

A young boy with a joyful expression is the central figure, wearing a blue and red striped knit hat and a dark jacket with a bright yellow lining. He is holding hands with another person, whose hand is visible in the foreground. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with snow on the ground and red playground equipment, suggesting a winter day in a park or schoolyard.

# **REFUGEES WELCOME: CITY RESOLUTIONS TOOLKIT**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**





**AMNESTY**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

**#IWELCOME**

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## GET THE FACTS

# 22,500,000

Refugees around the world

# 1/2

More than half of all refugees are children

# 50%

Percentage of refugee children who attend primary school, compared to the 91% average worldwide



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***We are living in the midst of the worst global refugee crisis since World War II. You can take action by declaring your city a “Refugees Welcome” zone.***

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Imagine how you'd feel if you lost your home, your family, and your friends. What if you needed the help of total strangers? That is the situation of millions of people around the world.

They are refugees -- people fleeing war, violence and persecution. Right now, there are 22.5 million refugees around the world. More than half are children, and they all need safety and a home.

Most refugees are living in neighboring countries, waiting to return to their homes or trying to rebuild their lives in a new country. A tiny percent--1.2 million--are extremely vulnerable and need to resettle abroad. These include torture survivors, people with severe medical conditions, at-risk women and children and LGBTI individuals.

The United States (U.S.) has historically been the largest resettler of refugees. But instead of continuing to lead during this critical global crisis, the U.S. has stepped back. The current administration has slashed the number of refugees who can enter the U.S. through a series of discriminatory executive orders.

The President has limited refugee admissions for 2018 to 45,000--an all-time low. The average U.S. limit since 1980 has been 95,000 refugees, but during this year of critical need, the U.S. is on track to resettle a mere 21,000.

Pictured below: Wissam Hajj Mouhamed Ali holds her daughter Julia while her twins look on. Julia was born in Canada after the family fled the war in Syria. They found refuge in Canada after living in a tent in a refugee camp in Jordan for three years.





This administration's discriminatory bans and policies have wreaked havoc on ordinary people, tearing families apart and stranding people fleeing violence and persecution.

For the most vulnerable refugees, these bans amount to a death sentence.

But you can help.

Our collective voices welcoming refugees must be heard. Elected officials need to know that they do not speak in our names when they slash refugee admissions and ban refugees from entire countries, separating families and leaving people in danger.

We are creating a blanket of support by passing Refugees Welcome resolutions in city councils and school governments across the U.S. Elected officials cannot pretend that the U.S. does not want to welcome refugees when local and school officials across the country are on the record saying "yes" to refugees.

Passing a Refugees Welcome resolution in your city is a powerful way to get loud and insist that your government supports refugees. Thank you for being part of the solution.

**Naureen Shah**  
**Senior Director of Campaigns**  
**Amnesty International USA**

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### ***What is a resolution?***

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A resolution is a motion adopted by an official body such as a student council, city council or state legislature. It is a formal expression of an opinion.

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### ***What is a Refugees Welcome resolution?***

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A Refugees Welcome resolution is a declaration of support for refugees passed through your city council. They are non-binding statements, not laws that decide whether a community will accept refugees. Rather, they tell community leaders that people in your city are supportive of refugees. There is a draft resolution in Appendix A.

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### ***Why should we pass a Refugees Welcome resolution?***

