

Refugees



✦ A Global Dilemma

1951 UN Convention on Refugees



- ✦ The 1951 UN Convention on Refugees defines refugee.
- ✦ defines the legal rights of refugees & the responsibilities of governments toward refugees.
- ✦ Canada was one of the original signatories of this convention.
- ✦ the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) is established to protect and find solutions for refugees.

1951 definition



- ✦ A **refugee** is someone who is “owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

1967 UN Refugees Protocol

- ✦ added by the UN and signed by Canada.
- ✦ clarifies the principal of “**non-refoulement**”
 - ✦ the “contracting State shall not expel or return (refouler) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political group
- ✦ Therefore, persons arriving in Canada claiming refugee status go through a detailed refugee determination process.

Asylum Seekers



- ✦ Someone who says he or she is a refugee but whose claim has not yet been evaluated. In mid 2014 there were 1.2 million asylum seekers globally having their status determined.
- ✦ Mass migrations in Europe right now are of asylum seekers, not refugees.
- ✦ Some will turn out to be bona fide refugees & others are economic immigrants

Canada & Asylum Seekers



- ✦ The majority of refugees entering Canada are pre selected and pre screened by the UNHCR, though some asylum seekers reach Canada's border and then claim to be refugees.
- ✦ Canada is obligated to screen all claimants to see if they are really refugees.
- ✦ Almost 1/2 claims processed in 2014 were granted refugee status and permission to stay.
- ✦ Failed claimants are deported.

Internally Displaced Persons



- ✦ Are among the world's most vulnerable people.
- ✦ They have not crossed a border to a safer nation, they are still in their home country.
- ✦ They are the responsibility of their own government, even if that government might be the very cause of their flight or danger, as is the case in Syria.
- ✦ Many governments do not admit that they have IDPs or permit UN agencies to assist them, so they are very unsafe.

