



MIGRATION 101

FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES, MIGRANTS, AND
OTHERS SEEKING SAFETY IN THE US

FIRST EDITION



OXFAM

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WHAT FORMS OF MIGRATION ARE THERE?

New, fast-moving conflicts are precipitating an unprecedented global migration crisis. Millions are seeking safety as new anti-refugee and immigration policies lead to confusion.

Currently, over 65 million people are displaced, more than any ever recorded by the UN Refugee Agency.¹ While displaced people are sometimes referred to as “refugees,” in fact only about a third of the world’s displaced population are legally considered refugees. Together with others who have been forced to flee their homes, they form a mosaic of the various forms of displacement rampant in the world today. Some are displaced within their home country, others in neighboring countries. Many fewer make long journeys in search of refuge far away from home.

While displacement is not a new phenomenon, the scale of the current crisis is unprecedented. The number of refugees is at its highest since World War II, driven by long-term conflicts that show no signs of abating like in Syria and South Sudan. New, fast-moving crises are uprooting people from their homes, and long-standing displacement situations, like those in Somalia or Afghanistan, still lack solutions. These growing numbers mean that in 2017, a person was forced to leave his or her home every three seconds.²

As a humanitarian and development organization, Oxfam has a long history of working with displaced populations, not only helping people with their immediate basic needs for clean water, shelter, food, and dignified work, but also advocating for peaceful resolutions to the crises that forced them to flee and appropriate support for them in the meantime, both in their own nations and in the countries that host them. The scale of this crisis has prompted calls for US action, but a complex American migration framework and a series of new anti-refugee and immigrant policies introduced by the Trump Administration have led to confusion. The following document details only a few

of the various existing migration statuses, focusing on those that are most important to the American context and humanitarian issues.

WHO ARE REFUGEES?

Under international law a refugee is a person located outside the country of his or her nationality who has a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of his or her:

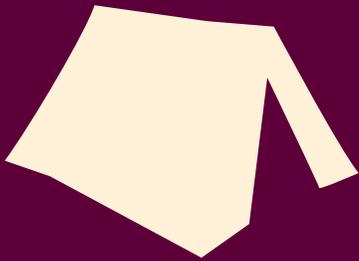
- race,
- religion,
- nationality,
- membership in a particular social group, or
- political opinion.³

Globally, there are more than 22.5 million refugees. Most live in host countries neighboring or near their nations of origin. Less than 1% will ever be resettled to third countries like the US, even though the UN estimates that 8% of the world’s refugees are in need of resettlement, with no prospects of returning to their home country or integrating into their host country.⁴

HOW ARE REFUGEES RESETTLED TO THE US?

In the US, refugee law is enshrined in the Refugee Act of 1980.⁵ For decades, the US has been the world’s largest resettlement country, with the world’s longest and most thorough refugee resettlement process. First, an individual who meets the refugee definition must be referred to the US Refugee Admissions Program. Authorities perform multiple security and medical screenings, conduct in-person interviews, and collect biometric information. At the end of

While displacement is not a new phenomenon, the scale of the current crisis is unprecedented. The number of refugees is at its highest since World War II, driven by long-term conflicts that show no signs of abating.



65.6 MILLION PEOPLE

are currently displaced because of persecution conflict, violence, and human rights violations.



1 IN 100 PEOPLE

worldwide are now displaced, the highest recorded since WWII



51% OF REFUGEES

are children under the age of 18



20 PEOPLE PER MINUTE

are forced to flee their homes

STEPS IN THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS IN THE US

-  The UN interviews refugees and collects extensive biographical and biometric information in order to refer the most vulnerable individuals for resettlement. A refugee cannot ask to be resettled.
-  Several US agencies conduct their own background checks.
 - State Department
 - Department of Homeland Security
 - National Counterterrorism Center
 - FBI
-  Refugees are interviewed in person by specially trained agents of the Department of Homeland Security.
-  Refugees provide further biometric data for screening and storage in several agency databases.
-  Refugees attend a medical checkup.
-  Accepted refugees are referred to a national resettlement agency in the US.
-  Refugees attend a pre-departure cultural orientation to facilitate integration.
-  The International Organization for Migration books travel for refugees.
-  Refugees are vetted against the National Targeting Center-Passenger program and the Transportation Security Administration's Secure Flight program.
-  Customs and Border Protection ensures that the arriving refugee is the same individual as the person approved by the Department of Homeland Security.
-  The individual is admitted entry to the US as a refugee. Upon entry, a refugee has been more scrutinized than any other traveler to the US and undergoes further security checks after applying for a green card.

this process, refugees accepted for resettlement in the US will be given a pre-departure cultural orientation and then assigned to a local resettlement group in the US which will facilitate their arrival and integration.⁶ From beginning to end, the US resettlement process can take more than two years.

