United States* refugee orientation video is available in 15 languages: Af-Maay, Arabic, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, English, Farsi, French, Hmong, Karen, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Nepali, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. In addition, the Department of State enters into cooperative agreements for one-to-three day pre-departure orientation classes for eligible refugees at sites throughout the world. In an effort to further bridge the information gap, for certain groups, brief video presentations featuring the experience of recently resettled refugees of the same ethnic group are made available to refugee applicants overseas.

### ***Transportation***

The Department of State funds the transportation of refugees resettled in the United States through a program administered by IOM. The cost of transportation is provided to refugees in the form of a loan. Refugees are responsible for repaying these loans over time, beginning six months after their arrival.

### ***Reception and Placement (R&P)***

PRM currently funds cooperative agreements with ten entities – nine private voluntary agencies and one state government agency – to provide initial resettlement services to arriving refugees. The R&P agencies agree to provide initial reception and core services (including housing, furnishings, clothing, food, and medical, employment and social service referrals) to arriving refugees. These services are provided according to standards of care developed jointly by the NGO community and U.S. Government agencies. The ten organizations maintain a nationwide network of some 350 affiliated offices to provide services. Two of the organizations also maintain a network of 20 affiliated offices through which PRM places unaccompanied refugee minors into foster care funded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Using R&P funds from PRM supplemented by cash and in-kind contributions from private and other sources, the R&P agreement obligates the participating agencies to provide the following services:

- Sponsorship;
- Pre-arrival resettlement planning, including placement;
- Reception on arrival;
- Basic needs support (including housing, furnishings, food, and clothing) for at least 30 days;
- Community orientation;
- Referrals to health, employment, education and other services as needed; and
- Case management and tracking for 90-180 days.

Refugees are eligible for lawful employment upon arrival in the United States. After one year, a refugee is required to apply for adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident. Five years after admission, a refugee who has been granted lawful permanent resident status is eligible to apply for citizenship.

### III. REGIONAL PROGRAMS

**TABLE II**  
**PROPOSED FY 2009 REGIONAL CEILINGS BY PRIORITY**

<b><u>AFRICA</u></b>	
Approved pipeline from FY 2008	3,000
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	4,000
Priority 2 Groups	4,000
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	1,000
	<b><u>Total Proposed: 12,000</u></b>
<b><u>EAST ASIA</u></b>	
Approved pipeline from FY 2008	5,900
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	600
Priority 2 Groups	12,400
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	100
	<b><u>Total Proposed: 19,000</u></b>
<b><u>EUROPE / CENTRAL ASIA</u></b>	
Approved pipeline from FY 2008	580
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	400
Priority 2 Groups	1,500
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	20
	<b><u>Total Proposed: 2,500</u></b>
<b><u>LATIN AMERICA / CARIBBEAN</u></b>	
Approved pipeline from FY 2008	1,850
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	100
Priority 2 Groups	2,500
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	50
	<b><u>Total Proposed: 4,500</u></b>
<b><u>NEAR EAST / SOUTH ASIA</u></b>	
Approved pipeline from FY 2008	10,900
Priority 1 Individual Referrals	14,000
Priority 2 Groups	12,000
Priority 3 Family Reunification Refugees	100
	<b><u>Total Proposed: 37,000</u></b>
<b><u>UNALLOCATED RESERVE</u></b>	5,000
	<b><u>TOTAL PROPOSED CEILING: 80,000</u></b>

In the following regional program overviews, a description of refugee conditions and religious freedom in each region is provided. In addition, prospects for voluntary repatriation, resettlement within the region, and third-country resettlement are discussed.

## **AFRICA**

There are approximately 2.5 million refugees across the African continent, making up roughly 16 percent of the global refugee population. 2008 saw continued progress on several fronts for major refugee populations in Africa. A comprehensive peace agreement in Sudan in 2005 and successful elections and new governments formed in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, and Mauritania over the past three years laid the groundwork for large-scale returns. In 2008, UN-organized repatriations were underway for refugees from Sudan, Burundi, the DRC, Togo, and Mauritania. Organized repatriations to Liberia and Angola were largely completed in 2007 with efforts continuing in 2008 to find solutions for residual refugee populations.

At the same time, ongoing violence in the Darfur region of Sudan, Somalia, eastern Chad, and the Central African Republic (CAR) continued to generate new refugee flows or threatened refugees in their countries of first asylum. Election related violence in Kenya led to a small refugee outflow, with some beginning to return by mid-2008. Eritreans continued to seek asylum in neighboring countries due to political tensions and increasing political repression. Ethiopians fleeing a counter-insurgency program in the Ogaden region have sought refuge in Somaliland, Djibouti and Yemen. In Zimbabwe, economic collapse and growing government-sponsored political repression and violence, especially around the March and June 2008 elections, led to increased migration and some limited refugee outflows.

The principle of first asylum is still honored by most African countries. Traditionally, refugees in Africa have been allowed to remain – and in many cases to integrate locally – until voluntary repatriation is possible. In most cases, this is *de facto* local integration, and does not include granting of legal permanent residence or voting rights. However, countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Senegal have announced intentions to consider legalizing the status (*de jure* local integration) of long-staying refugee populations interested in remaining.

### ***Religious Freedom***

In sub-Saharan Africa, people are typically free to practice their chosen religions. Governments generally provide for and respect freedom of

religion, although in some countries religious freedom is limited, particularly in the midst of ethnic and other conflicts. The Government of Eritrea, for instance, has in recent years engaged in serious religious repression, harassing, arresting, and detaining members of independent evangelical groups, including Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses (who lost certain basic rights of citizenship for not participating in the 1993 national referendum), and a reform movement within the Eritrean Orthodox Church. It has also sought greater control over the four approved religious groups: the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church, and Islam. The government reportedly holds individuals who are jailed for their religious affiliation, some in harsh conditions, at various locations, including facilities administered by the military, as well as police stations inside Asmara and other cities. Often detainees have not been formally charged, accorded due process, or allowed access to their families. While many were ostensibly jailed for evasion of military conscription, significant numbers were being held solely for their religious beliefs.

In Sudan, regional distinctions in the constitution negotiated as part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) have resulted in disparities in the treatment of religious minorities in the north and south. Whereas the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) generally respects the rights of Christians and Muslims in the ten states of the south as provided for in its separate 2005 Constitution of Southern Sudan, the Government of National Unity (GNU) continues to place restrictions on Christians in the North. The Constitution preserves Shari'a as a source of legislation in the North, while the Constitution of Southern Sudan establishes "the traditional laws, religious beliefs, values, and customary practices of the people" as a source of legislation in the south.

In the north, obtaining permits to build new houses of worship remained a long and tortuous process for Christians, despite past improvements. In addition, the GNU pressured existing churches and Christian facilities in central Khartoum to move to less conspicuous locations on the outskirts of the capital. Most existing churches in the capital date from the colonial era and are located near the city center and cannot accommodate Christians who live in the IDP camps on the outskirts of Khartoum. Relatively few Christians have the time or means to travel over 20 miles to church during their two hours of "religious time" off from work on Sunday mornings. This policy not only limits the ability of Christians to practice their faith, but also enables the government to claim

publicly that new churches are not needed because the existing ones are under-utilized.

There was some improvement in respect for religious freedom in Sudan in the period covered by this report. The 2005 adoption of the Interim National Constitution and the Constitution of Southern Sudan continued to improve government and societal acceptance of minority religious groups in both the north and the south. In February 2007 the President of Sudan established the Commission for the Rights of Non-Muslims in the National Capital, a CPA mechanism for protecting religious freedom, by appointing the Commission's chairperson. Dialogue between Christian and Muslim groups continued under the auspices of the Sudan Inter-Religious Council, a NGO supported by the GNU and the Sudan Council of Churches.

Christian missionary activity is limited in the north due to Shari'a, strong social pressure against proselytizing, and existing laws against apostasy. The GNU promoted Islam through mandatory Islamic education for all students in the north, even non-Muslims enrolled in private Christian schools. The GOSS generally respected the rights of southerners to practice the religion of their choice, but some members of the Muslim community in Khartoum noted hindrances in the practice of Islam in some areas under GOSS control. Although there is no penalty for converting from another religion to Islam, converting from Islam to another religion is punishable by death in the north. This penalty has never been imposed by the current government, but the strong prejudice against conversion is sometimes expressed through ostracism of the convert or physical punishment of the missionary.

The Secretary of State has designated both Eritrea and Sudan as "countries of particular concern" for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program continues to be available to Sudanese, Eritrean, and other refugees who are victims of religious intolerance through Priority 1 referrals. Refugees from Eritrea and Sudan with refugee or asylee family members in the U.S. also have access to the program through Priority 3, and certain Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia have access through P-2.

## *Voluntary Repatriation*

Despite a number of protracted refugee situations throughout Africa, voluntary repatriation to a secure environment remains the most common and desirable durable solution. UNHCR, with peace agreements having been concluded and with the support of the U.S. Government and other donors, has made great progress in promoting and supporting refugee repatriation and reintegration in Africa over the past fifteen years, reducing refugee numbers by more than 50% (from six to less than three million) even as there have been new outflows.