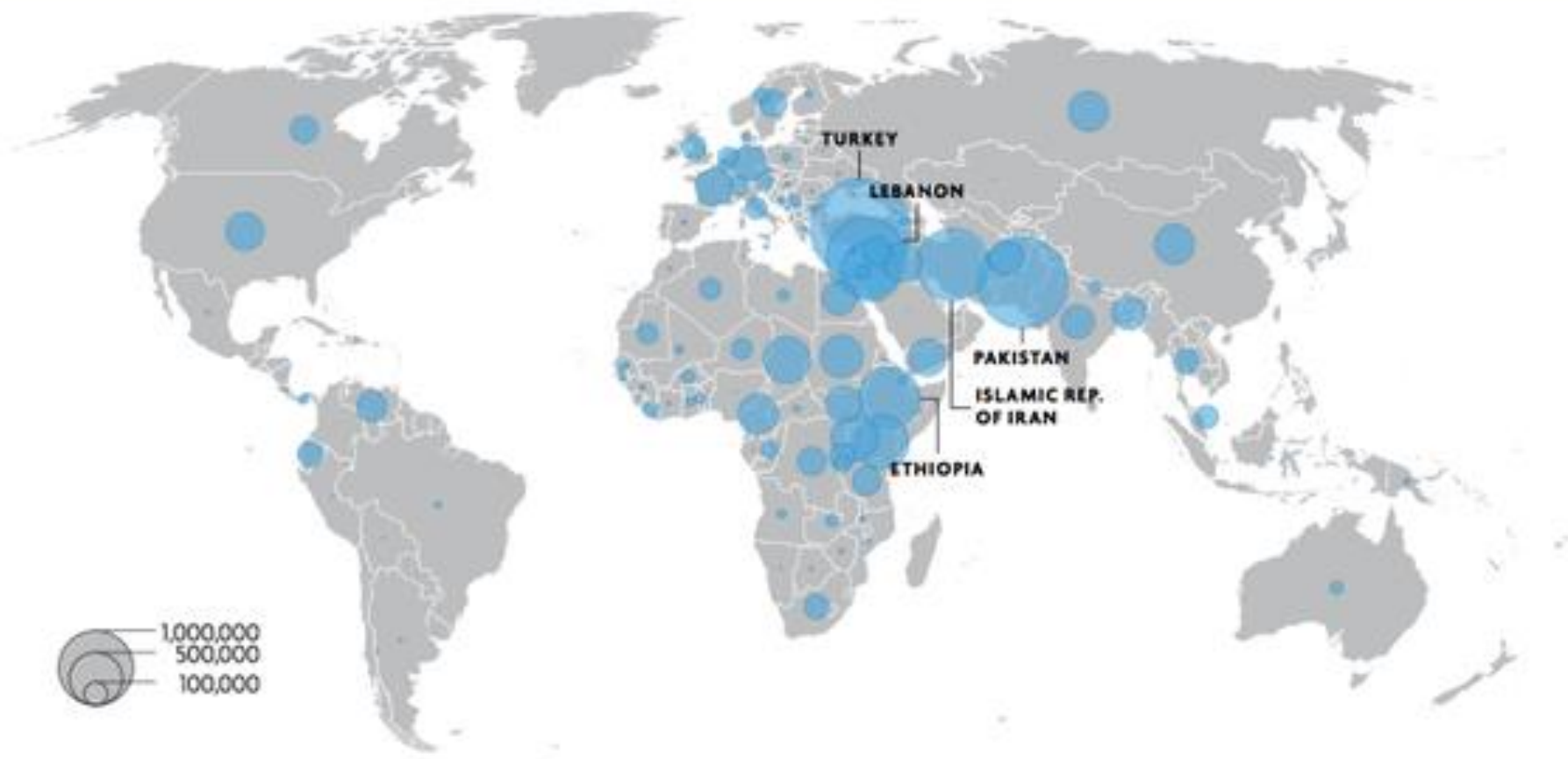
mid 2015 Populations of Concern

- ✦ 55 million worldwide total
- ✦ 36 million IDPs
- ✦ 15.9 million refugees
- ✦ 7.6 million IDPs in Syria
- ✦ 4.2 million refugees from Syria
- ✦ 35.5 million Canada's population
- ✦ 13.6 million Ontario's population
- ✦ 8.2 million Quebec's population
- ✦ 4.1 million Alberta's population



