

ALABAMA INTERFAITH REFUGEE PARTNERSHIP

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION (NON-DIRECT SUPPORT)



According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were over

108.4 MILLION

forcibly displaced people worldwide as of December, 2022.
Of those 108.4 million, about

35.3 MILLION

are considered refugees, and

5.4 MILLION

are considered asylum seekers.

Source: UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>)

THE REFUGEE CRISIS: ORIGIN COUNTRIES

52 PERCENT

of all displaced people come from just three countries:



SYRIA

6.8 MILLION



UKRAINE

5.7 MILLION



AFGHANISTAN

5.7 MILLION

THE REFUGEE CRISIS: HOST COUNTRIES

Türkiye, Colombia, Germany, Pakistan, and the Islamic Republic of Iran host the largest number of refugees.* In 2022, Türkiye hosted over 47% of the world's refugees. In contrast, the United States hosted only 347,851 (4%). The U.S., on the other hand, hosts a majority of the world's asylum seekers at 1.4 million (71%).**



TÜRKIYE

3.6 MILLION



IRAN

3.4 MILLION



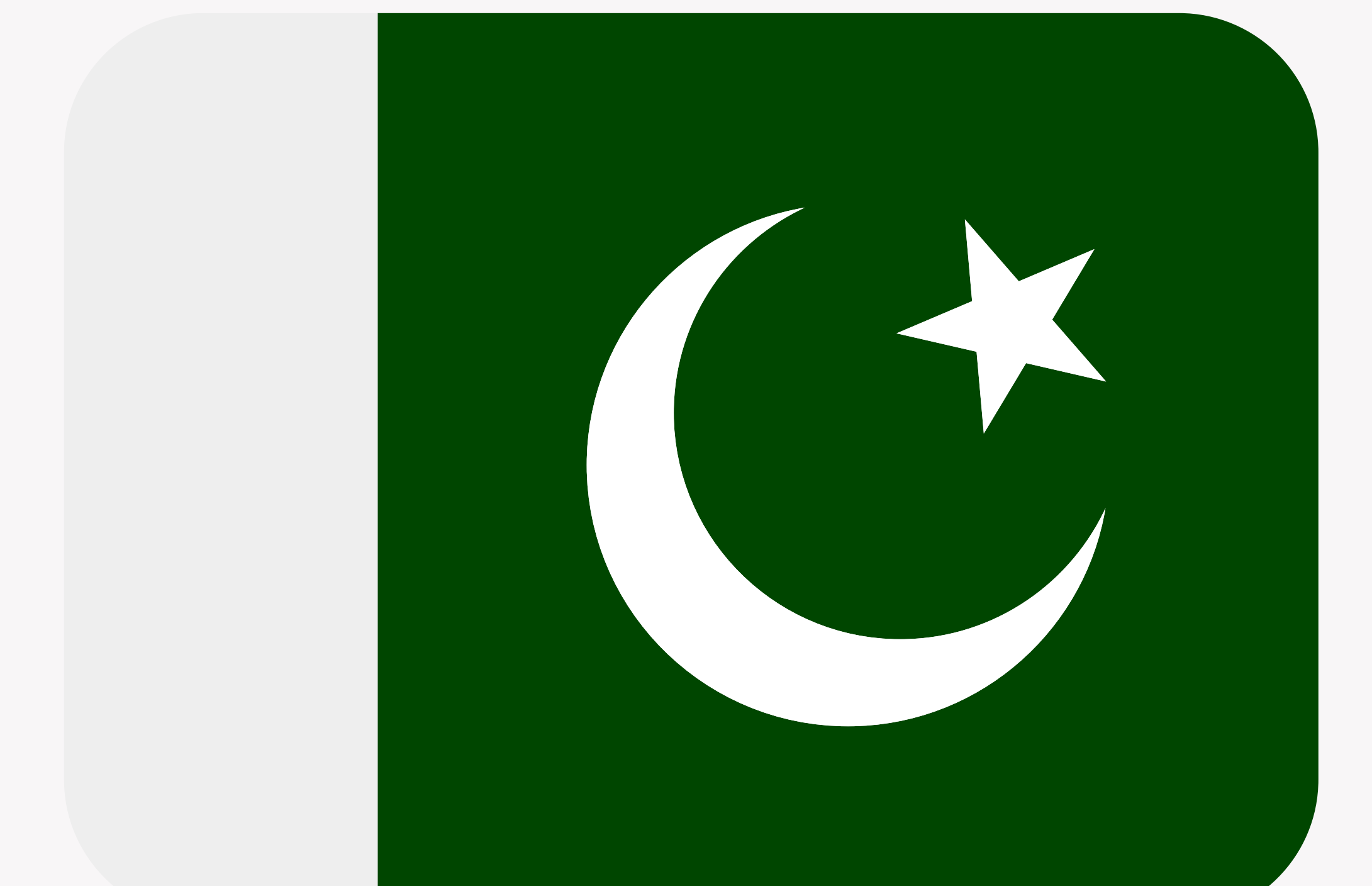
COLOMBIA

2.5 MILLION



GERMANY

2.1 MILLION



PAKISTAN

1.7 MILLION

Source: *UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>)

**UNHCR Populations by Country of Asylum and Population Type 2022 (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/download/?url=51oQiC>)

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT DEFINITION