WHY DOES THE US RESETTLE REFUGEES?

A cornerstone of the founding values of the US was to offer oppressed people refuge from violence and persecution. The US has a long and proud history of resettling refugees in need of safe haven, through both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Last year, the US admitted refugees from 77 countries. Regardless of their nationalities, one thing unites all refugees—they feared for their lives in their home countries. Like all of us, they are seeking a life of dignity, freedom and security.

WHY CAN'T THE US JUST SUPPORT REFUGEES ABROAD?

The US is the world's largest humanitarian donor, supporting refugees in dozens of countries. But some refugees have particular needs and safety concerns which make it impossible for them to stay where they are; for many, resettlement is a matter of life or death. It is not an either or proposition to provide assistance to refugees overseas or support their resettlement here in the US. We can and must do both.

SOURCE OPPOSITE PAGE: <http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/stories/2017/6/5941561f4/forced-displacement-worldwide-its-highest-decades.html>.



Pastor Richard talks with visitors at the Imvepi refugee settlement in Uganda
Coco McCabe/Oxfam

PASTOR RICHARD'S STORY

Pastor Richard, 34, made the difficult decision to uproot his family and head to Uganda. Who would readily trade home for a life of dependence and uncertainty in a country that is not your own? What would you do for work there? How would your family get enough to eat? Where would your children go to school? All of these questions weighed heavily on Pastor Richard and other South Sudanese refugees—even as they find relief in being free of the fear and violence that filled their days.

Richard resisted the urge to flee when gunshots first sounded. He held on through the arrests of people in his community, through the nighttime killings, and even through the targeting of religious leaders.

What he couldn't bear was when his children began to suffer because the only food his family had to eat was sweet potatoes.

"My young girl fell sick and was suffering from anemia seriously," said Richard, speaking in English. "The elder sister—even the same. In the morning you see their feet are swelling. So in all this, I actually made my decision to move out."

Pastor Richard is just one among the more than a million South Sudanese refugees who have now crossed the border seeking security in Uganda, where a relatively liberal refugee policy makes it more welcoming than many other places: It now hosts more refugees than any other African nation.

And they are just some of 22.5 million refugees seeking safety globally—the highest number since the aftermath of World War II, and part of a broad displacement crisis that Oxfam is tackling on many fronts.

In June 2017, living safely in a Ugandan refugee settlement with his family, Richard had not stopped worrying about food: The previous month, the World Food Programme, \$60 million short on funds, cut the grain ration in half for South Sudanese refugees—a terrible blow.

But a shortage of rations isn't Richard's only concern. What gnaws at him just as keenly is the future of his children and the additional orphans now in his care. All told, his household numbers 16.

A teacher himself, he fears the children won't have access to the education that is so vital to their success. Among his parishioners are several teachers, and they have discussed a plan for offering classes, but they lack teaching materials.

"They're our future generation," said Richard of the children. "They're the leaders of tomorrow."

Despite all the hardship and uncertainty he and his family—and countless others—have endured, Richard is sure that tomorrow will be brighter.

"I convince myself biblically that there's a time for everything. We suffered, but there's a time we shall also enjoy life," he said. "We shall get the peace back to South Sudan."

FAST FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES



FACT: REFUGEES DO NOT THREATEN US SECURITY.

The US refugee resettlement program is the world's largest and most stringent. Its critics should stop peddling untruths and take a hard look at the program, which includes multiple levels of background checks and investigations that make refugees by far the most scrutinized people coming into our country. Refugees spend roughly two years going through dozens of checks and interviews by our nation's top security and counter-terror experts, including Homeland Security, FBI, and the State Department. This is not just Oxfam's opinion: a bipartisan group of our nation's top current and former national security experts agree that the refugee resettlement program is safe.⁷

According to the Cato Institute, refugees are less likely than other foreign nationals, or even US citizens, to kill others in terrorist attacks in the US. From 1975 to 2015, the annual risk of death to a US resident by a refugee terrorist in the country was 1 in 3.64 billion.⁸



FACT: REFUGEES DO NOT COST US TAXPAYERS A LOT OF MONEY.

