



Refugee Shabbat 2023 Resource Guide

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Introduction

Participation in Refugee Shabbat can be as multifaceted as you would like.

Whether you signed up to participate on behalf of your congregation or as an individual, there are many options for how your Refugee Shabbat can take shape:

For congregations, you might consider including a liturgical reading on the theme of the refugee crisis in Shabbat services and/or dedicating a sermon or text study to the topic. If you have a relationship with a refugee, asylum seeker, refugee agency professional, or HIAS Welcome Circle Leader in your local community, consider inviting that person to speak during services. You could also reach out to Refugee Congress (more information on page 6).

In addition, you might plan a Shabbat dinner program after Friday evening services or a Shabbat lunch program after Saturday morning services on Zoom or in person – it could be a film or book discussion or an educational program about the various contours of the global refugee crisis. We also encourage you to invite your community to the HIAS-led events on Thursday, February 2, Friday, February 3, and Sunday, February 4.

In this document you will find several useful resources for building out your participation in HIAS Refugee Shabbat:

- a liturgical reading to include in Shabbat services or to share with congregants to read in their homes
- sermon talking points
- a text study to use during Torah study, Shabbat services, or as a stand-alone post-services program
- a [Refugee Shabbat Spotify playlist](#)

We encourage you to think through which of these options would be the most appealing to you and/or your community.

For everyone – individuals and congregations alike, in this document, on pages 4-5, you will find a list of ideas for how anyone can take action on Refugee Shabbat.

Safety and Security

As you design your participation in Refugee Shabbat, HIAS would like to take this opportunity to remind you to incorporate safety and security management into your planning process. In this era of heightened antisemitic, anti-immigrant, and Islamophobic violence, it is prudent to reflect on your community's approach to safety and security. We encourage you to consider which best practices are applicable to your congregation and facilities. [Secure Community Network](#) (SCN) is the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community in North America working to strengthen safety and security at Jewish institutions around the country. Working in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, SCN has created and curated some useful resources. Several are shared here for your consideration as you prepare for Refugee Shabbat.

[Cybersecurity Resources](#)

[Institutional Security](#)

[Low-Cost Security Measures for Jewish Facilities](#)

[Video Conference Best Practices](#)

[Online Training: Active Shooter - What you can do](#)

[Mass Gatherings: Take Charge of Your Personal Safety](#)

Publicity and Social Media

HIAS Refugee Shabbat is an opportunity for the Jewish community to communicate our strong, shared support for refugees and asylum seekers. HIAS headquarters will be working to tell the story of the Jewish community's participation in Refugee Shabbat, and we hope that you will do so too by contacting local media about your programming, inviting local elected officials to attend and/or speak at your programs, and/or writing op-eds about your participation for local news outlets. Please also consider writing about your participation on social media and in your community's newsletter or bulletin.

HIAS-led Events

This year, there will be three HIAS-led Refugee Shabbat programs which will be either entirely online or streamed live. We hope you will join us.

On **Thursday, February 2**, kick-off Refugee Shabbat a little early with the launch event for the HIAS Welcome to Congress Campaign. Keep your eye on your email for more details and registration information.

On **Friday, February 3**, join us in-person or via live-stream at the HIAS Refugee Shabbat Celebration. Hear from Mark Hetfield, HIAS CEO, and celebrate Shabbat and the work of communities around the United States in supporting HIAS, refugees, and asylum seekers. More details and registration information will be sent via email and listed on HIAS.org.

On **Sunday, February 4**, join us on Zoom for a deep dive into how the global climate crisis is impacting refugees around the world. More details and registration information will be shared in January via email and HIAS.org.

We would love for you to weave these programs into your community's Shabbat plans. Please share the links with your community when they become available and encourage them to attend and/or consider attending as a group.

Action Items for Everyone

Here is a list of 14 ways that anyone can take action for refugees and asylum seekers in the week leading up to and following Refugee Shabbat, as well as on the actual Shabbat itself.¹ If you are participating in Refugee Shabbat as a community, consider selecting one of the items on this list to encourage all community members to do in observance of Refugee Shabbat.