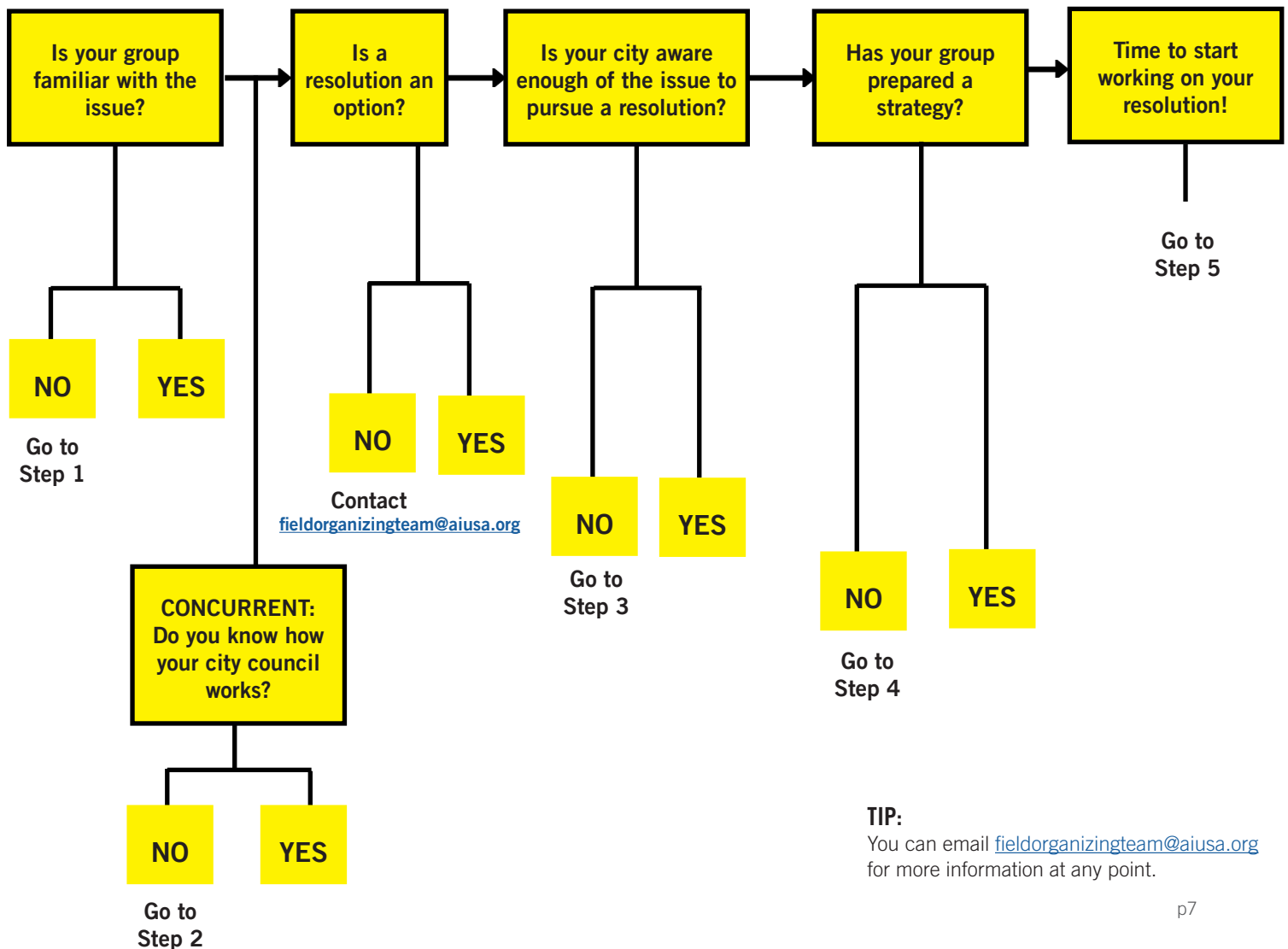
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- To show that your community supports resettling refugees
- To counter messages of anger and hate toward refugees that are in the media
- To provide accurate information about refugees to people in your community
- The process of passing a resolution is just as important as the end result, as it necessarily entails educating your community and bringing new people into our human rights movement.

# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit takes you step-by-step through the process of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution.

This flow chart can help you determine where to start as you move toward completing your goal, and the following steps will help guide the rest of your process. Use as much of the toolkit as you like!





# STEP 1: DOES YOUR GROUP UNDERSTAND THE REFUGEE CRISIS?

As you begin working towards passing a resolution in your city council, it's important that your group understands the refugee crisis so they may then begin educating your community and city government.

Does your group know who refugees are, the reasons why they may be fleeing their home countries and what Amnesty International is calling on governments to do in support of refugees? Are you familiar with common myths about refugees and have the information needed to counter these myths?

Your next step will be to email Ryan at [RMace@aiusa.org](mailto:RMace@aiusa.org). Ryan will help connect you with the refugee resettlement agency operating within your community. This step is important in order to notify them that you may be starting this work and to acquire accurate information about refugees who have been resettled in your community.



