

Resources for Learning about Refugees and Asylum Seekers



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Introduction

In addition to the HIAS [blog](#) and [Vimeo video gallery](#), use the articles and videos below to expand your knowledge. Invite family, friends, or community members to read, watch, or listen to these resources and then discuss your what you have learned over FaceTime or Zoom.

Articles

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately hard impact on refugees and migrants. They are often exposed to the virus with limited tools to protect themselves, and public health measures do not always reach them. Read [this report](#) from the World Health Organization to learn more about how the pandemic has impacted refugees, as well as [HIAS' 2021 Year End in Review](#) to learn about some of the ways we have helped mitigate that impact.
2. For most of human history, people have lived within a surprisingly narrow range of temperatures in the places where the climate supported abundant food production. As the planet warms, those regions are shifting. Entire nations will lose their ability to farm grains and vegetables. [Read about how ProPublica and The New York Times Magazine have modeled how climate refugees might move across international borders](#). You can also [read and listen about how climate impacts migration by exacerbating resource scarcity and conflict, and how HIAS teams are working to support climate refugees](#)
3. The crisis in Afghanistan in fall of 2021 led to the evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghan citizens. In the U.S. and around the world, communities struggled to provide adequate support to these newcomers, but worked tirelessly to rise to the occasion. [Read more about the scope of Afghan displacement in this report from UNHCR](#). You can also [click here to learn more about the U.S. evacuations and where things stand as of January 2022](#). For more information on how HIAS is helping, [visit the HIAS website](#).
4. In a [photographic timeline](#) covering the start of the Greek migration crisis in 2015 to the present, Nicola Zolin shows how the Greek islands changed from a starting point or stopover to a permanent home for thousands of refugees. The fires in the Moria refugee camp in the fall of 2020 were devastating and the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated the situation.
5. In November 2021, *The Walk* – a performance art piece featuring Little Amal, a 3.5-meter-tall puppet of a young refugee girl – concluded its 8,000km journey from the Syria-Turkey border across nine countries all the way to the UK. [Read more about the project and journey](#).
6. Canada continues to pave the way in private sponsorship of refugees, despite setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the many groups that benefit from this private sponsorship are Eritrean asylum seekers in Israel, who have found new homes and new opportunities in Canada thanks to partnerships with the Jewish community. [Read about two families' journeys here](#).

Podcasts and Videos

1. Listen to HIAS's new podcast [Crossing Borders](#), which takes you inside the experience of being a refugee by introducing you to people hoping to rebuild their lives in a new home and some of those dedicated to helping them succeed.
2. Explore the UNHCR's (the UN refugee agency) [video archives](#), which includes stories of refugees from all over the world.
3. Celebrated author and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Neil Gaiman joined forces with hundreds of fans and artists to release [a new animated version of his poem *What You Need To Be Warm*](#). The poem reflects the journeys and challenges refugees face, especially in the cold winter months. Gaiman asked his Twitter followers to share words and memories of warmth as inspiration for the poem.
4. Watch this [brief report](#) from a sprawling makeshift city that houses hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people, driven from their homes by Burma's military. Consider pairing this short video with the film [I Am Rohingya](#), a powerful documentary that chronicles the journey of 14 Rohingya youth who take to the stage in order to depict their families' harrowing escape from Burma.
5. [Midnight Traveler](#) is the firsthand documentation of one Afghan asylum-seeking family's difficult trek across numerous borders, revealing the danger and uncertainty facing asylum seekers juxtaposed with the unbreakable love shared amongst a family in search of safety.
6. In Maine – the whitest state in America – immigrant students are entering public schools in record numbers. But as the population increases, so does the number of hate crimes. Following 13 immigrant and non-immigrant teenage girls, the short documentary film [Maine Girls](#) explores the important role that young people play in bridging cultural divides.

Books

1. [The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives](#), edited by Viet Than Nguyen, is a powerful series of original essays by a collection of writers from around the world. The book looks at what it means to be forced to leave home and find a place of refuge against the backdrop of continually closing doors.
2. [Exit West](#) by Mohsin Hamid follows a young couple as they flee from war, emerging from their unnamed homeland into an alien and uncertain future, struggling to hold on to their past, each other, and their sense of who they are.
3. [How Fast Can You Run](#) is a powerful novel based on the life of Michael Majok Kuch, a South Sudanese refugee who author Harriet Levin Millan met through her teaching job at Drexel University and helped reunite with his family.
4. [How to Pronounce Knife](#), written by award-winning Canadian author and Laotian immigrant Souvankham Thammavongsa, is a collection of essays that tell the stories of forcibly displaced

people who, despite arriving safely in a new country, continue to grapple with displacement as they begin to rebuild their lives.

5. [*The Ungrateful Refugee*](#) by Dina Nayeri interweaves her own experiences as a child refugee from Iran with the stories of other refugees and asylum seekers in recent years. In this memoir, Nayeri confronts notions like “the swarm,” and, on the other hand, “good” immigrants, and challenges readers to rethink how we talk about the refugee crisis.
6. [*Tell Me How It Ends*](#) is an essay structured around the forty questions the author, Valeria Luiselli, asked undocumented Latin American children facing deportation as she provided volunteer translation assistance as they sought legal relief. The result is a timely exploration of how our immigration system treats children that arrive to the U.S. in search of a better life.
7. [*After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America*](#) provides an intimate look at the lives of two women — Mu Naw, a Christian from Burma, and Hasna, a Muslim from Syria — and their personal stories are situated within the larger history of the evolution of modern refugee resettlement in the U.S. It reveals much about America’s changing attitudes toward refugees and ever-shifting refugee policies, and their profound effect on human lives.
8. The action-packed young adult novel [*Skyhunter*](#) by Marie Lu is part of the dystopian science fiction/fantasy genre. But its main character and narrator Talin, a young refugee woman, has much to teach readers about the importance of representation and point of view as she goes up against great odds to protect her new home and friends.