

## Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month

*A Diversity Club and  
Diversity & Inclusion Committee Newsletter*

**gen·o·cide** /'jenə.sɪd/  
noun

*the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group*

## ORIGINS

"Never again," uttered after the Holocaust, has come to mean "over and over again," as millions of innocent people are exterminated based solely on who they are: race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, and other immutable characteristics.

In 2011, the month of April was designated as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month in Minnesota, in recognition of the state's desire to combat acts of genocide and human rights atrocities. The state declared that in order to prevent future genocides and mass atrocities, effective prevention measures must be implemented before a crisis has erupted, and educating the public can help to protect individual rights and promote a culture of lawfulness to prevent future genocides. So far just a handful of other states have followed suit.

### The month of April marks many genocides:

- **April 3rd** -  
Anniversary of the  
**Darfur** genocide
- **April 5th** -  
Anniversary of the siege  
of Sarajevo, **Bosnia**
- **April 7th** -  
**Rwandan** Genocide  
Awareness Day
- **April 12th** -  
**Holocaust**  
Remembrance Day
- **April 17th** -  
Anniversary of the  
**Cambodian** genocide
- **April 24th** -  
**Armenian** Genocide  
Awareness Day

### According to World Without Genocide, the aims of designating April as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month are to:

- **Protect:** We must create laws and policies to protect vulnerable people from being victimized.
- **Prevent:** We must use memory and memorialization to recognize the signs of violence and to prevent violence in the future.
- **Prosecute:** We must end impunity for the perpetrators and prosecute those who are culpable in genocide and mass violence.
- **Remember:** We must reflect on the millions of lives that have been lost and the cultures that have been destroyed by mass violence.



During the end credits of Disney's *Mulan*, a 2020 live-action remake of the 1998 animated movie of the same name, filmmakers had thanked eight government entities in Xinjiang, the region in China where Uighurs have been detained in mass internment camps. This realization resulted in a #BoycottMulan social media campaign.

Starting in 2017, China carried out a sweeping crackdown in its northwest Xinjiang region under the banner of "counterterrorism." China's harsh campaign to forcibly assimilate the Uighurs, a mostly Muslim ethnic minority group in Xinjiang, has resulted in more than one million Uighurs having been detained in "reeducation camps" for periods ranging from weeks to years. The Xinjiang government had also rolled out a high-tech surveillance system across the region that tracked Uighurs' movements through police checkpoints, facial recognition surveillance cameras, and house visits by officials.

The Uighurs are a nomadic Turkic people native to China's northwestern Xinjiang region. Many Uighurs are Muslim, and their religious faith has put them at odds with the officially atheistic Chinese Communist Party. The reasons for detention could be as minor as wearing a headscarf or long beard, having more than two children, or traveling overseas for vacation. Former detainees reported daily lessons in patriotism and Chinese language and some said they were tortured by guards. At some centers, they also learned vocational skills such as textile-making. A number of former detainees say they were forced to work at a factory as a condition of release.

Under international pressure, Beijing said in 2019 that all trainees at "vocational educational and training centers" in Xinjiang had graduated, using the term the government eventually settled on for the camps after initially denying their existence. However, China has continued to build massive detention centers in the region since then.

The US State Department declared in January that China's actions against Uighurs should be categorized as genocide. The US also banned imports of goods made in Xinjiang, citing a risk of forced labor in the region.



## How Controversy Around Disney's *Mulan* Increased Awareness About the Oppression of Uighurs in China



In September 2020, the Nagorno-Karabakh War between Armenia and Azerbaijan began when Azerbaijani armed forces launched artillery and aerial strikes against civilian settlements in the Republic of Artsakh. In addition to seeking aid and protection during this conflict, Armenian people have demanded that the US officially recognize the Armenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1915. Now, President Biden is declaring that the killing of nearly 1.5 million Armenian civilians by the Ottoman Turks was an act of genocide. This news aligns with similar statements from 29 other countries. Turkish leaders have disagreed that the killings amounted to genocide, yet have been bracing for the genocide declaration since Biden committed to it during his presidential campaign. Though the term genocide was not accepted until 1946, Biden's designation is a clear signal of accountability, even if it causes setbacks in other policy or relations with Turkey. Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian of Armenia recently said, "The recognition of the United States will be a kind of moral beacon to many countries. This is not about Armenia and Turkey. This is about our obligation to recognize and condemn the past, present, and future genocide."

