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## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION SETS CAP ON REFUGEES ALLOWED INTO US AT 15,000, ANOTHER RECORD LOW

*State Department says it expects more than 290,000 asylum claims from people already in the US this fiscal year.*

By Michelle Hackman  
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WASHINGTON—The Trump administration plans to take in no more than 15,000 new refugees during the current fiscal year that began October 1, the State Department said, bringing the limit to another record low.

Since taking office, President Trump has slashed the size of the refugee admissions program, setting successive lows on the number of refugees the US accepts each year.

The limit was set at 18,000 refugees for the fiscal year ended Wednesday. State Department data showed the final number of people resettled totaled about 11,800, due partly to a pause in acceptances during the coronavirus pandemic and other limits the Trump administration imposed. The State Department also cited the pandemic as one of the reasons for the refugee limit for the new fiscal year.

The latest reduction is in line with the administration's restrictions on all forms of immigration, both legal and illegal. It comes as the number of refugees fleeing violence and persecution around the world has swelled to 79.5 million people, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the highest number since World War II.

The US isn't alone in reducing refugee acceptances. Since 2017, the 46 countries that accept refugees have tended to take in a smaller number, according to U.N. data. The US refugee program, which started in 1980, took about half the world's resettled refugees annually for much of its history. The US now takes in a much smaller proportion of the global total and has been overtaken by Canada.

The State Department in its statement late Wednesday combined the new refugee ceiling with a projection of more than 290,000 new claims for asylum this year. Asylum claims are made by people already in the US who are fleeing persecution. Most people who ask for asylum in the US ultimately lose their cases, according to Justice Department data. Refugees, by contrast, are handpicked by the government after they have been vetted while they are still abroad.

Representatives for the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security didn't respond to questions about the projected asylum claims. The government stopped accepting asylum claims at the southern border in March under a public-health emergency order that allows it to turn away asylum seekers without allowing them to ask for protection.

The State Department said the Trump administration would continue to work on peacebuilding efforts abroad to create conditions allowing refugees to safely return to their home countries.

"By focusing on ending the conflicts that drive displacement in the first place, and by providing overseas humanitarian assistance to protect and assist displaced people, we can prevent the destabilizing effects of such displacement on affected countries and their neighbors," the statement read.

Resettlement agencies and refugee advocates denounced the new reduction.

"Our values as a nation and as people of faith demand that we take action when people's lives are in danger," said the Rev. John L. McCullough, president and CEO of Church World Service, one of the agencies that helps refugees resettle in the US "The lifesaving refugee resettlement program is a shadow of what it once was."

Mr. Trump has said refugees are a threat to national security and a possible drain on public resources. He has referred to them frequently on the campaign trail.

At a speech in Duluth, Minn., on Wednesday, Mr. Trump warned that Mr. Biden would "inundate your state with a historic flood of refugees."

Mr. Trump also referred during the speech to "refugees coming from the most dangerous places in the world, including Yemen, Syria, and your favorite country, Somalia, right?"

Minnesota is home to the nation's largest population of Somali refugees.

The admissions ceiling set by Mr. Trump could be revised by former Vice President Joe Biden should he win November's election. He has promised on the campaign trail to set the refugee admissions ceiling at 125,000 a year, higher than any year under the Obama administration.

The Biden campaign didn't respond to a request for comment Thursday.

If the cap remains unchanged, the final number of refugees who resettle in the US during the current fiscal year would likely fall short of the 15,000 limit, because the administration again set several category-based caps beneath the overall ceiling, according to information the State Department sent Congress. These category-based caps were introduced last year.

The administration plans to accept 5,000 refugees fleeing religious persecution, along with 4,000 Iraqis who aided the US military and 1,000 from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, the three countries that together send the most asylum seekers to the US The other 5,000 are open to any eligible refugees, though the administration said it would give priority to people fleeing Cuba, Venezuela or Hong Kong, where China imposed a national-security law this year that local rights activists and many Western countries said could suppress civil liberties.

Last year, the State Department didn't fill similar caps. Of the 4,000 slots it earmarked for Iraqis, for example, 123 were resettled as of Sept. 25. The State Department and resettlement agencies said too few applicants were interviewed and the security checks of people who had been interviewed were allowed to expire.