Pictured above: A young girl heads to school in the Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya.

## STEP 1

Learn and discuss key facts about refugees around the world, in the U.S. and in your community.

## STEP 2

Write down and discuss common myths about refugees that you may encounter at the national or local level. What are you hearing about refugees? What about that is true, and what is hurtful and false?

## STEP 3

Brainstorm how you could productively counter some of the myths that you might encounter while you work on refugee rights.

## STEP 4

Contact [RMace@aiusa.org](mailto:RMace@aiusa.org) to be connected with your local resettlement agency.

## TIP:

Visit our fact checking section (Appendix F) for suggestions.





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# STEP 2: HOW DOES YOUR CITY COUNCIL WORK?

Who is on the city council?
Can you submit a resolution? If not, what is the alternative?
What is the process for submitting a resolution?
Is there a certain time of the year when resolutions can be submitted?
How long might the resolution process take?
Are any city council seats up for election soon?

Is a Refugees Welcome resolution an option for your city or town? If so, move on to Step 3!

If not, reach out to [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) for alternative options.

A photograph of a person's hands writing on a yellow notepad with a red pen. The notepad is on a wooden table, and there are other papers and a water bottle nearby. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a workshop or meeting setting.

# STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR LOCAL CLIMATE AND BUILD SUPPORT

Around the world and in the U.S., refugees face discrimination, violence and hate. Refugees Welcome resolutions can help counter this rhetoric and demonstrate support for refugees, and it's helpful to assess what people in your community already think or feel about the refugee crisis.

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## **1. HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY CLIMATE:**

- What have you heard in your workplace or community about refugees?
- If you hear people talking about refugees, what is their tone?
- Do people sound supportive of refugees coming into the U.S.?
- Does there seem to be outspoken opposition to refugees in your community?

## **2. YOUR BEST RESOURCE FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS IS YOU AND YOUR GROUP: YOU KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY BEST. YOU MIGHT CONSIDER:**

- Looking at local newspapers, blogs or social media;
- Discovering whether there have been refugee-focused events in your community. This research may also help you understand how much education your community may need on the refugee crisis;
- Talking with your coworkers, friends or family members.
- Visit Appendix B for a thought-provoking exercise to assess your community's current climate.

After you have an idea of what people in your community think and feel about refugees, it is a great time to begin building local support for refugees.

**Your group is encouraged to get creative, but here are some ideas to get you started:**

- Hosting a local film screening followed by a conversation about refugees;
- Inviting a speaker with expertise on refugees. Email [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) for speaker suggestions;
- Table in a well-traveled area of town, talking to people about refugees and gathering signatures of those who are interested in supporting refugee rights;
- Working with a local newspaper to write a positive article about refugees.

Reach out to [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) for more ideas!

**Now that you have gone through these steps...**

Did your group decide to pursue a Refugees Welcome resolution?

- If yes, use Appendix A to draft your resolution, and then move on to Step 4.
- If your group decides that your city is not yet ready to pursue a Refugees Welcome resolution, there are still ways to take action! Reach out to [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) for possible next steps.



Pictured above: Refugees Welcome demonstration organized by AIUSA members in Vermont.

No matter what you decide, you have already done amazing work for refugee rights.

Pictured below: Seven-year-old Aya kisses her brother Adam. Aya and her family escaped Syria after their house was bombed. Activists in Canada worked for nearly a year to be able to welcome the family to safety and their new home in Toronto.



# STEP 4: DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

Organizing is the process by which you build power as a group, and then use that power to create change: in this case, achieving your goal of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution<sup>1</sup>.

Use this chart to create a smart strategy for your group, addressing the questions that you need to answer in order to reach your goal. You may want to start in the left column and move right. This chart is explained in greater depth on the next page, and you will find a blank copy of the chart in Appendix C.