## President Biden Formally Recognizes Armenian Genocide



## The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Genocide Prevention

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) is the US's official memorial to the Holocaust. Located in Washington, D.C., the USHMM provides for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history.

The USHMM teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives. With this knowledge, the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide works to do for the victims of genocide today what the world failed to do for the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The center's mandate is to alert the US's national conscience, influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to prevent and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity, and advance justice and accountability.

As a part of their genocide prevention efforts, the USHMM presents a series of Country Case Studies in which information on historical cases of genocide and other atrocities, places where mass atrocities are currently underway or populations are under threat, and areas where early warning signs call for concern and preventive action are presented. Many of these cases include powerful testimonies from people directly affected by these genocides.

# War and What Comes After

A TedTalk by  
Clemantine Wamariya

# Will You Witness Me?

A TedTalk by  
Emtithal "Emi" Mahmoud

TED War and what comes after | Clemantine Wamariya



TED A young poet tells the story of Darfur | Emtithal "Emi" Mahmoud



Clemantine Wamariya was six years old when the Rwandan Civil War forced her and her sister to flee their home in Kigali, leaving their parents and everything they knew behind. In this deeply personal, emotional, and moving TedTalk, she tells the story of how she became a refugee - living in camps in seven countries over the next six years, and how she's tried to make sense of what came after.

Emtithal "Emi" Mahmoud writes poetry of resilience, confronting her experience of escaping the genocide in Darfur in verse. She shares two stirring original poems about refugees, family, joy, and sorrow, asking, "Will you witness me?"

FORCIBLY  
DISPLACED  
PEOPLE  
WORLDWIDE:  
BY THE NUMBERS

**79.5 MILLION** forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019

Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020



**26M** Refugees  
20.4M Refugees under UNHCR's mandate  
5.6M Stateless refugees under UNHCR's mandate

**45.7M** Internally displaced people

Source: IDMC

**4.2M** Asylum-seekers

**3.6M** Venezuelans displaced abroad



**1%**  
of the world's population is displaced



**80%**  
of the world's displaced people are in countries or territories affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition



**73%**  
Hosted in neighbouring countries \*



**68%**  
Came from just 5 countries \*



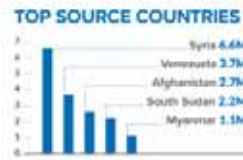
**40%**  
of the world's displaced people are children



**85%**  
Hosted in developing countries \*



\* Data includes UNHCR refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad



**4.2M**  
Stateless people



**2M**  
Asylum applications (in 2018)



**107,800**  
Resettled to 26 countries (in 2018)



**5.6M**  
Returnees (in 2019)



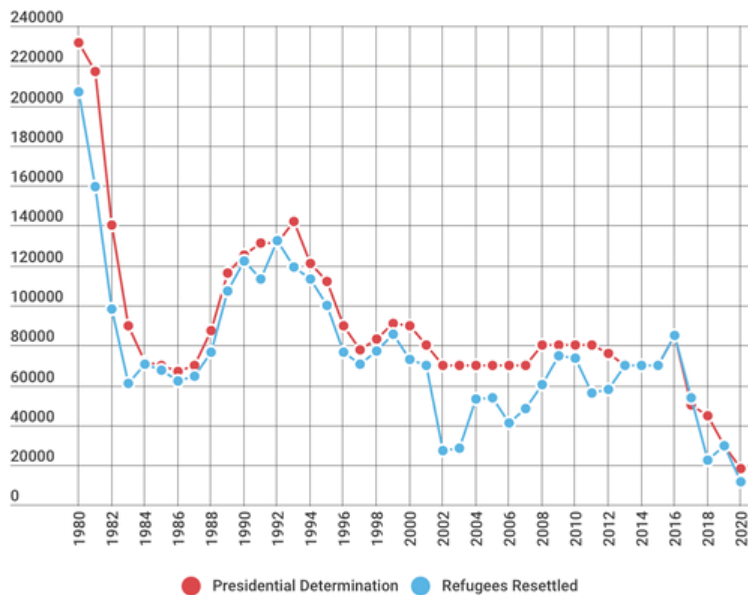
**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

employs **17,324** personnel in **135** countries  
(as of 31 May 2020)

We are funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with 86 per cent from governments and the European Union and 10 per cent from private donors