Map 2

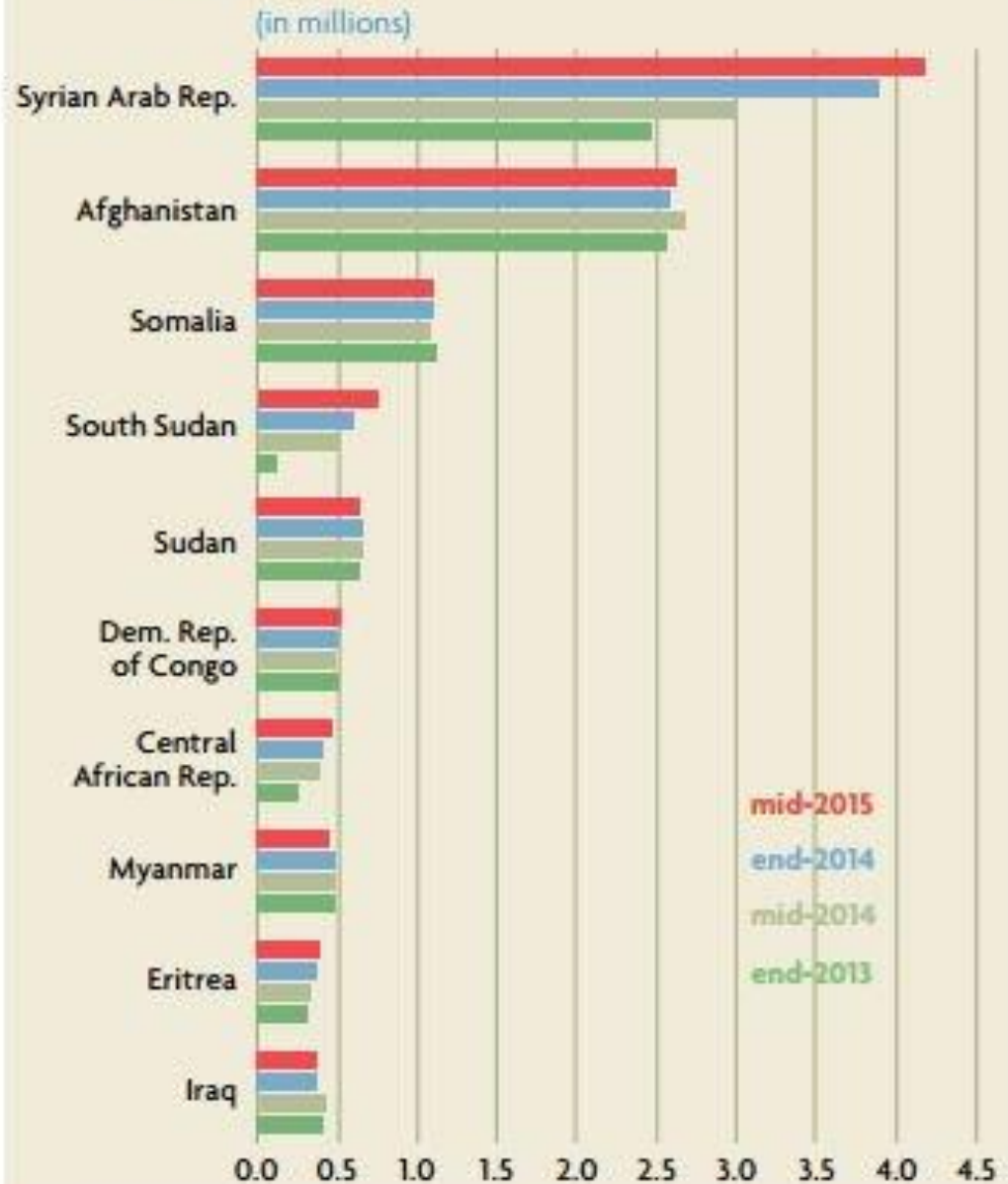
Who is hosting the world's refugees? | mid-2015



Where do they come from?