GOALS	CURRENT RESOURCES	POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS/ALLIES	DECISION-MAKER	TACTICS
<p><b>What is your goal?</b> For example: “Pass a resolution through city council”</p> <p>If you have a concrete timeline for your goal, include it here. For example: “We’ll pass the resolution by May 15”</p>	<p><b>What resources do you have within your group now?</b> For example: a draft of the resolution (Appendix A), 8 members, previously had letter placed in local paper, access to tabling space, friends with a city council member</p> <p><b>What resources do you need in order for your campaign to be successful?</b></p> <p><b>How might your group benefit from the campaign?</b> Increase members, visibility, etc.</p> <p><b>What problems might arise within our group?</b></p>	<p><b>Who cares about the issue and might join or support us?</b> Other groups in the community?</p> <p><b>How will you reach out to potential supporters?</b></p> <p><b>Who might oppose us and why? How might they oppose you?</b></p>	<p><b>Who has the power to give you what you want?</b> This will be your city council body, but focus on an individual council member who you think would be important to win over in order to pass the resolution. How could you influence them?</p> <p><b>Secondary targets (if necessary):</b> If you can’t influence the target, who can? And how could you influence them to speak to your target?</p>	<p><b>What things will you do to influence the decision-maker so they will say yes to your goal?</b></p> <p><b>Tactics must be:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant to the goal</li> <li>• Flexible and creative</li> <li>• Directed at the target</li> <li>• Possible within your groups resources</li> <li>• Able to influence your target</li> </ul> <p>Check out Appendix D for a list of possible tactics, or get creative!</p>

Adapted from the Midwest Academy

<sup>1</sup> While passing your Refugees Welcome resolution is your ultimate goal, that process will require the achievement of smaller, different objectives along the way. Educating your community, for example, will likely be a byproduct of your work to pass the resolution. But for the purposes of creating your strategy, you should list only your ultimate goal--passing the resolution--in that first column.



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### COLUMN ONE: STATE YOUR GOAL

- What is your goal? For example, “Pass a resolution through the city council”
  - Establish timeline
- 

### COLUMN TWO: UNDERSTAND YOUR GROUP

Your group understands the issue and the process of passing it through the council. What else do you need to consider?

- Do you have the energy and interest needed to begin the process?
- What resources do your group have access to? Remember that resources don’t have to only be physical materials, they can also be the connections, relationships and skills your group members have.
- What does your group need?
- How might the process of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution help your group?
- What problems within the group might get in the way? (For example, group members not committed, conflicting priorities, etc.)

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### COLUMN THREE: KNOW YOUR ALLIES AND OPPONENTS

Who will help? Who could harm? You might consider:

- Who else cares about this issue?
- Does your group have an ally on the council itself?
- What other groups in your community might care about the issue?
- How might you find other allies?
- Remember that your group members might belong to other organizations or religious groups and can reach potential allies that way.

When brainstorming possible opponents, consider:

- Who might oppose this effort?
  - Why might they be opposed?
  - What are their resources?
  - What might they try to do?
- 

### COLUMN FOUR: IDENTIFY THE TARGET

- Who are the voting members of the city council you will need to convince to pass the resolution? Select one of these individuals: perhaps the person you will convince to introduce the resolution.

- 
- If you decide you need to influence more council members, try to create a separate strategy chart for each.
  - What do you know about this target? What motivates them, what do they care about, and how could you use this information to secure their support?
  - Are there other people whose support you might need to succeed?
- 

### COLUMN FIVE: TACTICS

What actions could you take in order to either build support or get your target to give you what you want? Remember, tactics must be:

- Relevant to the goal
- Flexible and creative
- Directed at the target
- Possible within your group’s resources
- Able to influence your target

Check out Appendix D for a list of possible tactics, but feel free to get creative!

For any support with tactics or generating ideas, contact

[fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org).







# STEP 5: PASS YOUR RESOLUTION

Now that your group has learned about the resolutions process within your city council and prepared your strategy chart, you're ready to get to work!

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## 1. REACH OUT TO THE ALLIES YOU IDENTIFIED IN STEP 4. CONSIDER:

- Reaching out individually to those likely to support your goal and ask if they would be willing to join you;
- When asking for their support, consider what resources or relationships they or their group have that could help you publicize the resolution or gain more supporters;
- You might also consider how enthusiastic they seem. If they agree to support you but don't seem too excited, you might want to start by asking them to do something small, like post on social media or sign onto a joint letter announcing your intent to pass the resolution;

## 2. REACH OUT TO A CITY COUNCIL MEMBER WHO MIGHT BE LIKELY TO SPONSOR THE RESOLUTION.

### a. How do you select a sponsor for your resolution? You might already be familiar with your council and have a likely sponsor in mind. If not, here are some other ideas:

