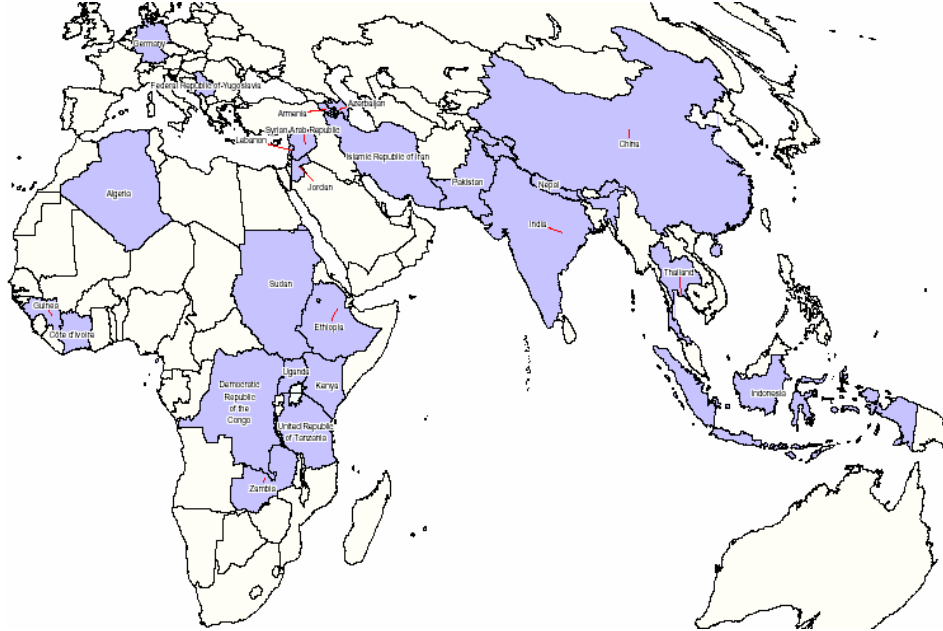


Refugees



- **Refugees** are those seeking asylum in a foreign country in order to escape persecution, war, terrorism, extreme poverty, famines, and natural disaster.
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) protects and supports refugees at the request of a government or the United Nations and assists in their return or resettlement.
- According to the UN Declaration of Human Rights, *refugees* are people who cross the border of their country and enter another country.
- Some people have to leave their homes, but are not able to cross a border – these people are identified as *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)*.
- Why people become refugees:
 - War (Inter-country or Intra-country)
 - Natural Disasters
 - Famine
 - Economic reasons
 - Political reasons
 - These people actually have a specific name within refugee law and are called “asylees”
 - Environmental reasons
 - Global warming altering the landscape
- Where are refugees from?
 - Refugees *have* come from all around the globe
 - Africa
 - Asia
 - Latin America
 - Europe
 - North America
 - Today, the majority of refugees are from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

- Where are refugees from?



- Where do refugees go?



- UNHCR estimates over 17,000,000 refugees worldwide.
- However, the true number is probably greater than this because many are not identified by international agencies.
- US Committee for Refugees estimates that over 7 million refugees are in camps – so millions have no shelter or protection at all!

- Famous Refugees
 - Georg & Maria von Trapp
 - Madeleine Albright
 - Henry Kissinger
 - H.E. The Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean
 - Vladimir Lenin
 - Karl Marx
 - Sigmund Freud
 - H.H. The Dalai Lama
 - Anne Frank
 - Victor Hugo
 - Albert Einstein

Refugees in Canada

- From 1995 to 2004 Canada welcomed more than 2.1 million immigrants.
- This included 265,685 (12% of the whole) refugees granted permanent residence.
- Refugee protection was not part of Canadian law until 1978.
- Early immigration policy discriminated by race:
 - British and northern Europeans were encouraged to immigrate whereas...
 - Chinese immigrants had to pay a Head Tax (\$500 in 1903)
 - Asians and others deemed undesirable were excluded by the "continuous passage" policy – immigrants had to come to Canada directly from their country of origin
 - Immigration Department used its discretion to discourage Black immigrants.
 - South Asians came to Vancouver on the ship the *Komagatu Maru* in 1914 to test the "continuous journey" policy. Indian immigrants left from Hong Kong but ship made a stop in Japan. All but 24 were refused entry (couldn't pay the head tax). The boat stayed off shore for 2 months waiting appeals but was finally returned to Calcutta... 20 people died en route.
 - In the 1930s and 1940s, thousands of European Jews tried to flee Nazi Germany.
 - Motivated by anti-semitism, the Canadian government used its discretion to exclude Jews.
- 1951: The *Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees* defined who was a refugee and their right to legal protection and assistance from those states who signed.
- A refugee is any person who *"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."*
- The 1951 convention was limited to protecting the approximately 50 million European refugees after World War II – many countries interpret it differently. (Are women and homosexuals protected when fleeing persecution as “members of a particular social group”? In Canada, yes.)

- 1978 was first time an *Immigration Act* included a humanitarian category for refugees needing protection and resettlement.
- 1986: UN awarded the Nansen Medal to the Canadian people in "recognition of their major and sustained contribution to the cause of refugees".
- April 4, 1985: Supreme Court rules the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects the basic rights and freedoms of refugee claimants in Canada. Known as the Singh decision, this Supreme Court decision declared that refugee claimants are entitled to basic standards of rights protection. April 4 is annually commemorated by Canadian refugee supporters as "Refugee Rights Day".
- 1988 *Immigration and Refugee Board* created to hear refugee claims.

- Relative to other countries, Canada has earned a reputation as a leader with some POSITIVE ELEMENTS:
 - an independent expert tribunal, with excellent documentation
 - gender guidelines
 - minimal detention of refugee claimants
 - an active resettlement program

- Still, as of 2005, more than 12,000 refugees overseas are waiting for a decision:
 - Refugees sponsored in 2005 may not even be interviewed until 2008
 - Private sponsors in Canada lose hope

- Other developed countries have much more strict policies (how many, from where, what happens once they're there)
 - US "feet dry" policy (Haiti, Cuba)
 - US Muslim *appearance* and treatment (Maher Arar)