

Opinion

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Will America Stand Again With the World's Refugees?

By Matthew Soerens

Jan. 26, 2018



One year ago on Saturday, President Trump [issued an executive order](#) to severely restrict the entry of refugees and other immigrant groups to the United States. This first version of the so-called travel ban set off protests at airports, lawsuits and global outcry — while thrilling some of the president's supporters who were pleased by his swift fulfillment of a campaign pledge.

After court rulings and subsequent decrees from the Trump administration, refugees are now being resettled in the United States at a distressingly slow rate, with many applicants subject to delays and onerous reviews. The impact of the Trump policies has proved disastrous.

In the first year of the Trump administration only 29,725 refugees were admitted to the United States, a big drop from the 99,183 allowed in the previous year. In 1980, by comparison, the United States welcomed more than 200,000 refugees.

In October, Mr. Trump [set the limit for refugee arrivals](#) for the current fiscal year at a historical low of 45,000. And unless the pace of arrivals increases significantly, the United States will not reach even half that goal. This year, the United States is on track to resettle fewer refugees than Canada, which has a population roughly one-tenth that of the United States.

(...)

A [draft of the report](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services obtained by The New York Times found that, over the past decade, refugees have contributed \$63 billion more in government revenues than they cost. That's consistent with the findings of economists, such as a recent study that found that refugees, on average, are paying more in taxes than they receive in governmental services and benefits by the ninth year after arrival.

The past year has been a disaster for refugees and for those of us who are deeply concerned — many because of the convictions of our faith — with their well-being. But, because of my Christian faith, I also believe that people can repent, turning from a wrong direction and moving in the right way.

It's not too late for our leaders to examine the facts, apply the values of the faith traditions that inspire many Americans' concern for refugees, and change course.

Matthew Soerens is the United States director of church mobilization for World Relief and the co-author of "Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis."