

10 Common Myths Concerning Refugees



Myth 1: There are plenty of countries in which refugees can find refuge.

Reality: No country is eager to receive refugees. Most countries seek ways to deter refugees from crossing their borders.

Myth 2: Most of the world's refugees are found in Western nations.

Reality: 86% of the world's refugees today can be found in developing nations. Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2013.

Myth 3: Most refugees are eventually resettled to another country.

Reality: Less than 1% of the world's refugees are resettled any given year.

Myth 4: Refugees should stay as close to home as possible so that they can later more easily return.

Reality: This is true when there is a good chance of the situation in the refugee's homeland improving. The majority of the world's refugees reside in countries neighboring their country of origin. But the option of returning to their homeland is often uncertain and distant. The world's refugee producing crises are growing both in number and in duration. There are tens of thousands of refugee children from families in which the last relative to have seen their homeland was a grandparent.

Myth 5: Refugees are dangerous because they cross international borders illegally.

Reality: Refugees are not dangerous. They are in danger as they seek safety outside of their homeland. Few have the option of securing travel documents and visas before fleeing their country. They are left with no alternative but to cross international borders illegally. This is not a crime. In their desperation, they often need to rely upon human smugglers for assistance.

Myth 6: Most refugees leave their country for economic reasons.

Reality: People who leave their country in pursuit of economic benefit are migrants and not refugees. By definition, refugees are people who were forced to flee their country due to war and/or persecution. Most countries have developed systems that make it nearly impossible for forcibly displaced people to prove their case for refugee status. No one knows how many genuine refugees are rejected by such countries every year, leaving them vulnerable for exploitation and deportation.

Myth 7: Refugees take jobs away from citizens in their country of refuge.

Reality: Many countries hosting refugees do not offer refugees the option to work. This often results in the uninformed public to view refugees as lazy – or as “illegals” working on the black market. In countries of refuge that permit refugees to work, the majority of refugees take entry level jobs – jobs that few citizens are willing to take. The number of refugees received by industrialized nations is too low to make a meaningful impact on nationwide employment.

Myth 8: Refugees are people in need – people to be pitied and helped.

Reality: Refugees are some of the most courageous, resilient and resourceful people on the planet. They are more than people in need – they are people wanting to give and make a meaningful contribution to society. They don't want or need our pity. They deserve our respect and compassion.

Myth 9: The problem is both too big and far away – there is nothing we can do to help.

Reality: The problem is big and complex – but it is not far away. The Refugee Highway runs through nearly every country on the planet. More likely than not, you will find refugees in your community.

Myth 10: The Bible has little to say about refugees.

Reality: The Bible is filled with stories of forcible displacement. God clearly expects his people to love the alien.