- Look at the social media pages of your city council members to see where they stand on the issues
- Research the councilors and see if they've made statements about refugees or human rights in the past
- Explore prior voting records to see who has the strongest stance on refugees or human rights

### b. Once you have chosen who to approach:

- Decide what "ask" you want to make of them: are they a strong ally who might be willing to introduce the resolution within the council? Or would they be more likely to simply declare or offer their support for the resolution once it has been introduced?
- Approach them and be ready to make your case. Why is this resolution important? Why should they support it?
- Prepare for your meeting. Consider possible questions that they might ask before deciding whether or not to support the resolution, and prepare answers.
- Ask whether they know of other council members who would also be likely to support it, and approach them too, to build as much support as possible. There is a guide to writing a letter to these councilors in the appendix.
- If there isn't a specific city council member who you think would be an ally, choose someone who might be willing and use the strategy chart to create a plan to secure their support. Using the chart helps you to consider what you need to do in order to convince that person to support your resolution.



# STEP 5: PASS YOUR RESOLUTION (CONT'D)

## 3. MAKE YOUR CASE TO THE COMMUNITY: SPREAD AWARENESS AND BUILD SUPPORT. YOU CAN CATER THIS TO THE NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY AND THE RESOURCES OF YOUR GROUP. BE CREATIVE! HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Make use of existing events--is there a community event coming up at which you can table, talk to people and collect signatures? Remember that elected officials respond best to perceived risks or benefits, so if you want to use a petition to influence a city council member, consider getting signatures of support from people who vote within that council member's district. That way, when the council member looks at the list and sees the addresses next to signatures, they know that these are people who might be able to vote for them (or not) based on their support of this issue.
- Refer to your strategy chart and build grassroots support for your resolution! You might engage local faith groups, social justice organizations, or high school or college Amnesty groups within your city.
- Submit a letter to the editor of your local or state newspaper. You might write the letter yourself, or ask a prominent community member if the letter could come from them if you think that this might convince more people to support your work.
- Host a community conversation, a vigil, or a teach-in.

And more! Check out Appendix D for more ideas, and contact [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) for materials or support on any of these ideas.

## 4. ATTEND ANY PUBLIC CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS ABOUT THE RESOLUTION

- Attend in large groups in order to demonstrate that the resolution has broad support.
- Have spokespersons from your group ready to speak on behalf of the resolution. If you have developed strong allies from local partners, ask representatives of those groups to also speak on behalf of the resolution.
- Take pictures! Tweet @amnestyusa using #iWelcome, and be sure to send pictures and updates



Pictured above: AIUSA members in Vermont demonstrate prior to the passage of their city resolution.



# STEP 6: CELEBRATE

## WAYS TO SPREAD THE WORD:

- Share your pictures! Use the hashtag #iWelcome and tag @amnestyusa on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.
- Write a blog post about your experience and send to [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) so we can feature it on AIUSA's site!
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
- Send 'thank you' notes to anyone who supported the resolution: city council members, leaders of other groups, etc.
- Leverage the passage of your resolution by meeting with local, state or other elected officials representing your community. Your Members of Congress care about what's happening in your city!
- Whatever you do, let [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) know so Amnesty can publicize.

If your resolution didn't pass, remember that the process itself is just as important as the end result.

You have educated your community about the refugee crisis, you have brought new people into the human rights movement, and maybe you have even grown your group.

Maybe you will want to try again next session, or after the next round of city council elections. Regardless, send us an email at [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org). We would love to thank you for your dedicated activism, and help you come up with a new plan to support refugees in your community.

If the resolution passes, celebrate your work and use the opportunity to spread the message that refugees are welcome in your community.



Pictured above: Resolution passed!