UNHCR defines resettlement as “the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided by the resettlement State ensures protection against refoulement and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependents with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals.”

THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

According to The White House, the refugee resettlement process in the United States includes the major steps on the following slides, with additional, more granular steps in between.



Source: *Infographic: The Screening Process for Refugee Entry into the United States
(<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states>)

1

The refugee applicants identify themselves to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), which then performs initial assessments and interviews the applicants to confirm the need for resettlement



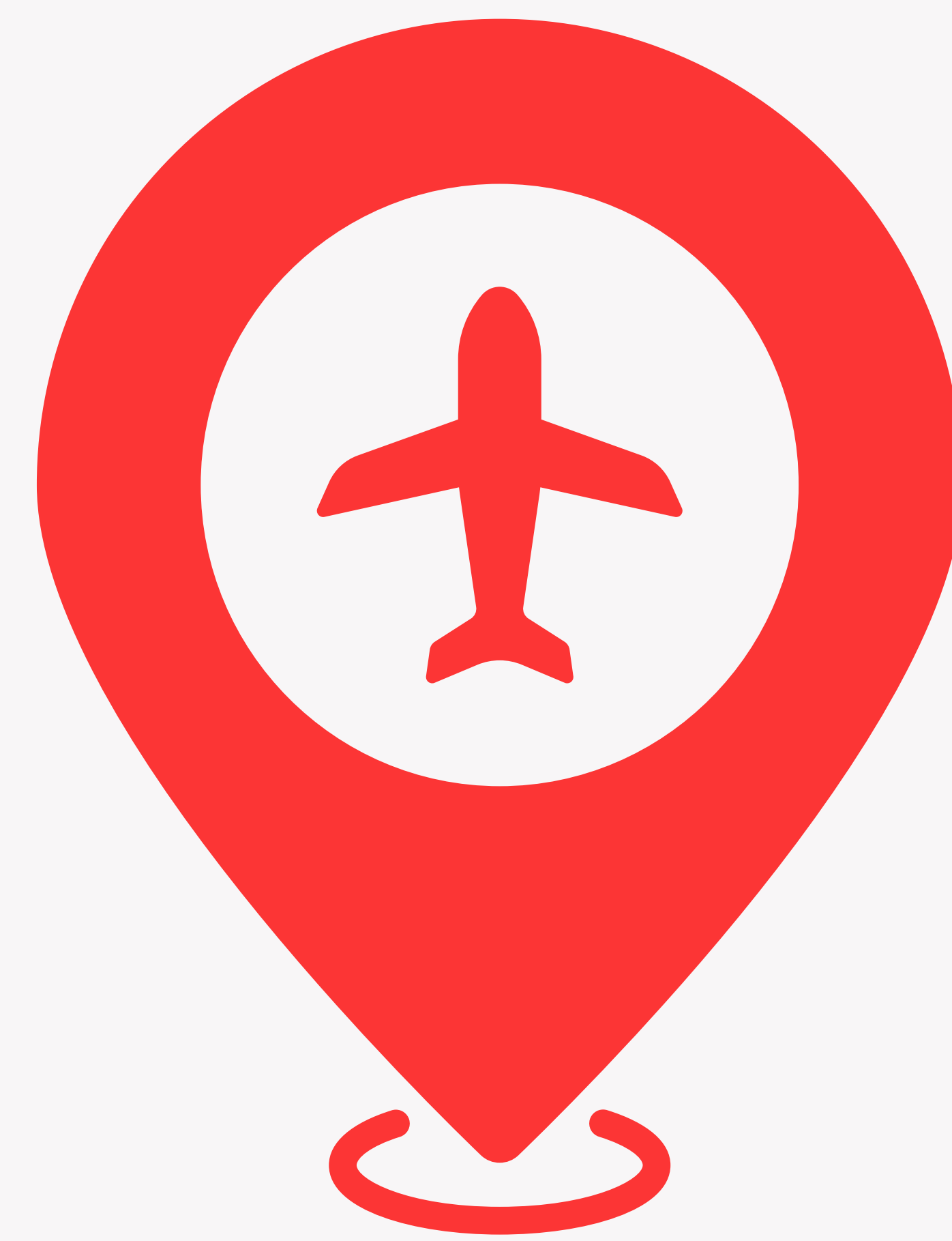
Biographic, enhanced security checks are completed by the National Counterterrorism Center, FBI, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and State Department. The need for a medical screening is determined and refugees may be provided medical treatment for communicable diseases.