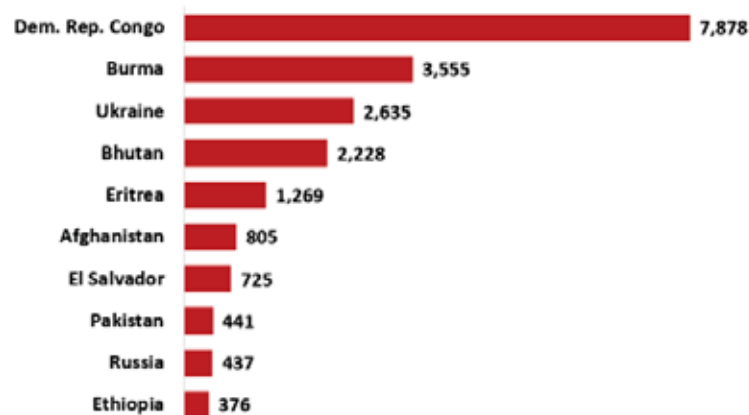


## U.S. Refugee Ceiling & Resettlement 1980-2020



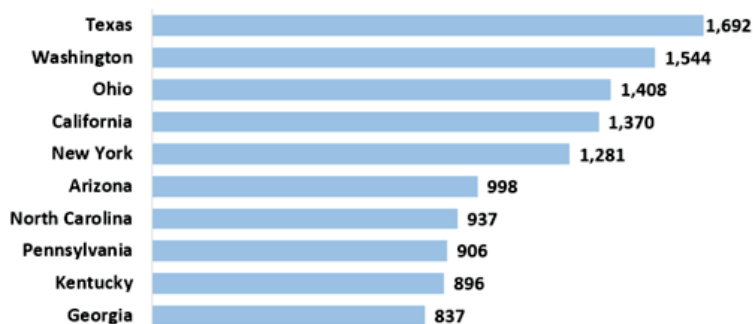
### Where America's Refugees Come From

Top 10 origin countries for refugees admitted to the U.S. in FY 2018



### Where do Refugees Live

Top 10 U.S. states resettling refugees in FY2018



# REFUGEES IN AMERICA

The US has been allowing humanitarian admissions of refugees and asylum seekers since the Refugee Act of 1980. The number of refugees accepted to the US each year is set by the President in consultation with Congress.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) screens applicants to determine whether they qualify as refugees and if they are in particular need of resettlement, and, if so, refers them to the US and other countries. While the total processing time varies depending on an applicant's location as well as other circumstances and policy changes, the vetting time - from the refugee's initial UNHCR referral to their arrival in the US - has been 18-24 months in recent years. To be admitted to the US, refugees go through several rounds of background checks, screenings, and interviews under the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

After arrival, resettlement agencies help refugees to start their lives in the US, assisting them with applying for a Social Security card, registering children in school, learning how to access shopping facilities, arranging medical appointments, and connecting them with needed social or language services. Refugees receive employment authorization and are encouraged to become employed as soon as possible so that they can support themselves. All refugees are required to apply for a green card to become a permanent resident after one year in the US. After five years of residency, they become eligible to apply for US citizenship.

## Refugee Admissions Cap

Although historically the US has resettled more refugees than any other country, its resettlement program has not kept up with the 50% increase of the global refugee population over the past five years. In 2021, the US refugee limit was the lowest it has been since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980.

On April 5, 2021, over 260 refugee leaders sent a [powerful appeal](#) to President Biden to lift the refugee admissions cap, detailing the negative impacts of maintaining a low refugee limit. They also highlight how many, many former refugees have become broadly contributing American citizens.

President Biden signed [an order](#) on April 16, 2021 extending a 15,000 refugee admissions cap issued by his predecessor through the end of September. In signing the order, Biden shelved a plan announced in February to increase the cap to 62,500. With Biden being criticized by lawmakers and refugee advocacy groups, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said that he plans to set a final, increased refugee cap for the remainder of this fiscal year by May 15, 2021.

# CHAMPIONS OF DIVERSITY: REFUGEES AND SURVIVORS OF GENOCIDE



## Dr. Jonas Havugimana Congolese Refugee-Turned-MD

Dr. Jonas Havugimana, or Dr. Jonas, as he is known across Kiziba, Rwanda's oldest existing refugee camp, has dedicated his life to helping others. Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, he was selected to be a DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) student in 2012, and, in 2018, became the first refugee to earn a degree in medicine in Rwanda. In their essential roles as health professionals at a Byumba district hospital, he and his colleagues spend their days working on triage and testing of suspected and positive cases of COVID-19 and refer them to the National Treatment Center for follow up and further treatment.

Motivated by his desire to help others, he has taken to WhatsApp to help treat and prescribe medicine for Congolese refugees in the US and Finland who have tested positive for the disease, following their progression and ensuring that they made full recoveries.

