

White House: US to Take In 100,000 Ukrainian Refugees

The White House announced Thursday plans for the United States to welcome as many as 100,000 Ukrainians and others fleeing the Russian invasion of the eastern European nation.

In a statement on its website, the White House said the plan is part of a larger \$1 billion humanitarian aid package to assist all those affected by “Russia’s war in Ukraine.”

The White House said while it expects most Ukrainians will choose to remain in Europe close to family and their homes, the refugees will be welcomed through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and other usual legal pathways. The statement says it is also looking to expand and develop new programs focusing on Ukrainians who have family members in the United States.

Refugee advocates welcomed the announcements but questioned the administration’s abilities to move refugee processing faster than its current pace.

Sunil Varghese, policy director at the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), said in a statement the Biden administration is right to respond to the crisis in Ukraine with “compassion” and “bold action,” and advocates await more information on the program.

“Unfortunately, refugee resettlement continues at a glacial pace, and significant investments and innovations are required to ensure the Biden administration’s intentions can be made reality. We look forward to receiving more details about the program to protect vulnerable Ukrainians and encourage the administration to issue a clear plan to fulfill its promise to rebuild the refugee admissions program as a whole,” he wrote.

The U.S. Refugee Admissions program was dramatically cut under the previous Trump administration, leaving fewer resources within the government and resettlement agencies to handle the significant increase of refugee applications and arrivals.

This August 17, 2021, image courtesy of Mohammad Ehsan Saadat shows Ehsan Saadat, a 33-year-old Afghan, who recently arrived in Canada, posing with his wife and his children in Toronto.

In 2021, the Biden administration raised the 2022 refugee cap to 125,000. Yet actual admissions continue to lag, and the White House has acknowledged the “goal will be hard to hit” despite Biden’s determination to rebuild the program and renew “America’s commitment to protect the most vulnerable, and to stand as a beacon of liberty and refuge to the world.”

Cars line up on the road to the Shehyni border crossing as people flee to Poland, after Russia launched a massive military operation against Ukraine, outside Mostyska, Ukraine, Feb. 27, 2022.

But Biden officials say the U.S. government is coordinating closely with the European Union on efforts to help refugees and provide humanitarian transfers and admissions to make sure they are complimentary.

The White House statement said the new humanitarian package will also include funding to ensure food security, shelter, clean water, medical supplies and other forms of assistance for those impacted by “Russia’s aggression.”

The statement says the package includes an additional \$320 million in democracy and human rights funding to Ukraine and its neighbors.

The White House says since February 24, the United States has already provided more than \$123 million to help Ukraine’s neighboring countries and the European Union receive and host the millions of refugees that have fled the country, with funding split among Poland, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, and the Slovak Republic.

Some information for this report was provided by the Associated Press and Reuters.

Source:

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