In West Africa, UNHCR's three-year Liberian repatriation program ended in June 2007, with some 150,000 Liberians having returned home both spontaneously and with UNHCR assistance. As many as 500,000 Liberian refugees returned in several waves prior to 2004. Small numbers of Liberians continued to return home on their own in FY 2008. A renewed repatriation effort from Ghana was occasioned by refugees protesting that they did not want to integrate into Ghana after all. In April 2008, UNHCR together with the Governments of Liberia and Ghana formed a Tripartite Commission to facilitate the return of at least 12,000 of the 25,000 registered Liberian refugees remaining in Ghana and some 6,000 Liberians from elsewhere in the region. UNHCR launched its Mauritania repatriation operation in January 2008 with the goal of returning 12,000 of the 24,000 Mauritanian refugees who have requested voluntary return this calendar year. Some 3,000 had returned by May 2008.

In East and Central Africa, even larger numbers returned home. Repatriation to South Sudan picked up considerably in 2008 with 250,000 – half the original population – having returned from neighboring countries by May. No return initiatives are anticipated for the Darfur region of Sudan, where conflict still rages. Repatriation to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has also increased with 150,000 returns by May and ongoing movements of the remaining 300,000 planned for 2008-2009. Most are returning to eastern DRC's South Kivu and Katanga provinces; the North Kivu Province still remains too insecure for large-scale refugee return. Return to Burundi has been somewhat slower, given sporadic violence and land shortages, but has recently picked up and over 420,000 have returned since 2002 with some 308,000 remaining in asylum countries (mainly Tanzania). A durable solutions package for Burundi refugees from the 1972 massacres who are in Tanzania began in April with about 20% of the over 200,000 refugees expressing a desire to repatriate and the other 80%

choosing to locally integrate in Tanzania. The security environment in Somaliland continued to allow for the safe repatriation of Somalilanders from Djibouti. Of some 2,800 refugees in Djibouti from Somaliland, UNHCR assisted 1,850 in returning to their homes.

### ***Local Integration***

In a number of protracted refugee situations, refugees were able to become self-sufficient and their camps and settlements were effectively integrated into the host communities. This integration dynamic occurred particularly in refugee situations that began in the 1960s through the early 1980s where refugees entered countries that had arable land available to provide them. Many refugees even moved out of the designated camps/settlements. It was only in Tanzania, however, that formal citizenship was offered, and only some refugees accepted it. More recently, even in the relatively few countries where land was available, refugees have been largely confined to camps/settlements. Refugees residing among the local population do not necessarily enjoy the rights, entitlements, or economic opportunities enjoyed by legal residents. As a result, local integration is often an interim, rather than a durable solution for most African refugees.

More recently, however, a number of African countries have considered more formal integration as a durable solution for residual refugee populations that have chosen not to repatriate when it was possible to do so. For example, in 2005, Guinea stated its willingness to offer local integration to residual populations of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees who were unwilling or unable to go home. In 2007, under an agreement with UNHCR, the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Nigeria offered local integration and legal residency to Liberians and Sierra Leoneans. UNHCR hopes that all West African states might offer similar opportunities to refugees on their territories in the context of free movement of peoples under the ECOWAS procedures.

Liberia has offered local integration to residual Sierra Leonean populations and Senegal is giving Mauritanian refugees who wish to remain in Senegal the option of becoming Senegalese citizens. The governments of Uganda and Zambia have stated intentions to provide refugees with local integration opportunities and citizenship but have not yet passed legislation. As mentioned above, the Government of Tanzania has agreed to provide

permanent settlement and citizenship to all of the 1972 era Burundi refugees who desire it; about 80% have accepted the offer so far.

### ***Third-Country Resettlement***

Resettlement in third countries outside the region is an essential durable solution and element of protection for certain refugees, given the political and economic volatility in many parts of Africa. With limited opportunities for permanent integration in countries of asylum and often protracted periods in refugee camps before voluntary repatriation becomes an option, the need for third-country resettlement of African refugees is expected to continue despite the overall decrease in the refugee population on the continent. In recent years, UNHCR has increasingly viewed resettlement as an important tool of protection for refugees in Africa. All resettlement countries, in particular the United States, Canada, and Australia, accept African refugees for resettlement, but the United States resettles far more than any other country.

### ***FY 2008 U.S. Admissions***

We anticipate admitting some 9,000 refugees from Africa in FY 2008. Five countries of origin (Burundi, Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea) account for the vast majority of U.S. admissions. In East Africa, we will largely complete processing of the “1972 Burundians” eligible for P-2 processing in Tanzania, with some 3,000 arrivals in FY 2008. In Kenya, a surge in UNHCR referrals in Dadaab will lead to more than 1,500 P-1 Somali departures. From West Africa, we expect close to 2,000 refugee admissions, primarily residual P-3 Liberians in Ghana, Guinea and Ivory Coast who were registered in the program in advance of the September 2006 cut-off date; and P-1 Congolese in Gabon and Togolese in Benin. Owing to continued insecurity in Chad, we have not yet been able to process Darfur refugees for U.S. resettlement. In all, we expect to admit refugees of more than 20 African nationalities, processed in more than 30 countries primarily in Africa and the Near East in FY 2008.

While large scale resettlement processing operations will continue, refugee admissions from Africa in FY08 will be somewhat lower than in recent years. This is due to compelling indications of widespread fraud that have recently come to light in the P-3 family reunification program. In mid-FY 2008, PRM and DHS/USCIS jointly conducted a DNA pilot in Kenya of individuals under consideration for the USRAP. The results indicated that a

statistically significant portion of claimed biological relationships could not be substantiated. We temporarily halted P-3 processing in several locations and are considering additional procedures including, as appropriate, biometric measures and new screening policies to address fraud in the P-3 program.

### ***FY 2009 U.S. Resettlement Program***

We propose 12,000 African refugees be admitted in FY 2009. PRM has actively engaged relevant offices within the Department of State, the voluntary agency community, UNHCR, and DHS/USCIS to identify caseloads appropriate for resettlement consideration. As a result of these discussions, PRM has identified a number of nationalities and groups for priority processing during FY 2009.

From East and Southern Africa, we expect approximately 10,500 admissions, primarily Somalis in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, as well as Eritreans in Shimelba Camp, Ethiopia who are eligible for P-2 processing. We also expect to receive P-1 referrals of Congolese, Burundians, Zimbabweans and other nationalities in a variety of asylum countries, including Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, and South Africa. Given ongoing anti-foreigner violence in South Africa and political instability in Zimbabwe, we expect increased referrals from Southern Africa in FY 2009.

The Administration remains deeply concerned about conditions in Darfur. PRM undertook a mission to eastern Chad in November 2007 to assess resettlement needs, capacity, and processing infrastructure requirements. The security environment in the region, including rebel incursions into Chad, makes large-scale resettlement processing extremely challenging at present. However, PRM continues to coordinate with UNHCR to allow for resettlement opportunities when conditions are stable, and has made targeted contributions to UNHCR to support resettlement staffing in Chad. The United States Government is also concerned about the long-standing situation of Eritrean refugees in eastern Sudan and anticipates referrals from this caseload following the completion of a UNHCR verification exercise in FY 2009.

From West and Central Africa, we expect approximately 1,500 admissions, including increased UNHCR referrals of Congolese and others in Cameroon, Gabon and Central African Republic. Small numbers of P-1 referrals of particularly vulnerable cases are also expected in Ghana, Benin,

Ivory Coast, Senegal, Niger, Togo, Guinea, and Mali. As we ceased accepting Affidavits of Relationship (AORs) for Liberians at the end of FY 2006, only a small number of residual Liberian P-3 cases will be processed in FY 2009. Due to improved country conditions in Liberia, very few Liberians in asylum countries are now being referred for U.S. resettlement consideration.

From North Africa, we anticipate small numbers of Sudanese, Somali, and other African refugees to be processed in Egypt. And in the Near East region, we also anticipate small numbers of Sudanese, Somali, and other African refugees to be processed in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

***Proposed FY 2009 Africa program:***

<b><i>Approved pipeline from FY 2008</i></b>	<b><i>3,000</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i></b>	<b><i>4,000</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 2 Groups</i></b>	<b><i>4,000</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i></b>	<b><i>1,000</i></b>
<b><u><i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i></u></b>	<b><u><i>12,000</i></u></b>

**EAST ASIA**

Several East Asian countries host large and diverse refugee populations. Recent years have seen important developments for these groups, particularly involving the strategic use of resettlement as a durable solution.

Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and Malaysia continue to host large numbers of Burmese refugees and asylum-seekers. The U.S. Government continues to promote a transition to a democratic, civilian government in Burma. The September 2007 protests in Burma sparked hopes that the regime would be forced to reform under the weight of domestic discontent and international pressure. However, with few signs of change from the Burmese regime, coupled with the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis, prospects for refugees to return to safe and stable conditions appear distant.

More than 140,000 refugees from Burma, mostly ethnic minorities, are recognized by UNHCR and live in nine Royal Thai Government (RTG)-administered refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border. The RTG continues to support the international community's efforts to resettle large numbers of refugees from these camps. Births, new arrivals fleeing continued conflict in Burma, and Burmese economic migrants keep the camps' population above 140,000 despite the resettlement of thousands of refugees to the U.S. and other countries in the last two years.