## Ella Ininahazwe Former Burundian Refugee Helping Current Refugee Youth Pursue Higher Education

Ella Ininahazwe is a graduate of Health Care Management and works as a Refugee College Guidance Counselor with the organization Kepler in Rwanda and with Southern New Hampshire University in Kenya (Kakuma refugee camp). Originally from Burundi, she came to Rwanda in 2015 as a student and refugee. With the help of Kepler and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, she made sure that over 150 students in refugee camps in Rwanda (mostly Kiziba refugee camp) were equipped with reliable electricity, strong internet connections, and laptops after the pandemic hit. As a contingency for the times when power cuts, she has organized student discussion groups to ensure that students can continue learning until it returns. In addition to all of this, she has been conducting in-person check-ins with students, advisors, and teachers to ensure the well-being of students and their good standing in school.

Ininahazwe has also contributed in the Tertiary Refugee Student Network and Global Advisory Youth Council's Twitter- and Instagram-based COVID campaign, which highlights what refugees are doing to support their communities by sharing videos of their work. Currently, she and her colleague are also working on establishing an Africa-wide network of refugee college guidance counselors, including development of the training curriculum and teaching material. They are also organizing a conference to be held on World Refugee Day with various partners working in tertiary programs. College Refugee Guidance Counselors will be hosting discussions with students about the pathways that have been implemented during this crisis.



# LASTING IMPACTS:

Anecdotes about those who have been affected directly or indirectly by genocide

"Genocide is something that I learned about at a young age. I grew up in an area with a large Jewish population and our elementary school curriculum featured the celebration of some of the Jewish holidays as well as a large Holocaust unit. Every year Holocaust survivors from the community would come to our classes and speak to us about their experiences. They would show us their scars and arm tattoos of their identification numbers and tell us their stories of how they survived the concentration camps. During these units we would also read books in class about the Holocaust. One story that stuck with me in particular was told to me in 4th grade. A woman told us about how when she was our age, the Nazis broke into their home in Germany. They killed her father in front of her and took the rest of their family to the concentration camps. After a few weeks, one day Nazis came into their barrack and took her mother away from her, accusing her of stealing food. Her mother died trying to protect and feed her while they were at Auschwitz. She never found out what happened to her mother but she thinks they sent her to the gas chambers. I will never forget how vividly she described the smell of rotting human flesh. This of course is a very brief version of her story, but it stuck with me. As a 4th grader, hearing that story was slightly traumatizing but so important because I can say that I have met people who have survived such horrible events. Education and awareness are so important when it comes to preventing things like this from ever happening again in history."

"When I think of Genocide, the first thing that comes to mind is the Holocaust. But after learning more about Genocide this month, it turns out there have been numerous other genocides in history. Being able to be educated on Genocide and Genocide awareness is something that I have come to appreciate. It seems to be one of those things where 'it won't matter until it affects you directly.' As someone who really only knew about the Holocaust and have never spoken with Holocaust survivors, I still found it important to learn about it in school. But then it gets me thinking about Genocide in Armenia and its most recent conflict with Azerbaijan. Knowing that at that time in 2020, conflict was happening abroad to a friend's family members was really eye opening to me. To see the effect that it has on people when it is so close to home really brought the concept close to home for myself as well. Overall, I think it is just really important to stay educated on Genocide, and how you never know who it may impact or have impacted whether directly or indirectly. And in that moment when speaking to a survivor or an ally, it is up to you to stay educated, show support, and be a good listening ear for those who are affected and reaching out for support."

"Hearing from one of our classmates about the Armenian Genocide and Armenia's most recent conflict with Azerbaijan during a Cultural Cuisine night at the end of 2020 was an incredibly impactful experience for me. It's shameful to admit, but these events were not on my radar prior to this. No one had been talking about this - none of our country's leaders, none of the news outlets, none of my peers, and I had never learned about the genocide in school. And it got me thinking about how mass, or even smaller-scale, tragedies can be and often have been ignored and not spoken of. It can often feel like when such atrocities happen, especially outside of the United States, that they are so far removed from us that we don't need to attend to them. But then as it turns out, someone we know and care about can be deeply affected and traumatized by it and we may never realize it. Having to go through that alone can be really isolating and difficult. And that's why it makes me even more thankful for the awareness and advocacy work that this individual has been doing for her people, so that she knows that she doesn't have to go through this fight alone, and that there are people who will listen to, learn from, and support her."