2

3

Refugees are assigned to domestic, non-governmental resettlement agencies, which include:

- Church World Service
- Ethiopian Community Development Council
- Episcopal Migration Ministries
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
- International Rescue Committee
- US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- World Relief Corporation



Resettlement agencies arrange for refugees' travel to the U.S. and work with local partner organizations to provide basic services and assistance to the refugees.

AFFIRMATIVE

ASYLUM



Individuals can apply for affirmative asylum – regardless of their nationality or how they entered the country – if they meet the following criteria:

- They are physically present in the United States
- They apply for asylum within one year of entering the United States
- They demonstrate that they were persecuted (or have a fear of persecution) due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group

The affirmative asylum process includes submitting an application to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), undergoing fingerprinting and background checks, and interviewing with an asylum officer at USCIS.

DEFENSIVE

ASYLUM



Individuals can apply for defensive asylum as a defense against removal from the U.S. (deportation) if they are placed in “removal proceedings.”

Individuals are placed into removal proceedings if:

- They are apprehended by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) trying to enter the United States without authorization
- The CBP agent they encounter paroles them into the U.S. for a temporary period and gives them a “Notice of Removal”
- They are in violation of their immigration status

Unlike the affirmative process, an asylum seeker filing defensively must request asylum in immigration court where a judge decides whether to grant or deny asylum.