Developments in Thailand involving Lao-Hmong asylum seekers are being monitored closely by the international community as the RTG increases the rate of returns to Laos without a transparent mechanism for identifying and protecting Lao-Hmong with a well-founded fear of persecution. Additional returns are expected in the coming months and the United States is monitoring the situation closely. The United States has urged the RTG to share the details of its procedures which ensure that Lao-Hmong with a well-founded fear of persecution are not returned to Laos. We have also expressed our concern about the status of the Lao-Hmong confined in an immigration detention center in Nong Khai. UNHCR considers these detainees persons of concern who should have the option of access to third-country resettlement. The United States and like-minded governments have informed the RTG that we are prepared to consider the Lao-Hmong group detained in Nong Khai for third-country resettlement, but they have not yet allowed UNHCR or resettlement countries access to these individuals.

Since 2006, UNHCR Malaysia has operated the second largest refugee status determination program in the world. As of April, there were some 38,700 persons of concern registered with UNHCR in Malaysia - 13,200 Rohingyas from the Northern Rakhine State of Burma, 21,000 other ethnic minorities from Burma, including Chin, as well as some 4,500 asylum-seekers and refugees from other countries. Malaysia is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. We support UNHCR's efforts to use resettlement as a strategic tool to assist a significant number of refugees in Malaysia.

Small numbers of ethnic minorities from the Central Highlands of Vietnam continue to cross into Cambodia. As of May, there were 577 individuals under UNHCR protection in Phnom Penh. Of the 238 for whom a determination has been made, UNHCR has found 42 percent to be refugees in need of third-country resettlement. In May 2007, the Department of State

announced that, while the United States would continue to accept referrals of refugees in Cambodia from UNHCR, we would expect those who are not found by UNHCR to be refugees in need of resettlement could return to Vietnam after counseling about how they can seek assistance, as needed, upon returning home

In 1992, more than 250,000 Burmese Rohingya refugees suffering oppression due to their Muslim faith and South Asian ethnicity migrated from North Rakhine province to Bangladesh. During the 1990s, over 230,000 Rohingya refugees were repatriated from Bangladesh, leaving behind approximately 26,000 in two UNHCR camps in southern Bangladesh. A further 10,000 Rohingya migrants settled in an unofficial makeshift camp where they live in squalid conditions. In addition to those who have remained in the camps, some who have previously repatriated have again returned to Bangladesh and are living without UNHCR protection, further increasing their vulnerability. As a result, UNHCR has referred a small number of Rohingya women-at-risk cases for U.S. resettlement consideration and we expect additional referrals in the future.

As reflected in the North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA), the United States is very concerned about the human rights situation of North Koreans both inside the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) and in certain countries in the region. The United States began resettling North Korean refugees in 2006 and remains committed to continuing this lifesaving program. We will continue to work closely with UNHCR, governments in the region, and NGOs to offer U.S. resettlement interviews to those expressing interest in U.S. resettlement.

### ***Religious Freedom***

Although many governments in East Asia permit freedom of worship, religious believers face serious persecution in several countries. The DPRK severely restricts religious freedom, including organized religious activity, except that which is supervised tightly by officially recognized groups linked to the government. Even though the DPRK Constitution provides for “freedom of religious belief,” genuine religious freedom does not exist. Little is known about the day-to-day life of religious persons in the country. Religious and human rights groups outside of the country have provided numerous, usually unconfirmed, reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, tortured or killed because of their religious beliefs.

The situation in countries such as China, Vietnam, Burma, and Laos is complex. While the constitutions of these countries ostensibly provide for freedom of religion, in practice these governments restrict or repress activities of some religious organizations. Many independent religious activities may be either prohibited or severely restricted, and dissenters may face physical mistreatment or imprisonment.

Despite dramatic increases in religious observance in China, the government continues to harass and interfere with unregistered religious groups, most notably the unofficial Catholic churches loyal to the Holy See, Protestant “house churches,” some Muslim groups, Buddhists loyal to the Dalai Lama, and the Falun Gong spiritual movement. There are many cases of arrest, imprisonment, and alleged torture of religious believers in China. In Laos, we have seen modest improvements in religious freedom; however, problems remain, particularly in Savannakhet and Attapeu Provinces, where Christians at times have been detained or asked to renounce their faith. The DPRK, China, and Burma remain “countries of particular concern” with respect to religious freedom.

Vietnam has made significant progress on many religious freedom issues since it was designated a “country of particular concern” in 2004. The USG and Government of Vietnam signed a Religious Freedom Agreement in May 2005, which requires Vietnam to implement fully its new legal framework on religion. Vietnam has banned the practice of forced or coerced renunciations of faith, released a number of prominent prisoners of conscience, and reopened a number of churches that had previously been closed and encouraged them to register. Recognizing this significant progress, the USG removed Vietnam from the “countries of particular concern” list in November 2006. The U.S. Government continues to monitor religious freedom issues in Vietnam.

Nationals of the DPRK, Vietnam, China, and Burma have access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program through Priority 1 individual referrals. In addition, the United States continues to operate in-country Priority 2 processing for certain Vietnamese. A significant number of Burmese will also be processed in FY 2009 under Priority 2. Burmese refugees also have access to family reunification processing through Priority 3.

### ***Voluntary Repatriation***

Repatriation of the 26,000 Rohingyas from Burma remaining in camps in Bangladesh does not appear to be a viable solution for the vast majority of the population. Many Vietnamese Montagnards in Cambodia have chosen to repatriate voluntarily. International access to the Central Highlands continued to increase throughout the year. UNHCR international staff, U.S. Consulate General officials, and other Western diplomats have been able to monitor the return of members of ethnic minorities who have repatriated from Cambodia and found no systemic problems.

### ***Local Integration***

Countries in the region are traditionally reluctant to integrate refugees or even to grant temporary asylum. We hope that our ongoing commitment to resettle a large number of refugees from the camps along the Thai-Burma border will encourage the RTG to take steps to improve the local integration prospects for those refugees who will not be resettled. We recognize that the RTG is concerned that resettlement is not dramatically reducing the camp population as new refugees are coming into the camps to take the place of those who are departing for third countries. The Government of Malaysia has not honored an earlier commitment to issue work permits to the Rohingya population, so local integration remains elusive for this group.

### ***Third-Country Resettlement***

The United States continues to be a leader of resettlement in the region. Other resettlement countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Nordic countries, consider refugees referred by UNHCR. In FY 2008, the United States processed UNHCR-referred refugee cases in Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The United States also continues to administer an in-country program in Vietnam, managed by the Humanitarian Resettlement Section at the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City.

### ***FY 2008 U.S. Admissions***

The regional ceiling for East Asia in FY 2008 is 20,000. We expect to resettle up to 18,000 refugees from the region by the end of the fiscal year. This will include some 17,000 Burmese – Karen and Karenni living in

camps along the Thai-Burma border and Burmese Chin in Malaysia – and 1,000 Vietnamese through the Humanitarian Resettlement Program.

The United States continued processing in Mae La refugee camp in Thailand throughout FY 2008 and resettled 6,000 refugees from that camp. Working in close consultation with UNHCR and the RTG, we also began processing in Nupo and Umpiem camps, where approximately 14,000 people out of a total population of 34,000 came forward for consideration. We expect to admit some 6,000 of these refugees by the end of the fiscal year.

Since May 2006, Secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security and State have exercised their discretionary authorities to render inapplicable the material support inadmissibility provision for refugees who provided material support to the following eight groups in East Asia:

- (1) Karen National Union/Karen National Army (KNU/KNLA)
- (2) Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CAN)
- (3) Chin national League for Democracy (CNLD)
- (4) Kayan New Land Party (KNLP)
- (5) Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
- (6) Karenni National Progressive Party
- (7) Appropriate groups affiliated with the Hmong
- (8) Appropriate groups affiliated with the Montagnards

More than 4,000 refugees have already benefited from these exemptions. Under subsection 691(b) of Division J of the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, these groups are no longer considered terrorist organizations under the INA based upon their previous activities. In addition, under section 691(a), either Secretary can now render inapplicable almost all of the inadmissibility provisions under INA § 212(a)(3)(B). We expect several thousand refugees who have applied for resettlement to benefit from this new legislation.

The Humanitarian Resettlement Initiative continued to accept applications from Vietnamese citizens who might have been eligible under three categories of the former Orderly Departure Program (ODP) for consideration for resettlement to the United States. This process is open only to those who were unable to apply or who were unable to complete the application process before the ODP closed on September 30, 1994. Individuals had until June 2008 to apply. As of May 2008, the U.S.

Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City had evaluated almost 61,000 completed applications and found about 3,700 eligible for further consideration. Under the Lautenberg Amendment, certain categories of Vietnamese refugee applicants benefit from a reduced evidentiary standard when seeking eligibility for refugee status.

***FY 2009 U.S. Resettlement Program***

We propose the admission of 19,000 refugees from East Asia in FY 2009. This will include some 4,300 individuals already approved and pending departure at the beginning of the year. We will interview Burmese refugees living in seven camps located in three provinces in Thailand and will continue processing in Malaysia, leading to the admission of some 17,000 refugees from Burma in FY 2009. Some 1,000 admissions are expected from the Humanitarian Resettlement Initiative in Vietnam and some 100 as Priority 3 beneficiaries in FY 2009. We also expect the admission of Tibetans, North Koreans, and other nationalities from this region.

