

Asylum in the US and Switzerland

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Definition of a Refugee

“owing to 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, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

Art. 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol

- *Interesting fact: the 1967 Protocol eliminated the temporal limitation from the 1951 Convention, which initially considered that no more refugees would be produced after World War II.*

Defining Elements of the Refugee Definition

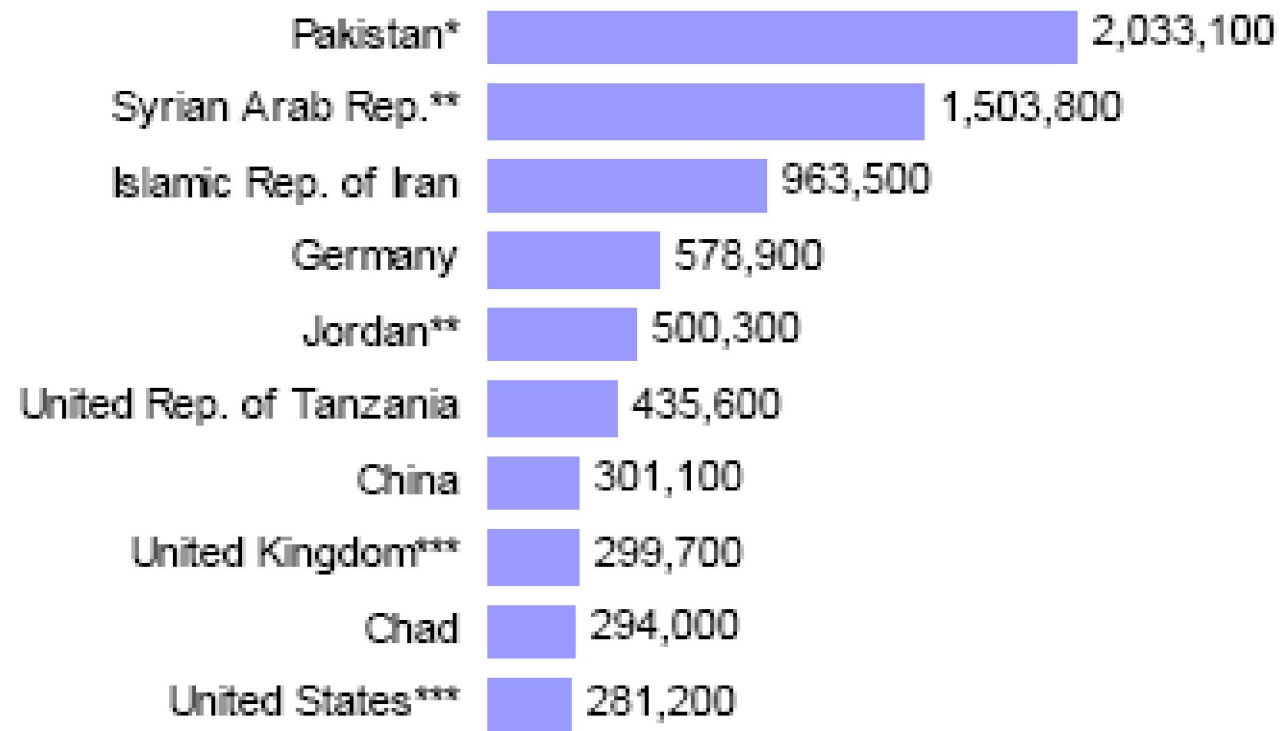
- Having crossed an international border
- Having experienced persecution in the past or having a well-founded fear of being persecuted in the future
- Being persecuted on grounds of one's political opinion, race, nationality, religion or belonging to a "particular social group".
- Being individually targeted
- Lack of state protection
 - *In order to be granted refugee status, all those elements must be present.*

Asylum in the US and Switzerland – a Comparative Perspective

- **Destination countries**
- **Number of hosted refugees:** *most refugees are located in conflict neighboring countries (Pakistan, Syria)*
- **Asylum seekers vs. resettled refugees:** *The US has relatively few asylum applications from asylum seekers but directly resettles recognized refugees from conflict-neighboring countries*
- **Restrictions to the asylum process:** *CH - fast-track procedure by determining some claims “manifestly unfounded” and obligation to submit identity documents within 48 hours; US – obligation to apply for asylum within one-year*
- **Durable solutions:** *Refugees in both the US and CH are usually naturalized, ie. Become citizens; but whereas a refugee can receive citizenship within 5 years in the US, it takes 12 years in Switzerland, thus the high percentage of foreigners*

Major Refugee Hosting Countries

Fig 3: Major refugee hosting countries, end-2007



UNHCR, 2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons, June 2008

Number of asylum seekers and resettled refugees in 2007

Country of asylum	Refugees Total	Asylum Seekers Pending end 2007	Applications Received 2007	Granted Refugee Status	Recognition Rates	Resettled Refugees Total
Switzerland	45,653	10,754	10,884*	1,537*	19,2%*	-
United States	281,219	83,884	40,449	25,270**	50%	48,217**

UNHCR Statistics, June 2008; accessible at: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics.html>

* BFM, Asylstatistik, August 2008; accessible at:

<http://www.bfm.admin.ch/etc/medialib/data/migration/statistik/asylstatistik/uebersichten.Par.0003.File.tmp/Asyl-Uebersicht-Jahre-Total-d.pdf>

** DHS, Refugees and Asylees: 2007; accessible at:

www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_rfa_fr_2007.pdf