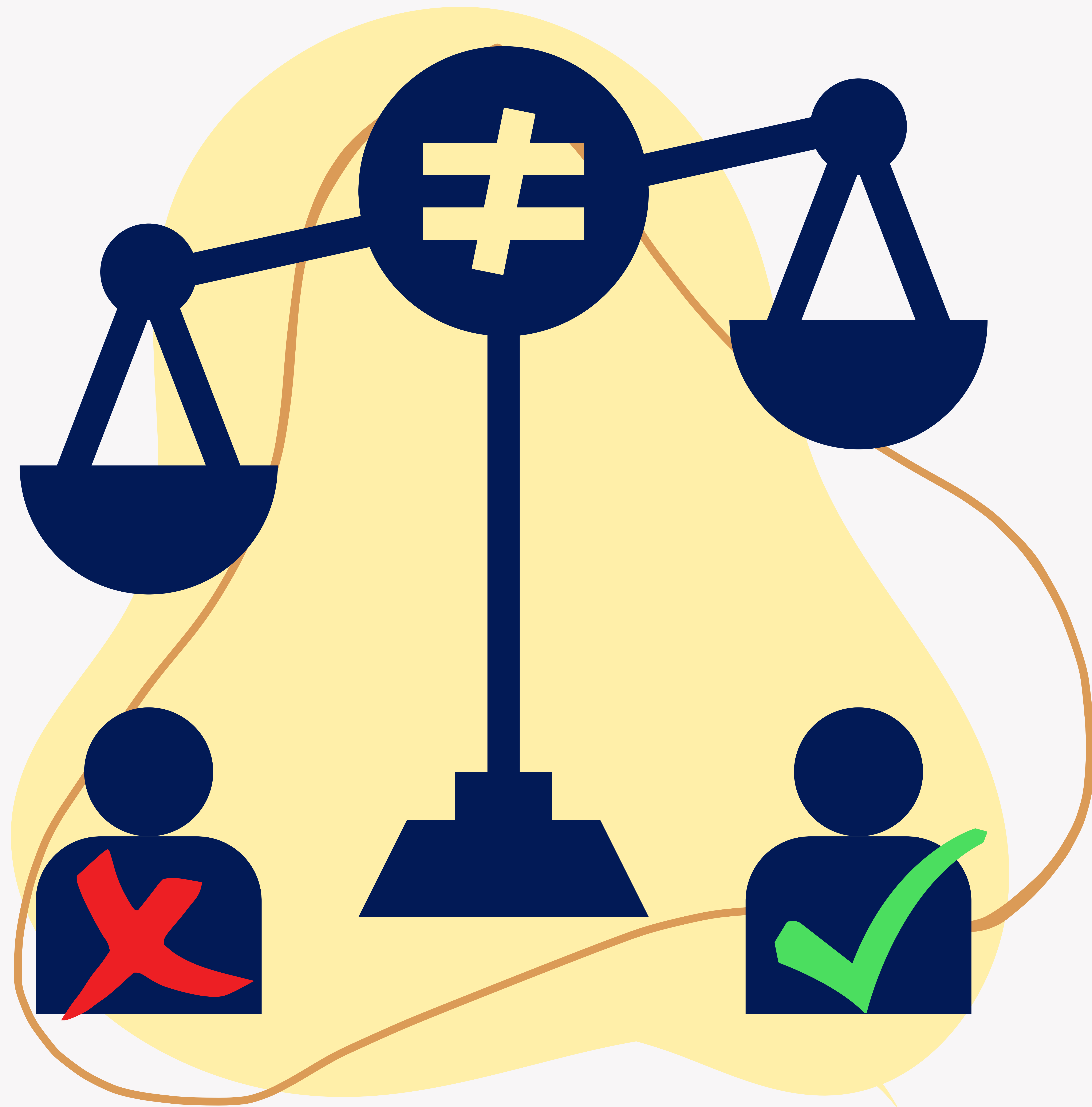
COURT BACKLOGS & LONG WAIT TIMES

There are significant backlogs in the U.S. Immigration Court system, causing asylum seekers to wait years for a decision on their case. As of April 2023, the backlog across the entire U.S. is over 2 million cases, and the average wait time is 762 days (2 years and 1 month). This wait time is as high as 8,600 days (23 years) in certain hearing locations such as the Denver Detention Facility.

Source: TRAC Immigration Court Backlog Tool
(https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/)



INCONSISTENT APPROVAL RATINGS



Approval rates vary greatly depending on the state one's case is being heard in, the judge that is hearing their case, and whether they have legal representation. As of April 2023, the nation as a whole approves an average of 40% of all asylum cases.* The immigration court in Atlanta, where ALIRP's Partners attend their immigration hearings, has an approval rating of only 11% as of April, 2023.

Source: TRAC Asylum Decision Tool
(<https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/asylum/>)

OTHER CHALLENGES

Other challenges facing asylum seekers include:

- Ineligibility for state or federal financial support
- Inability to work legally before becoming eligible to apply for a work permit 150 days after submitting their asylum application (significant backlogs and long wait times exist for this system as well, with an average processing time of 10.5 months* as of June, 2023)
- Difficulty accessing health care, legal services, transportation, and other basic necessities
- Language barriers



Source: *USCIS Processing Times Calculator (<https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>)

Groups like ALIRP are essential to helping asylum seekers navigate these challenges and barriers to success.

We are very grateful for the help of ALIRP, because when we first arrived here, we did not know anything, and they helped us a lot with getting in contact with lawyers and with difficult economic situations and legal fees.

RAMON, PARTNER



To me, the care that the volunteers have is spectacular. When I first came, my family was far away. Volunteers visited me every week, and they began to feel like my family.

JULIAN, PARTNER



HISTORY OF ALIRP

In 2016, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham (UUCB) started a Refugee Interest Group to support refugees and asylum seekers locally and globally.

2016

2019

2021

2023

In 2021, ALIRP hired our first AmeriCorps VISTA Service Member. We hired two more in 2022.

In 2019, the Refugee Interest Group split from UUCB and became a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization named the Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership.

In 2023, we hired our first Half-Time Case Manager.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership has a 12-member board with one ex-officio member. Most board members chair an advisory committee. ALIRP's committees include: Education and Advocacy, Direct Support, Communications, Fundraising, Outreach, and Volunteer Engagement. There are many opportunities to get involved on the various committees.



OUR PARTNERS

As of June, 2023, ALIRP is working with 101 individual Partners across 28 families. Partners range from 0 to 48 years old, and come from countries including Guatemala, Honduras, Ukraine, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Kenya, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The majority of our partners come from North and Central America.