***Proposed FY 2009 East Asia Program:***

<b><i>Approved pipeline from FY 2008</i></b>	<b><i>5,900</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i></b>	<b><i>600</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 2 Groups</i></b>	<b><i>12,400</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i></b>	<b><i>100</i></b>
<b><u><i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i></u></b>	<b><u><i>19,000</i></u></b>

**EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

The nations that once composed the Soviet Union have for over a decade demonstrated a wide range of both political progress and economic growth. Important steps have been taken by many of these independent states in Eastern Europe, as well as some in Central Asia, in the direction of democratization, rule of law, civil rights, and tolerance. For example, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are vibrant free-market democracies, members of NATO and the European Union, and each of these governments respects the human rights of its citizens, including freedom of speech, press, and religion. Many Eurasian countries have made significant progress in

consolidating democratic institutions and instituting the rule of law. All former Soviet and Warsaw Pact countries have relationships with NATO: three have become Allies (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), two are aspirant members (Georgia and Ukraine), and the others are participants in NATO's Partnership for Peace. All Eurasian countries except Uzbekistan have acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. However, in many former Soviet states and in Russia, there are attacks against non-Slavic foreigners, immigrants and refugees.

In its 2008-2009 Global Appeal, UNHCR reported that there were some 4.6 million asylum seekers, refugees, IDPs, or other persons "of concern" throughout Europe and Central Asia. Most had fled conflicts outside the region, such as in Afghanistan, but persons claiming persecution within the countries of the former Soviet Union are also included. Furthermore, even those nations that are abandoning totalitarianism and pursuing democratic governance have been slow or reluctant to recognize, protect, and integrate refugees and at-risk individuals. UNHCR has been working with many of these governments on asylum procedures and refugee protection laws. Some modest progress has been made.

According to UNHCR, at the end of 2007 there were approximately 500,000 refugees and IDPs in the Balkans, almost all of whom have been displaced for eight years or longer. An estimated 246,000 persons of this population are minorities from Kosovo, many of whom are in Serbia. Finding durable solutions for the remaining refugees and IDPs in the Balkans continues to be problematic, particularly following Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008.

Since 1989, the USRAP has offered resettlement consideration to individuals from certain religious minorities in the nations that made up the former Soviet Union who also have close family ties to the United States. Under the Lautenberg Amendment, Jews, Evangelical Christians, and certain members of the Ukrainian Catholic or Ukrainian Orthodox Churches benefit from a reduced evidentiary standard when seeking eligibility for refugee status. In the last two years, both the number of new applications and the approval rates for Lautenberg cases, particularly Evangelical Christians, have declined.

In addition to those eligible under the Lautenberg Amendment, individuals of all nationalities throughout the region may be referred for Priority 1 processing.

## *Religious Freedom*

Freedom of religion varies widely in Europe and Central Asia. Most states regulate religious groups and activities to some degree, by identifying so-called “traditional” religions that enjoy privileges sometimes denied to other, newer religious groups. In Eastern Europe, majority religions such as the Orthodox Church are often provided with such special treatment and privileges. These same states sometimes view other groups as “dangerous sects and cults.” Some states have enacted restrictive legislation to govern the activities of foreign missionaries, especially those from Protestant or “nontraditional” denominations. In many cases, registration with state bodies has been required, not only to establish a group as a legal entity able to rent or own space but also to hold religious services, a practice which is not in keeping with international covenants on freedom of religion. In some eastern European countries, onerous membership and legal requirements restrict new religions from enjoying the privileges of traditional religions, such as the right to appoint military and prison chaplains and receive state subsidies. These so-called “multi-tiered” religion laws, such as the new Romanian one, also exist in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

Restitution of religious properties seized by Communist regimes and the Nazis is an issue that has not yet been fully resolved, and in some countries progress on this issue has been slow and uneven.

Manifestations of anti-Semitism continue throughout this region, including demonstrations by extremist groups and vandalism of cemeteries and monuments. Most incidents have been in former communist bloc countries but a number of west European countries have faced a disturbing increase in anti-Semitic acts. Attacks on synagogues and other places where religious groups gather have been reported in Russia. The Russian government has condemned such acts. In the Caucasus and Central Asian states, the remaining small Jewish communities enjoy reasonably amicable relations with their Muslim compatriots. Jewish communities from Azerbaijan in the Caucasus to Bukhara and Tashkent in Uzbekistan report societal and governmental support.

Observant Muslims across Europe and Central Asia have experienced some instances of being treated as potential Islamists and accused of membership in banned groups. In some countries, there are legal prohibitions against beards or wearing particular types of clothing; doing so

marks one as an observant Muslim in certain public contexts and causes frequent requests for identification documents. Muslims in some Russian cities are subject to harassment and societal violence. Observant Muslims in Russia and Central Asia have experienced mosque closures, detentions, and arrests, and the possibility of torture, especially in Uzbekistan. Islamic cemeteries have also been desecrated across Europe. As a result of concerns over this treatment, as well as the arrest, detention and fining of some Christian groups according to Uzbekistan's restrictive religion law, the Secretary of State has designated Uzbekistan a "country of particular concern" for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Religion and ethnicity are closely intertwined in the Balkans, so it is often difficult to identify acts as primarily religious or primarily ethnic in origin. The USRAP has provided protection for persecuted Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians, as well as individuals of other religious minorities and mixed marriages. We will continue to work with UNHCR, NGOs, human rights groups, and U.S. missions to identify victims of religious persecution for whom resettlement is appropriate.

### ***Voluntary Repatriation***

International efforts are being made to repatriate Afghans and citizens of African nations, such as Angola, because of changing country conditions and increased stability in their home nations. Individuals of these nationalities may still be processed as Priority 1 referrals when their individual circumstances would preclude safe repatriation.

The international community continues to support efforts to create favorable conditions for the return of ethnic minorities in the Balkans. In June 2006, a Protocol on Voluntary and Sustainable Return to Kosovo was signed, which seeks to improve the conditions for return by focusing on three elements: ensuring the safety of returnees; returning property to the displaced and rebuilding their houses; and creating an overall environment that sustains returns. However, as many displaced persons continued to wait to make a decision on return due to uncertainty surrounding Kosovo's status, the rate of ethnic minority returns remained low. After Kosovo declared independence in February 2008, strong pressure from Serbia discouraged displaced persons from returning to their homes. Still, despite their long displacement, many of these displaced persons express a strong desire to return home. As they gain confidence that the situation is stable, they will feel more comfortable in making a decision to return.

### ***Local Integration***

UNHCR has led efforts to create viable asylum systems and effective legal protections for refugees in the countries that emerged from the former Soviet Union. However, ineffective implementation of these laws, combined with xenophobia throughout the region, make effective local integration difficult for refugees. In Russia, difficulties in local integration and acquisition of citizenship remain for some former Soviet citizens who entered Russia before 1992 and are, therefore, entitled to become citizens under Russian law. Like the Meskhetian Turks, they have been unable to obtain recognition of their Russian citizenship and remain effectively stateless. In 2007, there was significant progress in resolving this issue, with some 240,000 formerly stateless individuals reportedly receiving Russian passports. There are numerous other groups and individuals still waiting for this recognition.

### ***Third-Country Resettlement***

The United States and other resettlement countries continue to accept refugees from the region. UNHCR has referred and will continue to refer to the United States, Canada, and other resettlement countries a number of at-risk individuals fleeing various forms of persecution within the region, as well as Afghan and African refugees who are unable to repatriate. Jewish emigration to Israel continues, with 6,502 individuals from states in the former Soviet Union availing themselves of this opportunity in 2007 under the United Israel Appeal Program.

### ***FY 2008 U.S. Admissions***

In FY 2008, we estimate close to 3,000 admissions from Europe and Central Asia. Religious minorities processed under the Lautenberg Amendment from countries of the former Soviet Union constitute a significant portion of the caseload. During FY 2008, circuit rides took place to process applicants in Almaty, Ashgabat, Baku, Belgrade, Bishkek, Chisinau, Kyiv, Tashkent, Tbilisi, and Valletta.

### ***FY 2009 U.S. Resettlement Program***

The proposed FY 2009 ceiling for refugees from Europe and Central Asia is 2,500. It includes some 580 who will be in the final stage of admissions processing at the end of FY 2008, as well as new cases approved

in FY 2009. Priority 2 includes individuals who will be processed under Lautenberg guidelines in states of the former Soviet Union. The number of applications for this Priority 2 and the percentage approved continue to decline each year. We anticipate processing some Uzbek P-3 beneficiaries during FY 2009.

***Proposed FY 2009 Europe & Central Asia Program:***

<b><i>Approved pipeline from FY 2008</i></b>	<b><i>580</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i></b>	<b><i>400</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 2 Groups</i></b>	<b><i>1,500</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i></b>	<b><i>20</i></b>
<b><u><i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i></u></b>	<b><u><i>2,500</i></u></b>

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

According to UNHCR, at the end of 2007 the number of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, and other people of concern in Latin America and the Caribbean totaled over 3.5 million. The ongoing conflict in Colombia generated the most significant numbers of refugees and IDPs in the region. According to government estimates, there are almost three million displaced people in Colombia, 2.45 million of whom are officially registered. In surrounding countries, more than 500,000 Colombians live in refugee-like situations, but only some 50,000 have been recognized as refugees, according to UNHCR. Ecuador, the country with the largest population of Colombian refugees, has an effective asylum process in which UNHCR participates. Several other countries in the region with significant refugee populations, such as Costa Rica, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Peru, are developing asylum processes with assistance from UNHCR. Panama has developed an asylum process and is being advised by UNHCR on its implementation.

