



## The Need

The world is facing a humanitarian crisis the likes of which we have not witnessed since World War II, with over 70 million displaced individuals around the globe, including nearly 26 million refugees. Given the political climate and increased xenophobia in the United States and elsewhere, particularly in the wake of the current U.S. Administration's efforts to deny safe haven and freedom to those in need, legal advocacy for refugees and displaced people is more important than ever.

## IRAP Model

The International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) has created an innovative model that mobilizes legal resources to advocate for refugees and displaced people. We work with our clients to identify and navigate pathways to safety through free direct legal representation, systemic advocacy, and litigation.

IRAP's approach is grounded in three distinct but interrelated strategies.

- 1** IRAP has created a "virtual public interest law firm"—a firm that is not impeded by geographic boundaries and uses technological solutions to deliver free high-quality representation to people living in, and fleeing from, war, persecution, and political upheaval around the world. We have trained an army of volunteers—1,200 students from 30 law schools in the U.S. and Canada and *pro bono* attorneys from over 120 international law firms and multinational corporations—to assist thousands of refugees and displaced people on urgent registration, protection, and resettlement cases.
- 2** Through impact litigation and systemic advocacy, IRAP is bringing legal challenges to refugee rights violations in the courts, creating solutions to overcoming the legal and bureaucratic impediments in the resettlement process, and developing an enforceable system of legal and procedural rights for refugees and displaced people worldwide. Working directly with our clients as they navigate the labyrinthine processes, IRAP is often able to identify obstacles of which other institutional players are unaware. Our unique model utilizes lessons learned in individual casework to advocate for systemic changes that benefit broader refugee populations.
- 3** Finally, a crucial prong of IRAP's approach is to train the next generation of international human rights advocates. These advocates are essential to ensure fairness, decency, and adherence to the rule of law throughout the refugee resettlement process.

***The attacks on the rights of refugees and displaced people demand immediate and bold action. IRAP innovates smart and durable solutions, proving that the plight of refugees is anything but hopeless.***

# IRAP Response to the Muslim Ban Executive Orders

IRAP was on the front lines of the fight against the discriminatory Executive Order signed by the President on January 27, 2017, which froze the refugee program and banned people from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the United States. IRAP mobilized an emergency task force of legal advocates and led the fight in the courts and press, securing a Temporary Restraining Order that prevented the nationwide deportation and detention of 2,100 immigrants and refugees affected by the ban. As the lead plaintiff in the only lawsuit challenging the entirety of the Executive Order, IRAP was victorious in winning preliminary injunctions against two additional versions of the ban, which ensured that over 21,000 refugees who would have otherwise been banned were admitted to the United States in 2017. With the battle far from over, IRAP will fight for continued access to safe haven in the United States and elsewhere through legal aid, litigation, policy advocacy, and communications.



## New Initiatives Expanding Pathways to Safety



Traditional pathways to safety for the world's most vulnerable people are rapidly dwindling. As the capacity of the United Nations diminishes and global refugee resettlement processing slows, particularly in the wake of reduced funding and resettlement slots from the United States, IRAP works to identify, pursue, and expand legal pathways to safety for individuals seeking safe passage to Europe, Canada, the United States, and elsewhere. IRAP is partnering with destination governments and other NGOs to promote all pathways, facilitate access to these avenues, and advocate for additional pathways to safety for people forced to flee their homes. We are also expanding our virtual public interest law firm model by piloting programs in Europe to assist refugees there and ensure their legal rights are enforced (with a focus on family reunification), creating a global program to identify and pursue additional pathways to safety for refugees, and leveraging our vast network of *pro bono* law firm partners across Europe and the Middle East to increase our scope.

## IRAP Outcomes

In the ten years since our establishment by a group of five Yale Law School students, we have become a world leader in enforcing and expanding the rights of the world's most vulnerable refugees.

Among our notable achievements are:

- Helping to resettle over 4,000 refugees and displaced persons to 18 different countries, and providing legal assistance through our online advice hotline to more than 25,000 individuals from 73 countries.
- Playing a leadership role in enacting ten pieces of Congressional legislation that affect the lives of more than 170,000 individuals.
- Winning a groundbreaking lawsuit against President Trump's proclamation attempting to end the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, ensuring that refugees will continue to be resettled to the United States.
- Winning a landmark lawsuit against the Departments of State and Homeland Security on behalf of Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa applicants, who bravely served the U.S. during the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, but are mired in case processing limbo for years while being threatened with violence or death in their home countries.

***Everyone should have a safe place to call home and a safe way to get there.***