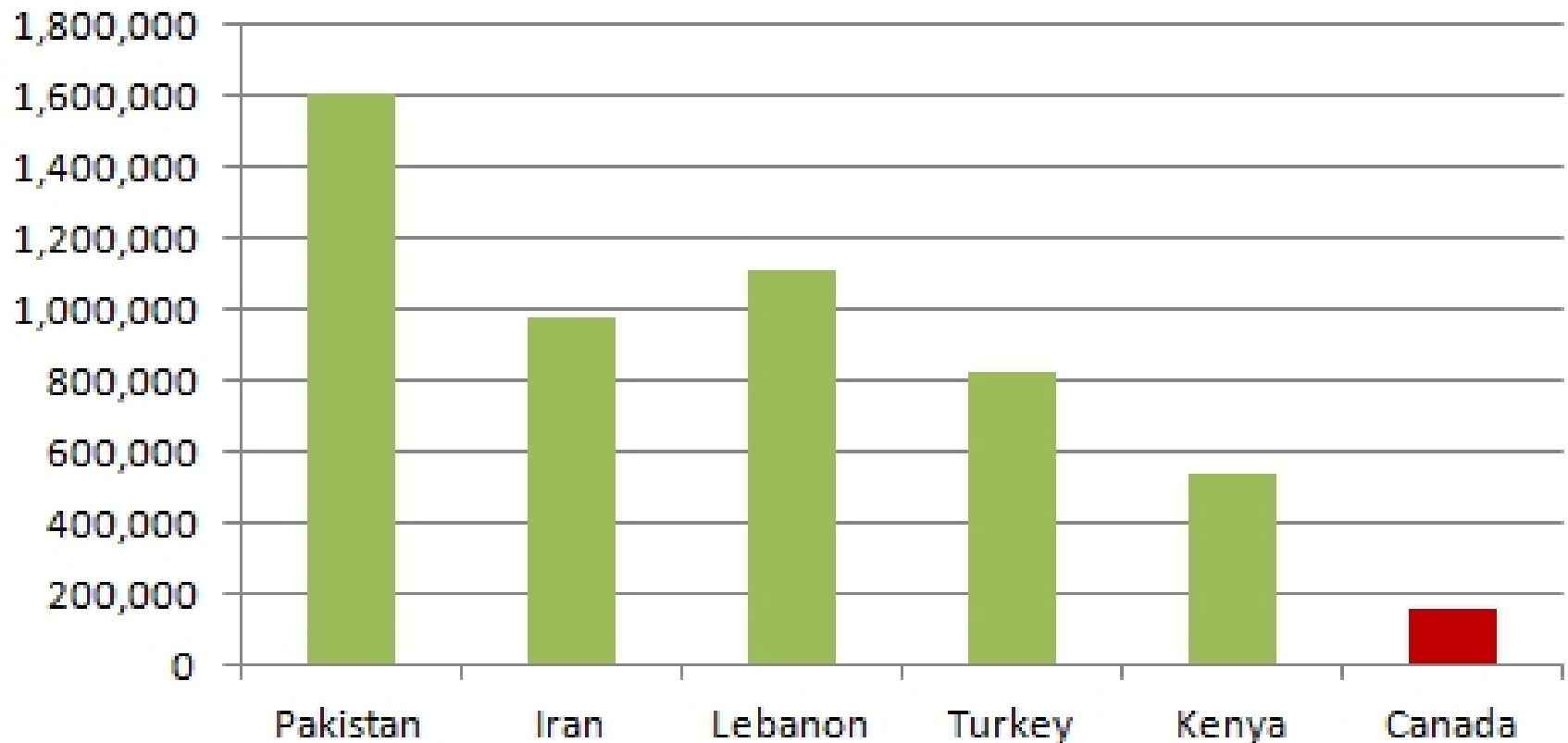
Fig. 2

Where do the world's refugees come from?




Where do they go?

Refugees hosted - Canada compared to some other countries (UNHCR statistics, mid 2014)



What are durable solutions for refugees?



- ✦ Ideally, voluntary repatriation (going back home if it becomes feasible).
- ✦ 2nd, local integration in the country of first asylum – seldom accepted by a recipient country.
- ✦ 3rd, third country resettlement such as currently is the case for some Syrians.
- ✦ 4th, not a durable solution, nor very desirable, long term retention camps.

Who is working to help?



- ✦ The UNHCR is the lead agency responsible for protection.
- ✦ Other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, WFP, WHO, UNDP, IOM.
- ✦ NGO community delivers aid in the field.
- ✦ Donors, governments that provide the UN & NGOs with funds.
- ✦ First asylum country governments.
- ✦ Local populations (nationally and internationally).

Top 12 Major Donor Countries in USD



Total contributions to UNHCR in 2012 (USD)

Donor	Contributions
Governments and the European Union	
United States of America	791,120,742
Japan	184,840,510
European Union	166,944,814
Sweden	117,915,465
Netherlands	102,169,590
United Kingdom	99,585,966
Norway	83,994,687
Germany	68,200,819
Canada	64,989,067
Denmark	57,646,744
Australia	48,379,940
Switzerland	37,340,180

Canada's checkered past



1776, The United Empire Loyalists are regarded as among Canada's first refugee contingent.

Before 1860, thousands of fugitive American slaves also arrived in Canada, and the public recognition given to Canada as the final stop on the Underground Railroad reaffirmed that this country was indeed a sanctuary for those seeking protection from persecution. An estimated **30,000 African Americans** came to Canada seeking protection.

1939, hundreds of Jewish refugees on board the ship SS St. Louis were turned away, and had to return to Germany and face death.

Canada eventually accepted some **4,000 Jewish refugees** from Europe, the US welcomed 240,000, Britain 85,000, China 25,000, Argentina and Brazil over 25,000 each, and Mexico and Colombia received some 40,000 between them.