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## DRAFT CITY RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

WHEREAS there are more refugees in the world today than at any time since World War II, and more than half of the world's refugees are children:

WHEREAS refugees are fleeing armed conflict and human rights abuses in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central America, and other regions:

WHEREAS more than half of the world's refugees are hosted by only ten countries, and many of these countries do not have adequate resources to keep refugees fed, housed, or safe, leaving some refugees to survive on less than fifty cents a day:

WHEREAS ninety-nine percent of Syrian refugees are hosted by only five countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, and one in four people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee:

WHEREAS there is a continued lack of funding for humanitarian aid for host countries, and food rations and medical aid have been repeatedly cut for refugees:

WHEREAS refugees who need to be resettled include torture survivors, people with severe medical conditions, LGBTI individuals, children alone, and women and children at risk – all of whom who cannot return home and cannot stay in their host country due to their extreme vulnerability:

WHEREAS the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has determined that 1.2 million refugees are in need of immediate resettlement, but less than 150,000 resettlement places are available worldwide:

WHEREAS refugees in need of resettlement represent only .02 percent of the world's population;

WHEREAS We applaud the historic, bi-partisan tradition in of the United States in welcoming refugees, in keeping with our national values and respect for human rights:

WHEREAS a refugee does not get to choose to be resettled in the United States or the country of his or her choice:

WHEREAS, even if a refugee is a candidate for resettlement in the United States, he or she must still be found admissible under U.S. immigration law:

WHEREAS every single refugee must undergo a Security vetting process that is lengthy, extremely detailed, and very safe, taking 18 to 24 months and involving multiple law enforcement and intelligence agencies:

WHEREAS, refugees are the most vetted individuals to enter the United States and are not permitted to travel to the U.S. until all security screenings have been successfully completed:

WHEREAS [RESETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY, the organizations responsible for resettling refugees in this community, as well as numerous other community organizations and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in [CITY];

WHEREAS (RESETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS] have resettled more than [NUMBER] refugees in [CITY] since [YEAR] from more than [NUMBER] countries including [LIST COUNTRIES]:

RESOLVED, [NAME] City Council declares its support for the resettlement of refugees no matter their religion, race, nationality, or country of origin, in [CITY] and calls upon other [STATE] communities to join them in Supporting a stronger national effort to resettle the most vulnerable refugees.

Note: Contact [RMace@aiusa.org](mailto:RMace@aiusa.org) for information regarding the resettlement organizations that work within your community.



**“Sensing” is an optional but helpful campaign development tool with which you can build a deeper understanding of and empathy with the specific audiences you’ll need to interact with in order to achieve your goal.**

During the sensing phase you can learn directly from people in order to learn how to motivate and engage those audiences to be a part of the solution. Interviews are one element of the sensing tool that you can use in your community:

- 1. Identify where to find your target group (shopping centers, grocery stores, community events, etc)**
- 2. Create a prepared set of questions. Questions regarding the refugee crisis may include:**
  - a. Do you know what a refugee is?
  - b. When you think of the word “refugee”, what comes to your mind?
  - c. What do you hear about refugees in the news? (Or online, or in conversations)
  - d. Do you know whether there are any refugees in our city?
  - e. Do you think that the U.S. should do more to help refugees?
- 3. Spend about 5-10 minutes informally asking your questions.**
  - a. Try to keep interviews to one or two group members per interviewee.
  - b. Your goal here is not to convince the person you’re interviewing of anything--you’re merely seeking their existing thoughts and feelings so you know how to “meet them where they’re at” with your campaigning.
- 4. Try to write down exactly what the person says, not what you think they may mean. You may also want to write down the body language, expressions, and tones that you observe.**
- 5. Debrief with each other after each interview.**

The purpose of these conversations is not to convince the people with whom you are speaking: instead, you are simply trying to understand what they think and feel about the issue. However, you are welcome to answer questions and engage in natural conversation.

You can use what you learn during this exercise to inform how you approach the community with your campaign to pass the resolution. Do people express misconceptions about refugees that your group needs to counter? Are people unfamiliar with the concept of refugees in general?

GOALS	CURRENT RESOURCES	POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS/ALLIES	DECISION-MAKER	TACTICS

**WHAT IS A TACTIC?**

“Tactics” are the things you do to either generate support or to get your message in front of your decision maker in order to convince them to grant your primary objective. Categories of tactics include grassroots activism, coalition building, lobbying, media and social media.