Refugees receive assistance from the government during the first six months of their stay. Afterwards, they are expected to provide for themselves. Refugees contribute significantly to the American economy: 13% were entrepreneurs (versus 9% of US born citizens); their median household income after 25 years in the US is \$67,000 (\$14,000 more than the median for all US households); and in 2015, they paid a total of \$20.9 billion in taxes.⁹

The Tennessee legislature's Fiscal Review Committee found that over a period of two decades, local refugees had contributed twice as much in state revenues than they had consumed.¹⁰ In fact, refugees even pay back the cost of their flight to the US!



FACT: REFUGEES CONTRIBUTE TO AMERICAN SOCIETY.

Refugees revitalize the communities in which they are living, weaving deeply into the fabric of the United States. Despite leaving their entire lives behind, sometimes with just the clothes on their backs, refugees who come to the US are resilient. They want to work and they want to contribute to our communities. Refugees are more likely to start businesses than other immigrants or even US-born citizens. They also give back so much to our culture – many famous Americans like Albert Einstein and Madeline Albright were refugees themselves.



FACT: REFUGEES CONSTITUTE A VERY SMALL PORTION OF THE US POPULATION.

Less than 1% of the global refugee population is resettled. Even a smaller percentage is selected to come to the US.¹¹ Yet despite there being more refugees around the world than ever before, in 2017 President Trump decided to admit a record-low number of refugees—an 82 percent drop from previous years. Worse still, it is likely that we'll only bring in 21,000 refugees this year because of policy changes that amount to a mountain of red tape.¹² With more than 325 million people in the US, refugees represent a miniscule portion of the population.

Some people worry that as a wealthy country, the US is expected to assume disproportionate responsibility for refugees. In reality, however, the six richest countries in the world (including the US) take in less than nine percent of the world's refugees while the overwhelming majority of refugees find shelter in poorer countries that struggle to support them.¹³

WHO ARE TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) HOLDERS?

The Secretary of Homeland Security may designate nationals of certain foreign countries as eligible for TPS when circumstances in their countries of origin prevent them from returning safely. Country designations stem from the following conditions:

- ongoing armed conflict, including civil war
- an environmental disaster or epidemic, or
- other extraordinary and temporary conditions.¹⁴

Unlike refugee status, which is granted based on an assessment of an individual, TPS is available based on the situation in the country of origin. TPS holders can live and work in the US; however, they are not eligible for a green card/permanent residency, and if their country's TPS designation is terminated, they must leave the US.

Currently, an estimated 317,000 individuals reside in the US under TPS. Similar to refugees, TPS holders are heavily vetted to maintain security. To date, ten countries have been deemed eligible for TPS by the Department of Homeland Security, though some of these designations

have recently been revoked by the Trump Administration. In January 2018, TPS was terminated for El Salvador, which accounted for 195,000 Salvadoran beneficiaries, many of whom have been living and working in the US on TPS status since 2001.¹⁵ January 2018 also saw the extension, but not redesignation, of TPS for Syria, allowing Syrians with TPS to remain for only 18 more months in the US while the conflict rages in Syria with no end in sight. This decision offers no solution for Syrians who need Temporary Protected Status but were not able to submit their application before 2016.

More recently, TPS has been terminated for nearly 9,000 Nepalis and 57,000 Hondurans. Many of the Honduran TPS-holders have been residing in the US for nearly two decades, initially due to the catastrophic conditions after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and later because of ongoing violence and further natural disasters. Several more decisions on whether to terminate or redesignate TPS for countries in the program, including Yemen, where armed conflict continues to wreak havoc, are expected throughout 2018.

WHERE ARE PEOPLE WITH TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FROM?¹⁶

✘ TERMINATED

CITIZENSHIP	INDIVIDUALS
EL SALVADOR	195,000
HAITI	46,000
HONDURAS	57,000
NEPAL	8,950
NICARAGUA	2,550
SUDAN	1,040

? DECISION IN 2018

CITIZENSHIP	INDIVIDUALS
YEMEN	1,000
SOMALIA	250

➔ EXTENDED NEW DECISION IN 2019

CITIZENSHIP	INDIVIDUALS
SYRIA	5,800
SOUTH SUDAN	70



I'm Muslim. I went to Catholic school. I understand how similar we are. What unites us is way more than what divides us.