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

ALIRP offers a variety of programs to educate the community about the global and local refugee crisis. Some of these programs include:

- Virtual Film Nights
- Virtual and in-person book discussions
- Participation in the StoryCorps “One Small Step” program
- Refugee simulations



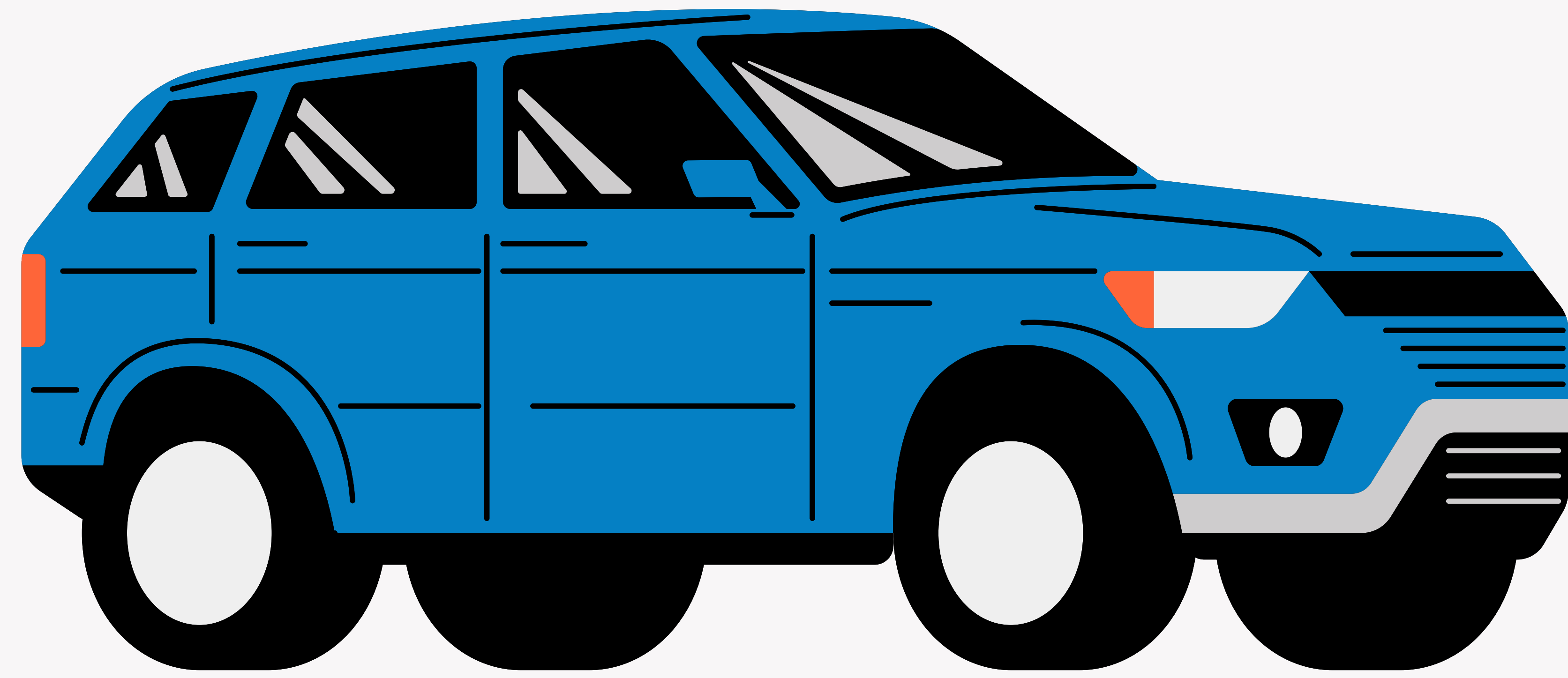
ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

ALIRP has conducted numerous advocacy initiatives to advocate for better conditions for refugees and asylum seekers both locally and globally. Some of our past advocacy initiatives have included:



- Partnering with the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice to encourage the Alabama Department of Public Health to provide COVID-19 information in multiple languages
- Partnering with Refugee Council USA, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services, and Episcopal Migration Ministry for Virtual Advocacy Days
- Collaborating with Allied Shepherd and Human Rights First to speak with Alabama Senators' offices to encourage sponsorship of the Afghan Adjustment Act

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT



Help provide transportation to partners who do not yet have driver's licenses, cars, or other means of reliable transportation.

Assist with educational needs such as school registration, providing homework assistance, liaising with teachers, and serving as an English language partner.



Assist with food rescue and delivery, including picking up boxes of food from local food pantries and transporting them to partners.