

President Trump's Executive Order on Refugees Harms Our Iraqi Allies

Recognizing the importance of protecting Iraqi allies who served alongside the U.S. Military, U.S. agencies, media, and non-governmental organizations, Congress passed the bipartisan Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, creating two pathways to resettle these individuals in the United States: the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, and direct access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

The Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Program

- ☑ For Iraqis who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Iraq for more than one year between March 20, 2003 and September 30, 2013 and who experienced threats due to that employment, the SIV program allows for resettlement and legal permanent residence (“green card”) in the United States.
- ☑ The Iraqi SIV program has stopped accepting applications, and there are less than 1,000 visas left to be issued. For qualified Iraqis who missed the deadline to apply for an SIV, or who served the United States in other capacities, direct access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is the avenue for protection.

Direct Access to the U.S Refugee Admissions Resettlement Program

- ☑ The Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act directed the administration to create a direct access program—also known as a priority 2 (P2) category—of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) to allow qualified U.S. affiliated Iraqis, who work or worked for the U.S. government, military, mission contractors, and U.S.-based media or non-governmental organizations, to directly apply to the United States for resettlement without a referral from UNHCR. As of now, more than 50,000 Iraqis are waiting to be processed for resettlement through this program.

Both SIV and USRAP processing involve extensive requirements, interviews, and security vetting. These procedures are lengthy and have been regularly reviewed and enhanced.

How the Executive Orders Affect U.S. Affiliated Iraqis

The Trump Administration’s executive order signed on March 6, 2017, will effectively:

- ☑ Suspend the entire U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for at least 120 days, halting resettlement of U.S. affiliated Iraqis. Due to the complex and rigorous vetting process employed at USRAP, halting the screening processes ensures security and medical clearances will expire. This will prevent these individuals from completing the screening process and will force many to recomplete previous steps in the vetting process once admissions resume, ensuring they will not be eligible for admission for several additional months or years.
- ☑ Cut the total number of refugees who will be admitted into the United States in FY17 by more than half from 110,000 to 50,000, drastically reducing the ability to resettle vulnerable U.S. affiliated Iraqis. As of March 1, 2017, more than 37,000 refugees had been admitted to the United States in FY17, leaving less than 13,000 slots remaining for refugee admissions this fiscal year.
- ☑ Iraqi SIV holders are not specifically targeted in this executive order, but Iraqis will be “subjected to thorough review, including, as appropriate, consultation with a designee of the Secretary of Defense” which could prolong their already extensive visa application process.
- ☑ Currently, no such exception has been issued for U.S. affiliated Iraqis in the USRAP program. As a result, tens of thousands of direct access applications will be further delayed and these men, women, and their families will be left in danger due to their affiliation to the United States including interpreters and translators who served the U.S. military.