MONZER'S STORY

He goes by Moe, his favorite character from *The Simpsons*. And it's thanks to them—along with a hearty diet of American movies, shows, and video games—that Monzer's English is so good people have a hard time believing he's from Syria, a country he fled five years ago after being arrested for peacefully protesting the government and its policies.

Now 21 and a senior at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Monzer is determined to become a dentist, like his mother, and his recent admission into the university's College of Dentistry is the first step toward making that dream come true. Classes begin in August.

But there's a hitch—a big one: Monzer's visa status. Right now, he has a temporary protected status, or TPS, a designation of profound uncertainty. Prior to the US government's extension of TPS for Syria in late January, Monzer worried that all the hard work he has put into assimilating and all the plans he has made for his future may be for naught.

"Once TPS expires, my employment authorization expires as well as the driver's license connected to it," said Monzer. Without a valid visa, he can't apply for the loans he needs to pay for dental school. He can't apply for a student visa through the school because the Syrian government doesn't want him to have a passport, he said. And if he were to apply for one, that would damage his chance for asylum here. Even though the US recently extended TPS for Syria, it leaves Monzer in limbo, uncertain of whether he will be so lucky to receive another extension when the next deadline arrives.

Monzer worries about his safety if he lost TPS and had to return to Syria. "Most of my friends in Syria are either dead, missing, or refugees in different countries."



Monzer is a senior at the University of Iowa and has been accepted at the university's College of Dentistry.

And despite the cold indifference of the administration toward refugees, Monzer has found a warm welcome among Iowans—even those he doesn't know but who are sympathetic to him and the local advocacy he does on behalf of other Syrians struggling with similar challenges.

Still the kindness of new friends can't shield him from the deeply troubling reality of TPS. "I'm Muslim. I went to Catholic school. I understand how similar we are. What unites us is way more than what divides us."

WHO ARE THE DREAMERS AND WHAT IS DEFERRED ACTION FOR CHILDHOOD ARRIVALS (DACA)?

In 2012, DACA was introduced to prevent the deportation of people who had been brought to live in the US as children. DACA is a 2-year renewable status that has been issued to approximately 800,000 people, often called “Dreamers.” In reality, the number of Dreamers—that is, undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US under the age of 18—is much higher than the 800,000 who have formally been given DACA status. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that more than 3.6 million undocumented immigrants entered the country while minors. However, the conditions required to request DACA exclude many immigrants who arrived in the US as minors.¹⁷

A variety of conditions must be met to request DACA, most notably:

- Under age 31 in June 2012
- Arrived in the US before 16th birthday
- Continuous residence in the US since 2007
- Have no felony or serious misdemeanor offenses and
- Currently in school, graduated with a high school or GED diploma, or honorably discharged from the military.¹⁸

This status is the outcome of a drawn-out legislative battle. In 2001, the Dream Act, which would have created a path to citizenship for those without legal immigration status who arrived in the US as children, was floated in Congress but never passed. DACA was intended as a stopgap measure, but no long-term solution has passed since. Recently, DACA has come under fire, facing both legal and political pressures. President Trump terminated the program in September 2017, asking Congress to develop a replacement. In the meantime, the courts have reviewed DACA and issued an injunction in January 2018, allowing Dreamers to renew their DACA status and stay in the US for the time being. Another court ruling in April 2018 rejected the Trump administration’s termination of the program, a promising development for DACA recipients. But the issue remains in the courts for the time being.¹⁹ If it expires and no permanent solution is found in the courts or Congress, Dreamers will face deportation.²⁰

WHO ARE ASYLEES?

Asylees are similar to refugees: they are people in need of protection from persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Globally, around 1 million people request asylum every year.²¹ Unlike resettled refugees, who sought refuge elsewhere and are later assigned to the US, those seeking asylum in the US are already in the US or have arrived at a port of entry. Their cases face an equally rigorous vetting process with wait times of six years in certain circumstances. These vulnerable individuals encounter long delays as the American authorities process more than 311,000 backlogged cases, a number that has increased by 1750% in recent years.²²

“

When I came to the States,
I always thought we ... [would]
have some financial support, but
actually it mean[t] way more when
I found the emotional support.

—Batoul Taha, 17, thinking back on all that church
volunteers and others have done for her family since they
resettled in Chicago from Lebanon. Their home was in
Damascus before fleeing to Lebanon.



PHOTO: COCO MCCABE/ OXFAM AMERICA

PROTECTING REFUGEES AND TPS HOLDERS

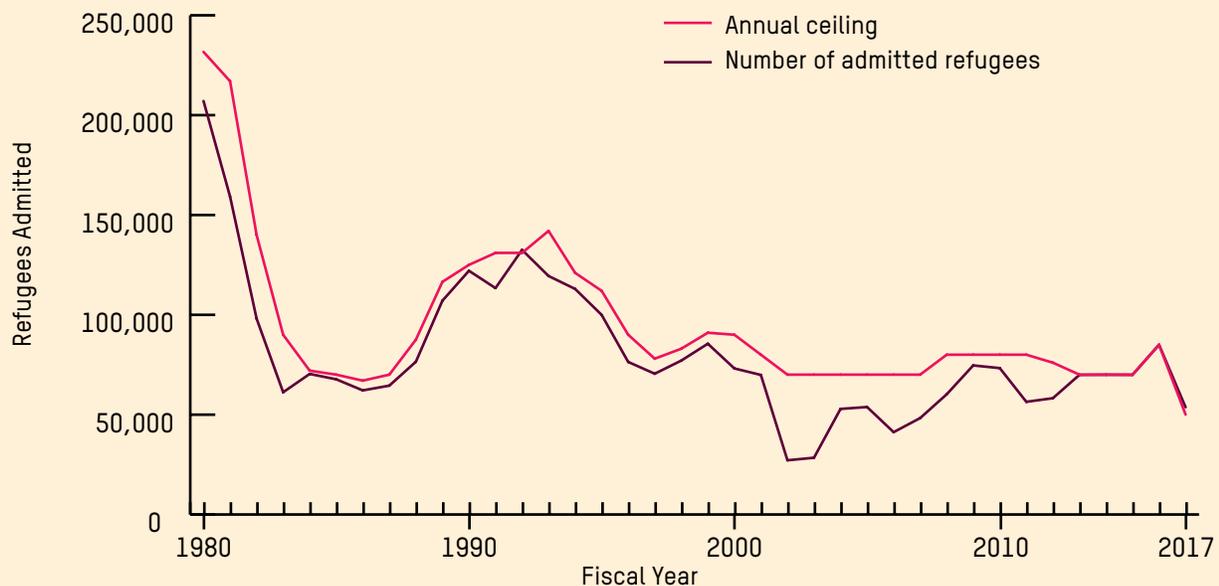
Oxfam advocates for policies that protect the world’s most vulnerable, including people fleeing oppression, disaster, and conflict. This aligns with a long history and tradition in the US of offering oppressed people refuge from violence and persecution.

PROTECT REFUGEES

While nearly 85,000 refugees were welcomed into the US in Fiscal Year 2016, President Trump introduced limits, resulting in just 53,716 resettled refugees in FY 2017 and a historically low ceiling of just 45,000 in FY 2018.²³ Worsening these already significant cuts are the recent

travel bans issued by President Trump, restricting entries to the US from several Muslim majority countries. A refugee resettlement ban, followed by a review for 11 “high-risk” countries, limited refugee entries to the US in late 2017. While that ban was in effect, just 2,225

US ANNUAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT CEILINGS AND NUMBER OF REFUGEES ADMITTED, 1980-PRESENT



SOURCE: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>

Muslim refugees were admitted. During the same seven-month period from the year before, 32,587 Muslim refugees were admitted.²⁴

At the current rate of resettlement, less than half of the allotted 45,000 refugees will be able to enter the US this fiscal year, a 77% decrease from the historical average.²⁵

OXFAM RECOMMENDS:

1. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE NEEDS-BASED.

Refugees, by definition, are individuals persecuted for their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Their ability to resettle in the US should not be determined by their religion, nationality, or any other status: it should be based on demonstrated need, as it has been since the start of the program.

2. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SHOULD BE COMMENSURATE WITH THE SCALE OF GLOBAL NEED.

The recent cuts to the resettlement program come at a moment of an unprecedented global displacement crisis. Since the program began in 1980, Presidents from both parties have set more robust targets, the average being 95,000. This fiscal year's ceiling of 45,000 is unacceptable. Even more worrisome is the fact that the US may not even meet this disastrously low target given the fact that the administration has dramatically slowed its refugee admissions processing since coming into office. At the very least, a ceiling of 75,000 refugees is necessary during this moment of crisis.