1. **Bless with Intention** – As you welcome Shabbat on February 3rd (or the date of your choosing), [use this reading](#) before reciting Kiddush (the blessing over the Shabbat wine) to set an intention to act in solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers around the globe.
2. **Volunteer** – There are countless ways to volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers today. If you are located near one of [HIAS' local resettlement partners](#), many need individuals to help as skilled volunteers as well as congregations and organizations to assist in welcoming new neighbors to their communities. If you are not near a HIAS partner, there are a network of organizations around the country that you can find [on this map](#) who do similar work. Congregations and organizations interested in serving as private sponsors (supporting your new neighbors independently) can explore the opportunity to become a [HIAS Welcome Circle](#). And you can explore other ways to volunteer on the HIAS website [here](#).
3. **Find the Facts** – Check out this [list of articles and videos](#) to learn more about the global refugee and asylum crisis and share these resources with family and friends. Discuss what you've learned with them!
4. **Advocate to your Elected Officials** – The United States can and must welcome refugees and asylum seekers in a fair and compassionate way. Send a message to the Biden administration and/or your Member of Congress using the links on [this page](#).
5. **Ask Your Members of Congress to Support Welcome for Refugees** – Join HIAS communities across the country for our Welcome to Congress campaign and Spring Advocacy Week. These are opportunities to work with HIAS' Grassroots Organizing and Advocacy team to urge your Senators and Representatives to welcome refugees, asylum seekers, parolees, and those seeking a safe place to call home. To get involved, [contact Russ Agdern, Grassroots Campaign Manager in Community Engagement](#).

¹ We recognize that HIAS' supporters observe Shabbat in a multiplicity of ways. We encourage you to choose the activities that work best for you and to use the time leading up to Refugee Shabbat and directly after for any of the activities that resonate but are not in line with your personal Shabbat practice.

6. **Join the “Jews for Refugees” Facebook Group** – Joining this group is a great way to connect with thousands of other committed individuals across the United States and around the world, access up-to-the-minute information about the Jewish response to the refugee crisis and share actions that you are taking. [Click here to join](#).
7. **Shop at Refugee and Immigrant-Owned Businesses** – Consider doing a Google search for refugee-owned restaurants and shops in your local area. Check out lists like [this one](#), [this one](#), or [this one](#) to purchase refugee-made products from around the world.
8. **Learn a Language with Refugees** – Sign up to learn Arabic, Armenian, French, Kurdish, Persian, or Spanish by employing a refugee as a teacher through [NaTakallam](#). You can even purchase “Gift of Conversation” packages for family and friends eager to learn. Professional translation services also available for individuals and organizations worldwide.
9. **Donate Goods** – Donate old technology (PCs, printers, tablets or PDAs, mice, sound and video cards, etc.) through [PCs for Refugees](#). Donate new or gently used baby carriers to refugees through [Carry the Future](#). Your [local resettlement agency](#) likely has other specific needs.
10. **Support Refugees and Asylum Seekers** – In the week leading up to Refugee Shabbat, set up a Facebook fundraiser to benefit HIAS’ work. For assistance setting up a personalized fundraiser page, please email development@hias.org.
11. **Become a Welcome Campaign Congregation** – If you are a member of a synagogue, [check this list to see if your community is part of HIAS’ Welcome Campaign](#), an action network uniting congregations across the United States in response to the largest refugee crisis in history. If your congregation is already signed up, contact synagogue lay leadership and clergy to find out how you can get involved. If not, contact synagogue lay leadership and clergy to encourage them to join.
12. **Donate to a Bond Fund** – Consider contributing to a [bond fund](#) to assist in releasing immigrants from detention.
13. Explore the resources created by [What Would You Bring?](#) and use them as starting points for conversations with family and friends.
14. Listen to the [Refugee Shabbat 2023 Spotify Playlist](#)

Sermon Talking Points

Click [here](#) to download sermon talking points.

Recorded Remarks

In mid-January, HIAS will provide pre-recorded remarks by Rachel Levitan, Vice President of International Policy and Relations.

Refugee Congress Speakers

If you are interested in bringing a refugee speaker to your community, consider contacting Refugee Congress.

Refugee Congress is a nonpartisan advocacy organization built and led by former refugees, asylum-seekers and other vulnerable migrants to promote the well-being, integration, and dignity of all vulnerable migrants. With delegates across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, they use their voices and experiences to inform and influence decision makers on critical domestic and international issues that affect their communities.

You can learn more at www.refugeecongress.org. To inquire about speaker availability, please email info@refugeecongress.org.

Text Study: Singing Ourselves Free

This year's text study uses classical and contemporary texts to link the Song of the Sea (read during Parashat Beshallah, Feb 4, 2023) with the refugee experience. There are questions to prompt discussion and reflection. It can be found [here](#). Previous year's text studies can be found [here](#).