



FACT SHEET

Australia's response to the Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian crisis

Overview

On 9 September 2015, the Australian Government announced that it will make an extra 12,000 Humanitarian Programme places available in response to the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

These places are in addition to the existing Humanitarian Programme intake of 13,750.

The Government has also pledged to provide humanitarian assistance of \$44 million. This contribution will deliver food, water, healthcare, education, emergency supplies and protection, including support for women and girls.

Eligibility and prioritisation

Priority for 12,000 Humanitarian Programme places will be given to people displaced by the conflict in Syria and Iraq who are:

- assessed as being most vulnerable – women, children and families with the least prospect of ever returning safely to their homes
- located in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey

People who fall into these categories will include both Syrians and Iraqis.

While subject to review, it is anticipated that a majority of places will be provided to Syrians, noting the significant and widespread displacement of people that has occurred in Syria.

Applicants will be required to meet all of the standard criteria for a Refugee and Humanitarian visa, including health, character and security checks. These checks will be conducted before people enter Australia.

All applications will be assessed on an individual basis – in line with Australia's existing refugee and humanitarian policies.

The additional places will not be offered to people in Australia or regional processing countries who travelled to Australia illegally by boat.

Visa processing arrangements

For planning purposes the 12,000 places will be available to refugees referred by the UNHCR and persons proposed under the Special Humanitarian Programme.

People referred for resettlement by the UNHCR

There are millions of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey who are registered with the UNHCR. The Australian Government is working closely with the UNHCR to identify refugees in these countries who are the most vulnerable and in greatest need of resettlement.

Those people referred by the UNHCR for resettlement in Australia will be required to meet all criteria for a Subclass 200 Refugee visa, including health, character and security requirements. These criteria must be met before visas can be granted.

Australia has consistently ranked in the top three resettlement countries for UNHCR-referred refugees, along with the United States of America and Canada.

People proposed for resettlement under the Special Humanitarian Programme (SHP):

Australian citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18, eligible New Zealand citizens and organisations operating in Australia are able to propose persons for resettlement under the Special Humanitarian Programme.

Priority for the limited places available under the Special Humanitarian Programme is generally given to applicants proposed by close family members.

People eligible for resettlement under the Special Humanitarian Programme may be registered with the UNHCR, but it is not a requirement.

The limited number of places available and the high demand for these places means that not everyone can be accepted.

People who have already applied for a Subclass 202 Global Special Humanitarian visa will continue to be considered and do not need to do anything more.

There is no need for SHP applicants or proposers to contact the Department of Immigration and Border Protection unless:

- we ask them to provide further information or attend an interview
- they need to tell us about a change in their circumstances.

Applicants and proposers who need to advise us of a change to their contact details can send an email to: victoria.ohpc@border.gov.au.

People previously refused a Global Special Humanitarian visa

People who previously lodged an application for a Global Special Humanitarian visa under the Special Humanitarian Programme that was refused will need to apply again if they wish to be considered.

Frequently asked questions

I am the proposer of a Special Humanitarian visa application for a family member who fled the conflict in Syria and Iraq. How can I seek an update on the progress of that application?

Applications already lodged by people who have fled the conflict in Syria and Iraq will continue to be considered – proposers do not need to do anything more.

At each stage of processing, both applicant and proposer will be informed in writing of the location of the application and where to direct queries. It is therefore important that proposers and applicants advise the Department if their contact details change.

If people need to advise us of a change to their contact details, they should send an email to the [Victorian Offshore Humanitarian Processing Centre](mailto:victoria.ohpc@border.gov.au).
(victoria.ohpc@border.gov.au)

Can I sponsor (propose) my family member/s who have fled Syria/Iraq and sought refuge in Lebanon/Jordan/Turkey?

Australian citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18, eligible New Zealand citizens and organisations operating in Australia are able to propose persons for resettlement under the Special Humanitarian Programme. More information about how to [propose a person for resettlement](#) is on our website.

Priority for the limited places available under the Special Humanitarian Programme is generally given to applicants proposed by close family members.

Will people from minority groups be prioritised?

Priority will be given to people who are assessed as being most vulnerable and in need of resettlement.

Membership of a particular minority group or religion may be relevant to people's individual claims.

Will people who are not located in refugee camps be considered?

While some of the people selected for resettlement in Australia will be drawn from UNHCR camps, others will be drawn from the urban communities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

What about people still in Syria and Iraq?

12,000 humanitarian visas are available for people displaced by the conflict in Syria and Iraq.

The Department's capacity to consider people who are currently living in Syria and Iraq is very limited due to security concerns and the destruction of infrastructure.

Do people need to be citizens of Syria or Iraq to be eligible for one of the additional humanitarian places?

Priority will be given to people displaced by the conflict in Syria and Iraq who are:

- assessed as being most vulnerable – women, children and families with the least prospect of ever returning safely to their homes
- located in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey

People who fall into these categories will include both Syrians and Iraqis.

The Australian Government will also provide humanitarian places for people in other situations as part of its annual intake of 13,750.

When will people from this intake start arriving in Australia?

The Australian Government is working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and other partners to process and resettle 12,000 people displaced by the conflict in Syria and Iraq as soon as practicable.

Applicants for resettlement will be required to meet all criteria for a Refugee and Humanitarian visa, including health, character and security requirements. These criteria must be met before visas can be granted.

Most applications will take a number of months to process. It is not possible to be more precise than this because processing times vary according to the circumstances of individual applicants.

The first arrivals are expected in Australia by the end of 2015.

Will people who come as part of this intake be able to stay in Australia permanently?

Yes. People in the 12,000 place intake will be granted a permanent visa.

Can Syrians and Iraqis who came to Australia by boat without a visa apply for one of the 12,000 humanitarian places?

No. The additional places will not be offered to people in Australia or regional processing countries who travelled to Australia illegally by boat.

My relative is not a citizen of Syria or Iraq but lived there for many years before being displaced by the current conflict. Are they eligible to apply?

Displaced people who are citizens of countries other than Syria and Iraq, to which it would be unsafe for them to return, may be eligible to apply for resettlement in Australia through Australia's existing offshore Humanitarian Programme.

However, people who are citizens of, or have a right of residence in, countries where it is safe for them to live, will not be granted one of these Humanitarian Programme places.

What services will the refugees who are resettled in Australia receive?

People resettled under this programme will be eligible to access the same benefits and support provided to other people arriving under Australia's offshore Humanitarian Programme. These include Medicare and social security benefits as well as settlement services to help them integrate into the Australian community.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for providing settlement support and assistance to people who come to Australia under the offshore Humanitarian Programme. The [DSS website](#) has information about what people in the Australian community can do to assist.