3. REFUGEES SHOULD BE SUPPORTED OUTSIDE OF THE US TOO.

It is not an either/or proposition to provide assistance to refugees overseas or support their resettlement here in the US. We can and must do both. Outside of the US, a robust international affairs budget is necessary not only to support refugees with their immediate needs and to support the countries—primarily in Africa and Asia—that bear the costs of hosting refugees, but also to fight poverty and to increase stability in order to prevent future displacement.

A SHORT HISTORY OF RECENT US MIGRATION POLICY

1948 The first-ever formal US refugee policy allowed for 205,000 refugees to enter the US over two years, which was later expanded to 415,000.

1953 Refugee Relief Act is passed with bipartisan support and signed by Republican President Eisenhower. It defined refugees as those who lack “the essentials of life” and allowed more than 200,000 resettled refugees to enter the US.

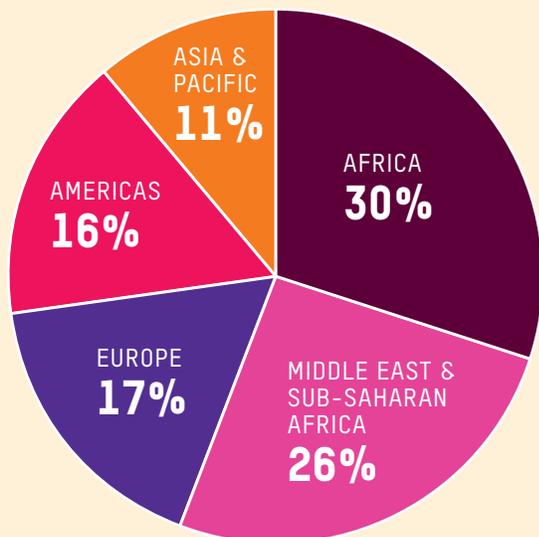
1980 The Refugee Act, which translated the UN Convention on Refugees into American legislation, created a clearer definition of a refugee and greater guidelines for their resettlement. It established resettlement ceilings at 50,000 per year, with emergency procedures to allow more in times of crisis. The bill was adopted by a unanimous vote in the Senate before being signed into law by President Carter.²⁶

1998 NACARA signed by President Clinton, allowing permanent residence for certain Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Cubans, Guatemalans, and members of former Soviet bloc countries.

2002 Homeland Security Act signed, whereby all immigration adjudication and enforcement is now housed under the Department of Homeland Security.²⁷

2018 Over the past 40 years, the US has become home for more than 3 million refugees, with annual admissions figures ranging from year to year, with a high of 207,000 in 1980.²⁸

WHERE ARE THE WORLD'S DISPLACED PEOPLE BEING HOSTED?



SOURCE: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>

PROTECT TPS HOLDERS

Roughly 317,000 of our neighbors are living in limbo, in light of recent and upcoming determinations on their eligibility for TPS. These people have become contributors to the US economy and culture after fleeing dangerous situations in their countries of citizenship.

OXFAM RECOMMENDS:

4. REDESIGNATE TPS FOR COUNTRIES WHERE SAFE CONDITIONS TO RETURN DO NOT EXIST.

Unfortunately, many of the countries with TPS designation cannot provide a safe haven for returning citizens. For example, in El Salvador, for which TPS was terminated in January 2018, returning individuals will be met by poor living conditions, an inability for the country to absorb returnees, multiple natural disasters, food insecurity, and high rates of criminal drug and gang activity.

Furthermore, Salvadoran TPS holders are parents to an estimated 192,000 US-citizen children who will either be abandoned or forced to return to El Salvador with their parents, facing increased risk of being targeted due to the inability to speak Spanish and unfamiliarity with the country.

In other TPS countries, conditions are not much better. Yemen, which faces a decision later in 2018, is marred in a three-year conflict leading to the worst cholera outbreak in human history. Syria continues to struggle in the eighth year of its civil war, and in South Sudan, more than half of the population is facing extreme hunger.

The decision to redesignate TPS should not be political. It should be based on evidence that affirms safe conditions for returnees. For many TPS countries, these conditions have not been met.

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COVER: A group of refugees crosses the border between Serbia and Croatia in late 2015. In recent years, the world has been facing the biggest displacement crisis since the Second World War, with as many as 65 million people on the move, many of them fleeing conflict and persecution. Oxfam has been assisting displaced people on several continents for decades, helping to provide for their immediate needs, as well as advocating for resolution of the crises that prompt so many to flee home. Oxfam also encourages governments to adopt policies that respect the basic rights of refugees and others seeking safety.

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