

# Faithful Voting and Global Concerns:

Global Issue Briefs for the 2020 U.S. Elections



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Issue 2: Refugees

## Welcoming Refugees in U.S. Policy

*In a series of two-page briefs, Faithful Voting and Global Concerns, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns addresses key global issues for voters to consider for the 2020 U.S. elections. Inspired by the gospel and Maryknoll missionaries' commitment to stand with vulnerable communities around the world, we urge U.S. citizens to consider these issues and vote to advance the cause of peace, social justice, and the integrity of creation.*

### See

The United States has long been the [world leader](#) in offering resettlement to refugees. Under the current Administration, the U.S. refugee program has been diminished, resulting in refugees being stranded in temporary shelters abroad.

A “[refugee](#)” is someone who has crossed an international border in order to flee persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a social group. To gain refugee status, individuals must be recognized by the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, or a national government as fitting the criteria. If they qualify, they have the right to permanent resettlement in a safe country.

Only a [small percentage](#) of refugees – often the most vulnerable – opt for permanent resettlement abroad; most remain in the neighboring countries to which they initially fled or eventually return home. Before they are resettled by a country which volunteers to receive them, refugees go through an extensive screening process that takes, on average, [18-24 months](#).

Since 1980, the U.S. has aimed to resettle an average of [95,000](#) refugees per year – the most of any country. However, the Trump administration's goal for fiscal year 2020 was to admit a maximum of just 18,000 refugees.

Meanwhile, the world is facing a [staggering number](#) of people who have been forcibly displaced and the worst refugee crisis since World War II.

Diplomatic and humanitarian solutions are shrinking as nations fail to cooperate to deal with underlying causes of violence and provide permanent solutions for refugees. When countries such as the U.S. draw back from their commitment to help refugees, refugees are left waiting for help. With decreases in funding, refugee agencies in the U.S. [continue to close](#).

### Facts About Refugees

- There are about [26 million](#) refugees right now; over half are under 18.
- The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops directs the [largest](#) network of refugee resettlement agencies in the world, resettling about 30% of the refugees admitted to the U.S. annually.
- In 2016, 84, 995 refugees were [admitted](#) to the U.S. In 2018, 22, 491 were admitted - a 74% decrease from 2016.
- Between 2005-2014, refugees brought in [\\$63 billion](#) more in revenue in taxes than they cost in welfare spending.

### Coronavirus Connection

Refugees living in [camps](#) are extremely vulnerable to coronavirus outbreaks, given the crowded conditions and lack of sanitation. Catholic humanitarian groups are calling for the evacuation of refugee camps in [Greece](#) due to the crisis. The coronavirus crisis will continue to impact those who were already vulnerable the most, exposing the weakness of our world's social protection systems.

## Judge

In this time of unprecedented global migration, Pope Francis has made it clear that our faith calls us to respond with compassion to the needs of those fleeing violence in their homelands. Based on the inherent dignity of each person as created in the image of God and our biblical call to “welcome the stranger,” [Pope Francis says](#) that nations must act toward refugees and migrants with “generosity, enthusiasm, wisdom, and far-sightedness.” To displaced people he [has said](#), “You are at the center of the Church’s heart.” To wealthy nations, [he has said](#) that ungenerosity toward refugees is “an alarm bell warning of the moral decline we will face if we continue to give ground to the throw-away culture.”

## Act

There are Members of Congress in both parties who [remain steadfast](#) in their support for refugees. We can urge our Members of Congress and Administration to revitalize bipartisan cooperation to support refugees by encouraging the following policy commitments:

- Ensure the number of refugees admitted to the United States annually is reflective of the global need for refugee resettlement, as determined by UNHCR. For example, [new legislation](#) can require that the president consult further with Congress and UNHCR when deciding how many refugees to admit each year.
- Maintain the United States’ [financial contributions](#) to refugee assistance programs at historic levels or higher.
- Increase U.S. leadership in efforts to expand international cooperation to help refugees, such as the [United Nations Global Compact on Refugees](#).
- Support diplomacy and peacebuilding efforts in war-torn countries to address the root causes of the refugee crisis.

## Maryknoll Experience



“[While volunteering in a refugee camp in Greece, I came across a] young man [refusing] the food that the church provides for them. He said “I am fasting.” I asked him to tell me about his fast. He just said “I fast so that all THIS will be over.” I just want to join my prayer to his.”

– Sr. Rosemarie Milazzo, MM

## Pray

“God of our wandering ancestors, may refugees find a friend in me and so make me worthy of the refuge I have found in you.”

- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

## Faithful Citizenship

Find out where the candidates stand on refugee resettlement and the policy proposals listed here. If a candidate’s position is unclear, reach out to the campaign and ask. Let candidates know you are concerned about the global refugee crisis, get them on the record, and vote to protect refugees.