**SAMPLE TACTICS**

- Public speeches
- Public letters or declarations of support
- Direct meetings with decision-makers
- Letters or emails to decision-makers
- Social media campaign (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and/or Snapchat)
- Photo actions
- Movie showing
- Art exhibits
- Chalk drawings
- Vigil
- Performance of music or theater
- A community conversation or ‘teach-in’
- Featuring a guest speaker with expertise on refugees
- Tabling for educational purposes and collecting signatures of support for the resolution (see the caveat regarding using petitions on Page 15)
- Work with your local newspaper to write a positive article about refugees, perhaps highlighting the contributions of people who have been resettled as refugees in your community
- Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in support of refugees
- Put up visible bulletin boards or posters in frequently visited public areas
- And more! The possibilities are endless, so feel free to get creative

**If you have questions about planning or executing any of these tactics, or to receive materials, email [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org).**

**SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE**

- Your voice is powerful. Our collective voices welcoming refugees must be heard. Learn more from @amnestyusa on how to pass an #IWelcome resolution in your community. [LINK]
- An #IWelcome resolution is a declaration of support for resettling refugees passed through your city council. It shows that no matter your color or creed, you are welcomed in our community. Join me & @amnestyusa to say #IWelcome: [LINK]
- Join us in our radical act of welcome. All you have to say is “#IWelcome refugees.” Join me & @amnestyusa to say #IWelcome: [LINK]
- Throughout the United States, refugees face discrimination, violence and hate. #IWelcome resolutions can help counter this rhetoric and demonstrate support for refugees. Learn more from @amnestyusa: [LINK]

## SAMPLE CHECKLIST

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide who in the group will work on this campaign</li> <li>Contact <a href="mailto:RMace@aiusa.org">RMace@aiusa.org</a> to connect with your local resettlement agency</li> <li>Educate your group on the issue</li> <li>Learn how to counter myths/ stereotypes about refugees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine how your city council operates</li> <li>Learn whether you can submit a resolution</li> <li>If a resolution is an option, continue to step 3</li> <li>If a resolution is not an option, contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an understanding of your local climate around refugees</li> <li>Begin to build support and awareness in your community</li> <li>Will you pursue a resolution? If yes, write the resolution, and move to step 4</li> <li>If no, email <a href="mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org">fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the research necessary to fill out your strategy chart</li> <li>Complete your strategy chart</li> <li>Create a timeline for action. What do you want to have accomplished by when?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact <a href="mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org">fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org</a> to let us know that you're beginning</li> <li>Reach out to allies</li> <li>Reach out to the identified "decision-maker"</li> <li>Make your case to the community</li> <li>Attend public meetings about the resolution in large</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread the word!</li> <li>Thank all the people involved</li> <li>Let <a href="mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org">fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org</a> know so Amnesty can publicize your victory!</li> </ul>



## FACT CHECK

Educating your community—family, neighbors, and politicians—about the crisis is critical.

**We are experiencing the worst refugee crisis since WWII, with over 21 million refugees across the globe.** Unprecedented numbers have fled from their homes because of war, conflict, and persecution. The vast majority of refugees are currently hosted in developing countries.

Millions of people are fleeing their homes because of war, armed conflict, violence, and persecution that forces them to leave. **They cannot safely return** to their homes, and they are incredibly vulnerable on their journey to refuge.

More than half of the world's refugees are currently living in only 10 countries, and many of these countries **do not have adequate resources** to keep refugees fed, housed, or safe. Some refugees are surviving on less than 50 cents a day.

The United Nations High Commissioner gives priority for resettlement to the most vulnerable refugees, including torture survivors, orphaned children, LGBTI individuals, and women and children at-risk. Available to less than 1% of the world's refugees, **resettlement is the last resort for refugees** who cannot return to their homes and cannot safely rebuild their lives in a country nearby.

Rhetoric that is based on fear rather than fact makes us less safe. Fear-mongering and hateful rhetoric against refugees, particularly Islamophobic rhetoric, inflames hate and violence at home and abroad.

**U.S. leadership matters.** In 2016, anchored by U.S. commitments, wealthy nations agreed to double global resettlement slots. Many of these countries were participating in resettlement for the first time. Instead, with the recent U.S. retreat, there has been a nearly 60% decline in refugee resettlement slots.