The number of Colombian asylum seekers in Ecuador continues to rise. As of December 2007, there were approximately 50,000 Colombian refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador, of whom just over 16,000 were recognized as refugees. The situation in Ecuador is UNHCR's major

concern in the region, where there may be an additional 250,000 “persons of concern.” In Panama, there are approximately 1,000 recognized refugees and 900 persons with official temporary status. In Costa Rica, there are approximately 12,000 recognized refugees, of whom 9,000 are Colombian. Costa Rica is working to revise its asylum system and to re-establish a Refugee Department. There are some 5,000 recognized refugees and asylum seekers in Brazil as well as just over 7,000 in Venezuela. The number of refugees and asylum seekers in both Ecuador and Venezuela is expected to significantly increase next year as UNHCR completes its survey of unregistered Colombians in need of protection, thereby identifying potential asylum applicants to host governments in both countries.

In response to the dangers faced by certain professionals, including police, lawyers, judges, and others in Colombia, in 2002 the United States began a Priority 1 resettlement program to resettle Colombians referred by the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá. As instability continued, we expanded the program and began to interview Colombians referred for resettlement consideration by UNHCR in Ecuador and Costa Rica.

In past years, however, UNHCR limited its referral of Colombians to the U.S. program, as many cases were being placed on hold because of the possible applicability of material support inadmissibility provisions in our immigration laws. Under the exemptions signed on April 27, 2007, by the Secretary of Homeland Security for material support provided under duress to a designated terrorist organization, individuals who provided material support under duress to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (September 6, 2007), National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN) (December 18, 2007) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (March 10, 2008) may now be admitted. As a result, the number of Colombian refugees eligible for refugee admissions to the United States has increased and we expect to see more referrals in FY 2009. As of April 30, 2008, a total of 1,278 Colombian refugees have been resettled in the United States over the past six years.

The situation in Haiti remains fragile following riots over rising food prices and the resignation of the Prime Minister in April. Recent steps by the government to crack down on gang-related crime and violence have been successful, resulting in some improvements in the security situation. The United States continues to support UNHCR’s efforts to help governments in the Caribbean address the needs of Haitian and other asylum seekers and welcomes referrals to the USRAP.

## ***Religious Freedom***

In Latin America, religious freedom is widely recognized and enjoyed. Cuba continues to be a glaring exception. The Cuban Constitution recognizes the right of citizens to profess and practice any religious belief within the framework of respect for the law; however, the government continues to place restrictions on freedom of religion. The Ministry of Interior, through its state security apparatus, continues to monitor the country's religious institutions, including through surveillance, infiltration, harassment of clergy and church members, evictions from and confiscation of places of worship, and preventive detention of religious activists. Some prisoners report that prison officials ignore repeated written requests for religious visits. In punishment cells, prisoners were denied access to reading materials, including bibles. The USRAP offers resettlement to Cubans persecuted for religious beliefs or activities.

## ***Voluntary Repatriation***

Given the violence in Colombia from illegally armed groups (non-state actors) and the Government of Colombia's inability to provide full protection in many areas, UNHCR does not actively promote repatriation of Colombian refugees. UNHCR has provided some assistance to Haitians in Jamaica and Cuba who have chosen to return home voluntarily.

## ***Local Integration***

The Governments of Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Venezuela have maintained policies that allow Colombians in need of protection to obtain asylum and integrate locally. Despite such policies, their capacity to review applications and confer refugee status remains limited, processing is slow, and these countries maintain documentation requirements that are difficult for many applicants to fulfill. Further, as more refugees have fled to these countries, living conditions for Colombians have deteriorated as asylum seekers wait longer for status determinations and are not given the right to work. Additionally, some Colombian asylum seekers in Ecuador and Venezuela continue to experience harassment by illegally armed Colombian groups operating in these countries. Some Colombian refugees in Costa Rica experience harassment by people with ties to these groups. For asylum seekers in Panama, the situation is more complicated, as the government continues to be reluctant to receive Colombian refugees or confer even minimal protection. Many Colombians in need of protection who enter

these countries irregularly must hide in remote border areas or in the shantytowns of larger cities. Some are moving to more secure communities further inland.

PRM is currently supporting UNHCR's efforts to assist the Dominican Republic and other Caribbean countries in developing systems for conducting refugee status determinations for Haitians and other asylum seekers.

### ***Third- and In-Country Resettlement***

In the recent past, local integration had been the most suitable solution to regional refugee problems in Latin America. In recent years, however, third-country resettlement has become an important alternative for those who face physical risks and have urgent protection needs. Canada and the United States offer resettlement to at-risk Colombian refugees in the region for whom third-country resettlement is the appropriate durable solution. Canada also operates an in-country humanitarian program in Colombia, through which as many as 1,000 Colombians are resettled each year. Currently, the United States accepts referrals from the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá or from UNHCR and processes these cases in Ecuador or Costa Rica. We are also exploring options for reaching Colombians who do not have access to UNHCR in other locations. Under the "Solidarity Resettlement Program," a component of the Mexico Plan of Action, other countries in the region including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay are working with UNHCR to resettle limited numbers of refugees.

The United States also facilitates the resettlement to other countries of migrants, mostly from Cuba and Haiti, who are interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard or who enter Guantanamo Naval Station illegally and are found by DHS/USCIS to have a well-founded fear of persecution or torture if repatriated. From 1995 through 2008, some 300 such protected migrants have been resettled to sixteen countries in Latin America, Europe, Australia and Canada.

The U.S. Government continues to operate an in-country refugee resettlement program in Cuba. We have taken steps to ensure that all Cubans eligible for consideration have access to the program and that approved refugees travel as soon as possible. Unfortunately, communications with refugees are sometimes intercepted by the Cuban

government, causing delays, misunderstandings, or misinformation. Also, some approved refugees are not granted exit permits by the Cuban government. Others do not have sufficient funds to pay for the medical exams, passports and exit permits needed to travel.

Cubans currently eligible to apply for admission to the United States through the in-country program include the following:

1. Former political prisoners;
2. Members of persecuted religious minorities;
3. Human rights activists;
4. Forced labor conscripts (1965-68); and
5. Persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatments resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs.
6. Persons who have experienced or fear harm because of their relationship – family or social – to someone who falls under one of the preceding categories.

### ***FY 2008 U.S. Admissions***

We anticipate resettlement of over 4,000 refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean during FY 2008. Cubans comprise the overwhelming majority of refugees resettled from the region. Historically, most Cuban admissions were former political prisoners and forced labor conscripts who served sentences in the 1960s and 1970s. The program was expanded in 1991 to include human rights activists, displaced professionals, and others with claims of persecution, which currently comprise the majority of admissions. Until recently, a small group of Cuban cases had been on hold due to possible inadmissibilities under our immigration laws for material support provided to a guerrilla group fighting against Castro in the late 1950s and early 1960s known as the “Alzados.” Pursuant to exemptions issued by the Secretaries of Homeland Security and State in 2007 and the 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which provided that the Alzados shall not be considered a terrorist organization under the INA, DHS has reviewed all long-pending “Alzados” cases for material support. The first of these cases traveled to the United States at the end of FY 2007; the majority of the approved cases will have traveled, or will be in the process of traveling, by the end of FY 2008. In addition, we expect some 100 Colombian refugees to be admitted to the United States during FY 2008.

### ***FY 2009 U.S. Resettlement Program***

The proposed 4,500 ceiling for Latin America and the Caribbean for FY 2009 comprises Cuban refugees eligible for the in-country Priority 2 program, a small number of UNHCR-referred Priority 1 Colombians, as well as a small number of Priority 3 family reunion cases.

#### ***Proposed FY 2009 program for Latin America and the Caribbean:***

<b><i>Approved pipeline from FY 2008</i></b>	<b><i>1,850</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i></b>	<b><i>100</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 2 In-Country Cubans</i></b>	<b><i>2,500</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i></b>	<b><i>50</i></b>
<b><u><i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i></u></b>	<b><u><i>4,500</i></u></b>

### **NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA**

The Near East/South Asia region remains host to millions of refugees, primarily Iraqis, Palestinians, Afghans, Iranians, Tibetans, Sri Lankans, and Bhutanese. Few countries in the region are party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and/or its 1967 Protocol. Nonetheless, to their credit, many host governments generally tolerate the presence of refugees.

UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), IOM, World Food Program (WFP), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and other humanitarian organizations work with refugees in the region. Some countries have provided long-term protection, mainly to Palestinians, Afghans, and some Africans.

There are reported to be anywhere from 1.5 million to over 2 million Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and other countries in the region, and 2.5 million internally displaced persons within Iraq, half of whom were displaced prior to February 2006. More than 42,000 third-country refugees (including Palestinians, Sudanese, and Iranian Kurds) remain in Iraq.

Despite the voluntary repatriation of over 5.3 million Afghan refugees, Pakistan continues to host approximately two million documented Afghans and Iran (in addition to hundreds of thousands of undocumented individuals) continues to host more than 915,000 registered Afghan refugees, many of whom have been resident in these countries for decades. We are concerned about reports of forced returns of Afghans working in Iran in recent months and will continue to monitor this situation.

The number of Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in India registered with UNHCR at the time of this writing is over 10,000 persons. UNHCR's focus for 2007/2008 has been finding solutions for the protracted Afghan caseload of approximately 9,000 persons, many of whom have lived in India 15 to 27 years.

