



# Factsheet

## THE AUSTRALIA UNITED STATES REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT DEAL

Last updated: August 2021

*As of 30 June 2021, 968 refugees had been resettled in the United States from Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG). Their resettlement is the result of a 2016 bilateral agreement between Australia and the United States offering a durable solution for refugees who were sent offshore and subject to a ban on settlement in Australia.*

### What is the Australia United States refugee resettlement deal?

In September 2016, the United States agreed to consider resettling refugees held in Nauru and on Manus Island in PNG, as well as those who had been transferred back to Australia for medical reasons. The agreement was made by then Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and US President Barack Obama. While US President Donald Trump [publicly criticised](#) the deal after taking office, the US has continued to honour it under the Trump and Biden administrations.

### Is the US a signatory to the Refugee Convention?

The US is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, but did accede to the 1967 Protocol to the Convention, which requires it to apply the provisions of the Refugee Convention. The US is a longstanding resettlement country. While the refugee intake was significantly [reduced](#) under the Trump administration, it has been [raised again](#) by [not require parliamentary approval](#)

val. Former US Deputy Secretary of State Heather Higginbottom has [stated](#) that the US made the agreement to [resettle](#) refugees. While the terms of the agreement have never been made public, it appears that the US undertook to consider resettling up to 1,250 refugees. A leaked [transcript](#) of a telephone call between Prime Minister Turnbull and President Trump in January 2017 suggested that the US had agreed to consider resettlement, but was ultimately *not obliged* to do so. In return, Australia agreed to resettle refugees from Costa Rica, although there was [some debate](#) at the time about whether these two