The refugee resettlement process in the U.S. is lengthy, extremely thorough, and very safe. **Refugees are the most vetted individuals to enter the U.S.** They undergo 18-24 months of vetting by multiple federal agencies.

**Refugees cannot choose where they are resettled.** The process of resettlement is determined by UNHCR and potential resettlement countries, and the U.S. government ultimately chooses refugees to be resettled in the U.S.

## COUNTER-POINTS

**“Amnesty International is political.”**

- Amnesty International is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that does not get involved in political systems, forms of government, or advocate on behalf of any political parties.
- There is nothing political about refugee rights. However, refugees and the refugee crisis has become politicized.

**“We can’t make a difference with city resolutions.”**

- You make a difference just by working on your resolution. It incorporates multiple ways of learning, gets people working together and engages people in human rights issues for what may be the first time.
- It shows elected officials that their constituents (you!) are paying attention to this issue, especially as many local and state seats are up for reelection in November 2018.



Below is a suggested format and talking points for a letter to your local city council member asking for their support for your Refugees Welcome resolution. Please use this as a guide.

The city councilor is more likely to read a short, concise note. You know what will work best in your community, so make use of the draft with this in mind.

Letters should be concise and clear, respectful, authentic and relevant to your community.

**Outline:**

Dear Councilor [NAME],

Paragraph 1: Explain who you are, why you are writing, and briefly introduce the “ask”.

Paragraph 2: Why do you care about this issue? Why is it important?

Paragraph 3: Back up your arguments with information: be concise and try to use information relevant to your town. You may consider citing the number of refugees that have been resettled in your city or state. Contact [RMace@aiusa.org](mailto:RMace@aiusa.org) to receive this information.

Paragraph 4: Re-state your “ask” and thank them for their time.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

**Some possible talking points:**

- This resolution is non-binding. It is a symbolic declaration. It cannot initiate bringing refugees into your community: the State Department does that.
- There are currently 22.5 million refugees worldwide, and half of these are children. Refugees leave their homes because they have no other choice. They have done nothing wrong, and should be treated with compassion.
- U.S. leadership is needed in order to alleviate the suffering of families fleeing war, persecution and violence.
- Resettling refugees offers crucial support to the most vulnerable refugees for whom it is unsafe to return home, including children traveling alone, LGBTI individuals, survivors of torture, people with medical conditions, and other women and children at risk.
- Security screening is a mandatory, lengthy and vigorous process. It takes 18 to 24 months and involves the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the State Department, the FBI and more.
- Suspending or cutting the refugee program does not make the U.S. safer.
- State and federal officials will listen when local communities speak up for refugee rights. This resolution is one way to go ‘on the record’ in support of refugees.

## **WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?**

Letters to the editor are short--usually 250 words or less--and intended to either respond to a published piece or raise an issue of concern.

Scroll to the bottom of this webpage for an example entitled "[Human rights trampled](#)".

## **HOW SHOULD I WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?**

Letters to the editor should be timely: relevant to current events or discourse. They should use simple and clear language, and they should provide a call to action.

When you submit your letter to the email address identified by your local newspaper, you will generally be asked for your full name, home address and phone number to verify your identity and ensure that the letter has been sent by a member of the community.

Please contact [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) if you have questions or are interested in working on a letter to the editor of a local or state publication. Staff would be glad to work with you on your letter.

## **TALKING POINTS TO USE IN YOUR LETTER:**

- We want to send a strong message that our community believes refugees should be treated with compassion, not like criminals.
- Refugees leave their homes because they have no other choice. They want the same safety that any of us would want if we were in their shoes. They just want to be part of a safe community again.
- Everyone has to stand against discrimination. With Refugees Welcome resolutions, all of us can become part of the solution by taking actions that reinforce the America we believe in: one that embraces our neighbors and creates a home for families seeking safety.
- That is why we want to pass a Refugees Welcome resolution here in our community. Resolutions are the voices of our elected representatives--and those voices need to be heard now more than ever.
- Once we pass the resolution here, we will ask our members of Congress to then support policies that reflect the will of their constituents--us.

Consider ending your letter with a call to action: perhaps you are trying to secure the support of a specific city councilor and decide that it would be effective to ask for their support by name.

Be sure to email [fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org](mailto:fieldorganizingteam@aiusa.org) when your letter is published!