1956, within months of the Hungarian uprising against the Soviet occupation, the Canadian government accepted almost **37,000 Hungarian refugees**.

1968, **11,000 Czechs**, following the Soviet invasion of their country, settled in Canada.

1970s, touched by the plight of the hundreds of thousands who escaped the communist regime of Viet Nam, by taking to the high seas in leaking, unsafe boats, many Canadians offered to sponsor their journey to Canada, and the government admitted some **70,000 refugees**.

1972, Canada also accepted **7,000 highly trained and educated Ugandan Asians** who were fleeing the notoriously repressive regime of Idi Amin.

1986, in recognition of its exceptional contribution to refugee protection, Canada was awarded the Nansen Medal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

1990s, Canada enacted a number of policies aimed at curtailing the number of refugees, creating problematic linkages between refugees, criminality, and terrorism.

In the **aftermath of 9/11** and the increased focus on national security, more resources have been diverted to strengthen border enforcement and to decrease numbers of refugees and asylum seekers, rather than aid in resettlement and integration.

2012, the Canadian government passed **Bill C-31**, or the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, which drastically restructured Canada's refugee and immigration policies. Bill C-31 introduced a number of problematic changes and was widely protested by lawyers, doctors and refugee advocates in Canada.

Bill C-31 made it easier to exclude political prisoners and activists from the refugee definition. Bill C-31 also enacted mandatory detention provisions for certain groups of refugee claimants and incorrectly linked refugees fleeing persecution to human smuggling offences.

The Canadian government also made troubling public statements about legitimate refugee claimants being "bogus" or fraudulent.

Healthcare for refugees was also drastically cut under the Conservative government.

2015, This policy was also successfully challenged at the Federal Court, with Justice Anne Mactavish going as far as to describe these cuts as "cruel and unusual treatment."

In **February 2016**, the Liberal government reversed these cuts and fully reinstated healthcare for all refugees.

Canada's Muslim Population

- ✦ 2011 census showed that 1, 054, 000 Muslims live in Canada, approx. 3.2% of population.
- ✦ 25,000 Syrian refugees will add a potential 2.3%.
- ✦ as of 2011, Canada already had 40, 840 Syrians and 49, 680 Iraqis living here.



Canada & Refugees Today

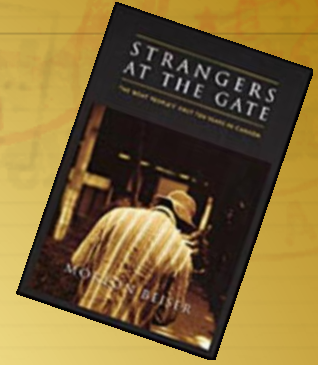
- ✦ Almost all the Syrians coming to Canada are families, not single people.
- ✦ 2014, we accepted less than 1% of the 2.9 million global refugees (22, 220).
- ✦ We rank 33rd globally in terms of refugees per capita.
- ✦ We intend to take in 25,000 this year. Globally, 25,000 people are being displaced, per day.



How has it been working out so far?

- ✦ Every wave of post war refugees has successfully integrated and become economically sufficient within a few years.
- ✦ The cost of government programs (ESL, travel, skills training and so on) has usually been paid back within a decade through additional tax revenues that refugees begin to generate.
- ✦ Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ our refugee intake is through private sponsorship, not funded by the government.
- ✦ We need people who will enter the work force, we have an aging population and are not replacing ourselves – economic benefits.

What about the Indochinese?



- ✦ By 1985, 110, 000 Indochinese had arrived in Canada. There were many rural people, with little formal education.
- ✦ Many spoke neither French nor English. Most came with no assets.
- ✦ They came during an economic down turn (80s recession).
- ✦ Faced major challenges getting established but had done well within a decade.
- ✦ Beiser (1999) studied this and found that they had an unemployment rate 2.3% below the Canadian average.
- ✦ 1 in 5 families started a business employing others.
- ✦ 99% successfully applied to become Canadian citizens.
- ✦ They were less likely than the average Canadian to receive some form of welfare.