

Some Facts on Political Asylum

- Any foreigner who enters the territory of the United States is eligible to apply for political asylum. There is no limit on the number of people who can be granted political asylum. Between April 1991 and September 1999, 76,552 cases were granted and 249,413 cases were denied or referred after an interview (U.S. Committee for Refugees).
- In fiscal year 1999, INS asylum officers received 41,377 applications for asylum. Of the 41,377 cases, 13,220 were granted political asylum, and 21,403 cases were denied or referred (U.S. Committee for Refugees).
- As of September 30, 1999, 341,622 asylum cases were pending. Of these, however, more than 200,000 are expected to be resolved by special 1997 legislation that grants permanent resident status to Central American asylum-seekers (U.S. Department of Justice, INS, tabulated by the U.S. Committee for Refugees).
- The United States currently accepts fewer than 2% of the world's refugees each year (U.S. Committee for Refugees).
- Annually, the American president, in consultation with Congress, determines how many refugees will be accepted in the United States' overseas resettlement program. In fiscal year 1997, for example, 78,000 refugee spaces were available and 70,085 refugees were admitted. For fiscal year 2000, 90,000 refugee spaces are available. The number of "refugee slots" are divided among different regions of the world (*National Immigration Forum and Refugee Reports, December 1999*).
- In 1990, the INS created a special Asylum Corps of officers whose sole function is to adjudicate asylum applications. Corps members are trained in international human rights law, conditions in countries of origin, and other relevant national and immigration refugee law (U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, September 1999).