

## U.S. again cuts refugee numbers, sparking widespread criticism (*The Associate Press*) (English 8)

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — For a second straight year the United States will lower the number of refugees it will accept, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. The secretary of state is in charge of U.S. relations with other countries. Human rights groups criticized the decision while Pompeo insisted that the United States is still committed to providing safety for people fleeing the world's danger zones.

A refugee is a person who has fled their country of origin because it is not safe for them. Many refugees flee war, conflict and persecution for their race, religion or nationality.

Up to 30,000 refugees will be allowed into the country next year, down from a cap of 45,000 this year. It will be the lowest ceiling on admissions since the program began in 1980. The announcement on September 17 came despite calls from global **humanitarian** groups that this year's cap of 45,000 was too low.

The announcement drew harsh criticism from Democratic lawmakers.

### Lawmakers, Humanitarian Advocates React

Democratic Senators Dianne Feinstein of California and Dick Durbin of Illinois released a joint statement on September 18. The Trump administration is abandoning America's long history of humanitarian leadership, the statement said.

The CATO Institute is a libertarian think tank in Washington, D.C. It also criticized lowering the cap. Libertarianism is a political philosophy where the focus is on individual freedoms. A think tank is a research center that studies and **advocates** for social, political and economic issues. An analyst at the think tank said the Trump administration is "shrinking the refugee program at exactly the moment when the number of people who need to flee violence has reached the highest level in decades."

The CATO Institute's David Bier said there is no way to defend the new ceiling. He pointed to a Trump administration paper that found that refugees help the United States make money. The chance of a refugee killing a U.S. resident is less than 1 in 3.6 billion annually, the report said.

Pompeo addressed potential criticism of lowering the ceiling. He noted that the United States would process more than 280,000 asylum claims. It will also process more than 800,000 asylum claims from people already inside the country.

Asylum is offered to people who would be in danger if they were sent back to their home countries. They apply to be admitted to a country for protection.

### Numbers Are Dramatically Reduced

The 30,000 cap is the maximum number of refugees the United States will admit for the next year, starting October 1. The actual number allowed in could be lower. So far this year, the United States has only admitted 20,918 refugees, according to State Department records.

President Barack Obama raised the ceiling to 110,000 in 2017. The pace slowed dramatically after Trump took office, though. In 2016, the last full year of the Obama administration, the United States welcomed nearly 85,000 refugees.

Pompeo said the lower ceiling still showed a commitment to aiding families forced to flee their homes due to violence or natural disasters. However, it puts the safety and well-being of the American people first, he claimed. He cited the case of an Iraqi refugee who was arrested in California. The refugee was arrested for killing a policeman in his homeland while fighting for a terrorist organization.

The United States still offers many other forms of protection to people from other countries, Pompeo said. The nation makes contributions to foreign aid and other forms of humanitarian assistance, he said.

### **Administration Builds Road Blocks**

Amnesty International is a global human rights group. The group accused the Trump administration of "abandoning" refugees with the lower cap.

"This is the lowest goal in the history of the program," Ryan Mace of Amnesty International said. It is made worse by the Trump administration's history of creating road blocks for refugees to arrive, he said.

Worldwide, there were about 25.4 million refugees last year, according to the United Nations. Many more people were forced out of their homes within their own countries. Most aid groups and governments support resettlement in other countries as a last resort. They prefer to allow refugees to return to their homes if conditions improve, rather than permanently moving to another country.

Pompeo said the United States should try to end conflicts that force people out of their home countries in the first place.

### **Crime Link Claim Is Unfounded**

Trump has made limiting the entry of immigrants a centerpiece of his government plan. The administration's "zero-tolerance" rule that forcibly separated families at the U.S.-Mexico border sparked outrage among Republicans and Democrats alike. Last year Trump temporarily banned visitors from a handful of Muslim-majority nations. He also insists he will build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Trump has linked immigrants to crime in the United States. Yet, according to resettlement agencies in the United States, the U.S. vetting process is one of the world's toughest. Three million refugees have been admitted since 1975. Not one of them has been arrested for carrying out a deadly terror attack on U.S. soil, according to resettlement agencies' reports.

Most applicants to the U.S. refugee program spend at least three years being interviewed. They have to go through medical exams and fill out paperwork. Cases are screened by the Defense Department, FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies.

After they are resettled, refugees continue to undergo security checks in the United States for five years or more.

Write a summary of the article in the space below. Remember: a summary touches on the main points of an article; it does not include all the details.