Approximately 108,000 Bhutanese refugees of mainly ethnic Nepali origin have lived in seven camps in eastern Nepal since the early 1990s. This population fled Bhutan due to the Royal Government of Bhutan's (RGOB) policy of "one nation and one people" (also referred to as "Bhutanization") aimed at forcing cultural integration of ethnic minorities and strengthening national integration. Despite fifteen rounds of formal negotiations to resolve the issue and secure the right of return for ethnic Nepalese from Bhutan, to date, none have been permitted to return to Bhutan.

Other countries in the region have provided long-term asylum for Tibetan, Bhutanese, and Sri Lankan refugees. Refugees identified by UNHCR for third-country resettlement include Iraqis in Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, the Gulf states, and India; Bhutanese in Nepal; Afghans in Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Syria, and India; and Iranians in Turkey and Syria.

### ***Religious Freedom***

Persecution of religious minorities is common in certain countries in the Middle East and South Asia. In Pakistan, blasphemy laws, anti-Ahmadi laws, and other discriminatory legislation have been used to target religious minorities, including Shi'as, Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis. Sectarian violence between majority Sunnis and minority Shi'as has claimed hundreds of lives in recent years. Sectarian violence in Iraq has reversed the return flow of Iraqi refugees and has resulted in what UNHCR considers the largest exodus in the Middle East since the Palestinian exodus following the

creation of the State of Israel. In India, enactment of “anti-conversion” legislation in some states has resulted in harassment of minorities. State and local government responses to extremist violence against religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, are often inadequate. In Afghanistan, religious freedom is limited due to constitutional contradictions, legislative ambiguity, and deferments to local interpretations of shari’a law.

In Saudi Arabia, Muslims who do not adhere to the officially sanctioned version of Sunni Islam can face severe repercussions, and the minority Shi’a Muslim and Ismaili communities are subject to official discrimination. Worship or possession of religious materials by non-Muslims is prohibited. In several countries in the region, the conversion of a Muslim to another religion is viewed as a criminal act, and in Saudi Arabia it is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. It is also illegal for a Saudi woman to marry a non-Muslim man. In Iran, particularly severe persecution of certain minority religions continues to be reported. In Egypt, converts to Christianity from Islam are viewed as apostates. As a result, they are subject to severe violations of religious freedom by both the government and society.

The USRAP provides access in a variety of ways to refugees who suffer religious persecution. The Specter Amendment, enacted in 2004, established that Iranian religious minorities designated as category members are eligible to apply under Priority 2 and benefit from a reduced evidentiary standard for establishing a well-founded fear of persecution. Iranian refugees may also gain access to the program through Priority 3. In addition, the USRAP accepts UNHCR and embassy referrals of religious minorities of various nationalities in the region. Nationals of any country, including “countries of particular concern” such as Saudi Arabia, may be referred to the U.S. program by UNHCR or a U.S. embassy for reasons of religious or political persecution.

### ***Voluntary Repatriation***

After the fall of the Taliban, voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan proceeded on a massive scale for several years, both with and without UNHCR assistance. More than 5.3 million Afghan refugees, the majority from Pakistan and Iran, have returned to Afghanistan since 2002. Over 3.6 million were assisted by UNHCR in the most successful refugee repatriation in UNHCR’s history. However, this massive repatriation has taxed the

capacities of Afghanistan to absorb further refugee returns and there is little expectation that the more than two million registered Afghans still in Pakistan will all return before the end of 2009 as originally planned. In UNHCR's view, the repatriation of Afghans has reached a new stage and returns are unlikely to continue in large numbers. UNHCR's assessment is that the continuing migration of Afghans in both directions across the Afghan-Pakistani border is part of a larger process of economic and social migration that has been occurring for centuries. Many of the Afghans who are choosing to stay in Pakistan are no longer seeking refuge from violence or persecution. They are, rather, seeking economic opportunities, fleeing poverty, visiting family, or remaining in place until security conditions and the absorptive capacity for returns in Afghanistan improves. UNHCR is working with the Government of Pakistan and the international community to develop policies and programs to encourage voluntary returns to the extent possible and to manage the population of Afghans that may remain in Pakistan for the longer term.

The return prospects of the Afghan population in India have been assessed over the years as extremely limited given the profile of the cases. Generally, they have no family/social links in their country of origin, which is fundamental to their security upon return. Many of the refugees have now married Indians, whose integration capacity in Afghanistan is seen as remote given the cultural and religious differences between the two countries. For some refugees there are heightened security risks and problems for return precisely because of their protracted exile in India. Children, particularly girls and young women, who have grown up in India in a more liberal environment may not be able to adjust. In 2007, UNHCR only assisted seven cases comprising 18 persons for voluntary repatriation from the urban caseload.

Following the February 2006 bombing of the Samarra mosque, the explosion of sectarian violence led to wide-scale displacement within and from Iraq. There are 2.5 million internally displaced Iraqis and anywhere from 1.5 million to over 2 million Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries, half of whom were displaced prior to February 2006. While the primary goal continues to be to support efforts to create conditions that will allow Iraqis to return home, the current security situation limits repatriation. The international community is providing protection and assistance to Iraqis living in host countries and making resettlement opportunities available to greater numbers of Iraqi refugees.

The United States has worked multilaterally with other interested governments in urging the Royal Government of Bhutan to allow for the voluntary repatriation of Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan under acceptable terms and conditions. We have asked Bhutan to work with the Government of Nepal and UNHCR to provide refugees with written terms and conditions of return, including property rights, and a clear timeline for implementation. We have also released a joint communiqué urging the Government of Bhutan to ensure conditions within Bhutan that preclude further refugee outflows in the future.

### ***Local Integration***

Few countries in the region offer local integration to refugees. UNHCR and the Government of Afghanistan have Tripartite Agreements with the governments of Iran and Pakistan that provide for the orderly, voluntary return of Afghan refugees. The agreement with Iran was valid until March 19, 2008 and an ad hoc agreement remains in place. The agreement with Pakistan was recently renewed and allows Afghan refugees who hold a “Proof of Registration” card to reside in Pakistan through December 2009. UNHCR is discussing shifting its focus away from assistance to Afghan refugees in South Asia in favor of a more broad-based development plan for the region that addresses both refugee and host community needs using self-reliance strategies.

The key to the successful transition from short-term humanitarian maintenance to long-term development is acceptance by the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan that they are best served by a system of managed migration across their border. Progress has been made in this area: some within the government of Pakistan have publicly acknowledged that some Afghans in Pakistan are likely to stay. The majority of Afghans who repatriated in the last few years had fled Taliban rule relatively recently. The Afghans remaining in Iran and Pakistan are for the most part the “hard cases,” who left Afghanistan in the early years of the Soviet invasion. They have deeper roots in Pakistan and Iran, and fewer ties to Afghanistan. A sizeable percentage of them have in fact never even lived in Afghanistan, and 74 percent are under age 28. Many of these Afghans are unlikely to return without strong economic and social incentives.

Local integration of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan is not an option, although both governments have permitted Iraqis to remain on a temporary basis. The governments of Jordan and Syria have both made

clear that they consider Iraqis in their countries to be visitors rather than refugees. The growing number of Iraqi refugees is straining the ability of Jordan and Syria to provide essential services. Although there are thought to be as many as 500,000 school-age children among the refugee population in the two countries, only about 25,000 Iraqi children are attending schools in Jordan and about 45,000 in Syria. Both Jordan and Syria have, in principle, opened their primary health care systems to Iraqi refugees, but it is not clear, particularly in Syria, what level of access Iraqis can attain. As a result of increased humanitarian assistance from the U.S. and other donors, access to primary health care improved significantly in 2007 for refugees in both Syria and Jordan. NGOs have established private health care clinics in both countries that provide free or low-cost primary health care assistance to refugees, as well as to locals.

Due to security concerns, Jordan has begun restricting entry access for military-aged Iraqi men. On October 12, 2007, Syria initiated visa restrictions limiting entry to Iraqis applying for commercial, scientific, educational and transport purposes. The new visas, which must be obtained from the Syrian Embassy in Baghdad and take about two weeks to process, allow a single entry and are valid for three months. There are, however, reports that visas can be obtained at the border for a fee. Jordan restricted entry to all Iraqis in February 2008 by imposing a visa regime similar to Syria's. Jordan has also agreed to waive 100% of overstay fines for those Iraqis who voluntarily depart Jordan and a 50% waiver on overstay fines for those Iraqis who convert their status to that of a resident.

India does not have a clear national policy for the treatment of refugees, and UNHCR has no formal status there. India recognizes and aids certain groups, including Sri Lankan Tamils and Tibetans, in the 117 settlements for Sri Lankans and 37 settlements for Tibetans throughout the country. It also permits UNHCR to assist other groups, primarily Afghans, Iranians, Somalis, Burmese, and Sudanese. Many Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils in India are permitted to work and receive social benefits.

UNHCR negotiated an agreement with the Government of India whereby India would naturalize over 8,000 Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees and authorize access to third country resettlement for those who could not be locally integrated or voluntarily repatriated. These concrete efforts will, after 27 years, bring to a close one of the world's longest-standing urban refugee situations. In 2007, naturalization clinics were established to review citizenship applications for the Hindu and Sikh Afghans.

### *Third-Country Resettlement*

The USRAP anticipates large-scale processing of Iraqis, Bhutanese, and Iranians during FY 2009. The U.S. Government recognizes that the possibility of third-country resettlement must be available to the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees. To this end, the United States supports UNHCR's efforts to identify and refer for resettlement in third countries some 25,000 vulnerable Iraqis in calendar year 2008. We expanded our resettlement processing capacity in the region last year and now have permanent processing facilities in Amman and Damascus, in addition to our previously existing facilities in Cairo and Istanbul. UNHCR has referred over 16,000 individuals to the U.S. program this fiscal year and will continue making referrals in coming months. We are committed to reaching the goal of admitting 12,000 Iraqi refugees during FY2008.

We are also facilitating direct access to the USRAP for Iraqis with close U.S. affiliations. During 2007 we established a program whereby direct-hire employees of the USG in Iraq and interpreters/translators for the Multi-National Forces (MNF-I) were eligible for direct access to the USRAP in Jordan and Egypt. The passage of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, enacted January 28, 2008, creates new categories of Iraqis who are eligible for direct access (P-2) to the USRAP, both inside and outside Iraq. Currently, beneficiaries of P-2 categories who may seek access to the USRAP in Jordan, Egypt and Iraq include:

1. Iraqis who work/worked on a full-time basis as interpreters/translators for the USG or MNF-I in Iraq;
2. Iraqis who are/were employed by the USG in Iraq;
3. Iraqis who are/were employees of an organization or entity closely associated with the U.S. mission in Iraq that has received USG funding through an official and documented contract, award, grant or cooperative agreement;
4. Iraqis who are/were employed in Iraq by a U.S.-based media organization or non-governmental organization;
5. Spouses, sons, daughters, parents and siblings of individuals described in the four categories above, or of an individual eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa as a result of his/her employment by or on behalf of the USG in Iraq, including if the individual is no longer alive, provided that the relationship is verified;

6. Iraqis who are the spouses, sons, daughters, parents, brothers or sisters of a citizen of the United States, or who are the spouses or unmarried sons or daughters of a Permanent Resident Alien of the United States, as established by their being or becoming beneficiaries of approved family-based I-130 Immigrant Visa Petitions.

PRM, DHS, and Embassy Baghdad began in-country refugee processing of Iraqi Locally Employed Staff (LES) and their immediate family members, even though no permanent OPE had been established in Iraq at that time. In March of this year, IOM staff and DHS officers completed interviews in Baghdad of 84 Iraqis. The first arrivals in the U.S. from this group were in May. We have now established a permanent OPE unit in Baghdad, which became fully operational during the fourth quarter of FY2008. Given the security and logistical challenges associated with operating an OPE in Iraq, we expect our processing capacity to remain greater in neighboring countries. Nonetheless, refugee processing in Iraq is a high priority for the USG and we believe it has significant potential, particularly to benefit Iraqis associated with U.S. efforts in Iraq.

Middle Eastern and South Asian refugees in most of Europe avail themselves of the asylum systems of the countries in which they are located. In Vienna, however, certain Iranian religious minorities (Baha'is, Zoroastrians, Jews, Mandaeans, and Christians) may be processed for U.S. resettlement using special procedures authorized by the Government of Austria. U.S. law provides particular protection for Iran's religious minorities, and more than 99 percent of eligible applicants are approved for admission to the U.S. The United States also processes Iranian religious minorities (primarily Baha'i) in Turkey through special procedures involving fast-track refugee status determination and referral by UNHCR.

The Government of Nepal publicly announced in November 2007 its support for third-country resettlement as a durable solution for Bhutanese refugees. Resettlement processing of these refugees has begun and the United States is committed to considering for resettlement as many refugees as express interest. Despite delays related to establishing an expedited exit permit process and medical screening issues, the first Bhutanese under the Priority 2 designation arrived in February 2008. Large-scale arrivals to the U.S. began in June 2008.

UNHCR has referred several hundred Afghans in India who cannot naturalize and who cannot repatriate. Those approved will arrive in FY 2008 and 2009. We are currently exploring modalities for processing vulnerable Tibetan refugees in the region.

***FY 2008 U.S. Admissions***

We estimate the admission of some 25,000 refugees from the region in FY 2008. These will include about 5,500 Iranians processed in Vienna and Istanbul, over 12,000 Iraqis, 5,000 Bhutanese, as well as some 1,000 Afghans and others from throughout the region.

***FY 2009 U.S. Resettlement Program***

The proposed regional ceiling for refugees from the Near East and South Asia for FY 2009 is 37,000 including vulnerable Iraqis, Bhutanese, Iranians, and Afghans. We expect individual UNHCR referrals of various religious and ethnic groups in the region, including Assyrians, Mandeans, as well as Iranian Kurds and Iranian Arabs (Ahwazis). In addition, Ahmadi Muslims in many locations and Afghans in the former Soviet Union, India, and elsewhere may be included. Various smaller refugee populations in Libya, Algeria, and elsewhere are also under consideration for individual referrals.

***Proposed FY 2009 Near East/South Asia program:***

<b><i>Approved pipeline from FY 2008</i></b>	<b><i>10,900</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 1 Individual Referrals</i></b>	<b><i>14,000</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 2 Groups</i></b>	<b><i>12,000</i></b>
<b><i>Priority 3 Family Reunification</i></b>	<b><i>100</i></b>
<b><u><i>Total Proposed Ceiling</i></u></b>	<b><u><i>37,000</i></u></b>

**TABLE III  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

**RESETTLEMENT ACCESS FOR REFUGEES FROM COUNTRIES DESIGNATED BY  
THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN\***

<b>COUNTRY OF CONCERN</b>	<b>PRIORITY 1</b>	<b>PRIORITY 2</b>	<b>PRIORITY 3</b>
Eritrea	X	X	X
Sudan	X		X
China	X		
Burma	X	X	X
DPRK	X		X
Iran	X	X	X
Saudi Arabia	X		
Uzbekistan	X		X

\* Countries currently designated in accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-292, Oct. 27, 1998, 112 Stat. 2787) (IRFA).

#### ***IV. DOMESTIC IMPACT OF REFUGEE ADMISSIONS***

In FY 2007, the USRAP admitted 48,281 refugees from 51 countries. Over half were originally from either the countries of Burma or Somalia. (See Table IV.)

The demographic characteristics of refugee arrivals from the 20 largest source countries (representing 99 percent of total arrivals) in FY 2007 illustrates the variation among refugee groups. The median age of all FY 2007 arrivals was 25 years and ranged from 19 years for arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to 33 years of age for arrivals from Iran. In FY 2007, 47.7 percent of all arriving refugees were female and 52.3 percent of all arriving refugees were male. Males predominated among refugees from Eritrea (60.3 percent), Burma (56 percent), and Sudan and Laos (54.7 percent). (See Table V.)

Considerable variation among refugee groups can be seen among specific age categories. Refugees under the age of five ranged from a high of 17.9 percent among Laotian arrivals to a low of 3.6 percent of those from Iran. The number of school-aged children (from five to 17 years of age) varied from a high of over 38.9 percent of arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a low of 17.7 percent of those from Iran. The number of working-aged refugees (18 to 64 years of age) varied from a high of 74.9 percent of those from Iran to a low of 49.1 percent of individuals from Burundi. Retirement-aged refugees (65 years or older) ranged from a high of 8.7 percent of arrivals from Vietnam to a low of less than one percent of those from Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda. Of the total arrivals in FY 2007, some 9.3 percent were under the age of five, 28.5 percent were of school age, 64 percent were of working age, and 3.2 percent were of retirement age. (See Table VI.)

During FY 2007, 67.3 percent of all arriving refugees resettled in 12 states. The majority were placed in California (13.89 percent), followed by Texas (9.12 percent), Minnesota (6.62 percent), New York (6.17 percent), Florida (5.57 percent), Washington (4.59 percent), and Arizona (4.13). The state of Illinois (3.88 percent), North Carolina (3.77 percent), Georgia (3.35 percent), Ohio (3.26 percent) and Indiana (2.94 percent) each resettled significant percentages of the total of newly arrived refugees. (See Table VII.)

**TABLE IV**  
**Refugee Arrivals By Country of Origin**  
**Fiscal Year 2007**

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Arrivals</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Afghanistan	441	0.91%
Angola	4	0.01%
Austria	1	0.00%
Benin	1	0.00%
Burkina Faso (U Volta)	6	0.01%
Burma	13,896	28.78%
Burundi	4,545	9.41%
Cambodia	15	0.03%
Cameroon	5	0.01%
Central Africa Republic	15	0.03%
Chad	10	0.02%
China	27	0.06%
Colombia	54	0.11%
Congo	206	0.43%
Cuba	2,922	6.05%
Democratic Republic of Congo	848	1.76%
Egypt	3	0.01%
Equatorial Guinea	14	0.03%
Eritrea	963	1.99%
Ethiopia	1,028	2.13%
Former Soviet Union*	4,557	9.44%
Former Yugoslavia**	2	0.00%
France	1	0.00%
Ghana	4	0.01%
Guinea	1	0.00%
Iran	5,481	11.35%
Iraq	1,608	3.33%

Country of Origin	Arrivals	
	Number	% of Total
Israel	1	0.00%
Ivory Coast	11	0.02%
Jordan	3	0.01%
Korea, North	22	0.05%
Kuwait	24	0.05%
Laos	117	0.24%
Liberia	1,606	3.33%
Mauritania	62	0.13%
Nepal	3	0.01%
Nigeria	20	0.04%
Pakistan	30	0.06%
Rwanda	202	0.42%
Sierra Leone	166	0.34%
Somalia	6,969	14.43%
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	2	0.00%
Sudan	704	1.46%
Syria	17	0.04%
Thailand	2	0.00%
The Gambia	13	0.03%
Togo	40	0.08%
Uganda	38	0.08%
Vietnam	1,564	3.24%
Yemen	6	0.01%
Zimbabwe	1	0.00%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48,281</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Former Soviet Union includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

\*\* Former Yugoslavia includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Yugoslavia.

*Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center*

**TABLE V**  
**Median Age and Gender of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2007**

<b>Rank (# of Arrivals)</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Refugees Admitted</b>	<b>Median Age</b>	<b>% Females</b>	<b>% Males</b>
1	Burma	13,896	22	44.0%	56.0%
2	Somalia	6,969	23	48.3%	51.7%
3	Iran	5,481	33	49.8%	50.2%
4	Former Soviet Union*	4,557	29	50.8%	49.2%
5	Burundi	4,545	30	49.3%	50.7%
6	Cuba	2,922	30	49.1%	50.9%
7	Iraq	1,608	27	51.4%	48.6%
8	Liberia	1,606	22	52.5%	47.5%
9	Vietnam	1,564	31	50.8%	49.2%
10	Ethiopia	1,028	23	48.4%	51.6%
11	Eritrea	963	21	39.7%	60.3%
12	Dem. Rep. Congo	848	19	48.3%	51.7%
13	Sudan	704	22	45.3%	54.7%
14	Afghanistan	441	24	49.0%	51.0%
15	Congo	206	22	48.1%	51.9%
16	Rwanda	202	23	49.5%	50.5%
17	Sierra Leone	166	25	47.6%	52.4%
18	Laos	117	22	45.3%	54.7%
19	Mauritania	62	24	46.8%	53.2%
20	Colombia	6654	27	46.3%	53.7%
	All Other Countries	342	25	50.6%	50.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>48,281</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>47.7%</b>	<b>52.3%</b>

\* Former Soviet Union includes countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

*Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center*

**TABLE VI**  
**Select Age Categories of Refugee Arrivals, Fiscal Year 2007**

<b>Rank (# of Arrivals)</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Under 5 Yrs</b>	<b>School Age (5-17)</b>	<b>Working Age (18-64)</b>	<b>Retirement Age (=or &gt; 65)</b>
1	Burma	11.5%	28.6%	62.7%	1.2%
2	Somalia	7.9%	31.5%	65.6%	3.0%
3	Iran	3.6%	17.7%	74.9%	7.0%
4	Former Soviet Union*	8.6%	28.9%	59.8%	7.4%
5	Burundi	16.4%	37.8%	49.1%	1.7%
6	Cuba	5.3%	20.9%	73.9%	3.0%
7	Iraq	7.5%	24.8%	68.7%	3.0%
8	Liberia	5.3%	37.1%	64.5%	2.2%
9	Vietnam	6.8%	25.8%	62.7%	8.7%
10	Ethiopia	4.6%	34.4%	69.9%	1.9%
11	Eritrea	13.6%	23.7%	64.5%	1.3%
12	Dem. Rep. Congo	12.4%	38.9%	54.8%	0.4%
13	Sudan	13.8%	26.3%	63.9%	1.1%
14	Afghanistan	6.3%	37.6%	61.2%	1.8%
15	Congo	13.6%	26.7%	64.1%	0.0%
16	Rwanda	6.9%	30.2%	69.8%	0.5%
17	Sierra Leone	5.4%	27.1%	68.1%	3.6%
18	Laos	17.9%	31.6%	49.6%	5.1%
19	Mauritania	6.5%	30.6%	66.1%	1.6%
20	Colombia	3.7%	29.6%	64.8%	1.9%
	Other Countries	8.8%	24.9%	69.3%	1.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>		9.3%	28.5%	64.0%	3.2%

\* Former Soviet Union includes countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

NOTE: Totals may exceed 100% due to overlapping age categories.

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

**TABLE VII**  
**Refugee Arrivals By State of Initial Resettlement, Fiscal Year 2007**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>Refugee Arrivals</b>	<b>Amerasian Arrivals</b>	<b>Total Arrivals</b>	<b>% of Total Arrivals to U.S.</b>
Alabama	135	0	135	0.28%
Alaska	30	0	30	0.06%
Arizona	1,992	0	1,992	4.13%
Arkansas	6	0	6	0.01%
California	6,699	8	6,707	13.89%
Colorado	950	4	954	1.98%
Connecticut	505	0	505	1.05%
Delaware	22	0	22	0.05%
District of Columbia	32	0	32	0.07%
Florida	2,691	0	2,691	5.57%
Georgia	1,610	7	1,617	3.35%
Hawaii	11	0	11	0.02%
Idaho	782	0	782	1.62%
Illinois	1,872	0	1,872	3.88%
Indiana	1,421	0	1,421	2.94%
Iowa	440	8	448	0.93%
Kansas	156	0	156	0.32%
Kentucky	899	0	899	1.86%
Louisiana	160	0	160	0.33%
Maine	118	0	118	0.24%
Maryland	648	0	648	1.34%
Massachusetts	810	5	815	1.69%
Michigan	1,283	0	1,283	2.66%
Minnesota	3,198	0	3,198	6.62%
Mississippi	1	0	1	0.00%
Missouri	831	0	831	1.72%
Montana	3	0	3	0.01%
Nebraska	487	3	490	1.01%
Nevada	334	0	334	0.69%
New Hampshire	254	0	254	0.53%
New Jersey	591	0	591	1.22%
New Mexico	109	0	109	0.23%

<b>STATE</b>	<b>Refugee Arrivals</b>	<b>Amerasian Arrivals</b>	<b>Total Arrivals</b>	<b>% of Total Arrivals to U.S.</b>
New York	2,978	0	2,978	6.17%
North Carolina	1,805	13	1,818	3.77%
North Dakota	196	0	196	0.41%
Ohio	1,573	0	1,573	3.26%
Oklahoma	156	0	156	0.32%
Oregon	693	0	693	1.44%
Pennsylvania	1,193	8	1,201	2.49%
Puerto Rico	8	0	8	0.02%
Rhode Island	139	0	139	0.29%
South Carolina	106	0	106	0.22%
South Dakota	219	0	219	0.45%
Tennessee	961	0	961	1.99%
Texas	4,394	7	4,401	9.12%
Utah	924	0	924	1.91%
Vermont	147	0	147	0.30%
Virginia	1,059	0	1,059	2.19%
Washington	2,215	1	2,216	4.59%
Wisconsin	371	0	371	0.77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,217</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48,281</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Note: Arrival figures do not reflect secondary migration.

Source: Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Refugee Processing Center

**TABLE VIII – With DHS**  
**ESTIMATED COSTS OF REFUGEE PROCESSING, MOVEMENT, AND RESETTLEMENT**  
**FY 2008 FUNDING AND FY 2009 BUDGET REQUEST**  
**(\$ MILLIONS)**

AGENCY	FUNDING FY 2008 (BY ACTIVITY)	ESTIMATED FUNDING FY 2009 (BY ACTIVITY)
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY</b>		
<i>United States Citizenship and Immigration Services</i>		
<b>Refugee Processing</b>	<b>\$ 18.9</b>	<b>\$ 20.8</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT OF STATE</b>		
<i>Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration</i>		
<b>Refugee Admissions</b>	<b>\$ 263*</b>	<b>\$ 213.4**</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES</b>		
<i>Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement</i>		
<b>Refugee Resettlement</b>	<b>\$ 523.0***</b>	<b>\$ 514.0***</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 700.4</b>	<b>\$ 722.8</b>

\* Includes recoveries and carry-over from prior fiscal years and funding from FY 2008 supplemental appropriation.

\*\* Does not include FY 2009 bridge funding, recoveries, or carry-over funding from FY 2008, which may become available to support the admissions program.

\*\*\* Does not include costs associated with the Unaccompanied Alien Children's Program, Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income programs. HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) refugee benefits and services are also provided to asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, certain Amerasians from Vietnam, victims of a severe form of trafficking who have received certification or eligibility letters from ORR, and certain family members who are accompanying or following to join victims of severe forms of trafficking, and some victims of torture, as well as Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants and their spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21. None of these additional groups is included in the refugee admissions ceiling.

**TABLE IX**  
**UNHCR Resettlement Statistics by Resettlement Country**  
**CY 2007**  
**DEPARTURES**

<b>RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL RESETTLED</b>
United States*	26,532	59.88%
Australia	6,056	12.14%
Canada	5,998	12.03%
Sweden	1,772	3.55%
Norway	978	1.96%
Finland	714	0.96%
New Zealand	629	1.26%
Denmark	480	1.43%
Netherlands	425	0.70%
Great Britain	348	0.85%
Brazil	163	0.21%
Ireland	107	0.33%
Chile	32	0.06%
Argentina	32	0.06%
Belgium	17	0.03%
Switzerland	7	0.01%
Other**	18	0.21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44,308</b>	

\*Includes departures to the U.S. of individuals referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program by UNHCR

\*\*Departures to Austria, France, Germany, and Italy