

Issue Overview: Political asylum

By Bloomberg, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.01.17

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People trying to reach Europe to seek political asylum rest near the Turkish city of Edirne, which borders European Union members Greece and Bulgaria, September 15, 2015. They planned a sit-in protest near the border with Greece, hoping authorities would allow them to cross into Europe overland instead of them having to risk their lives by sea trying to reach Greek islands. AP Photo/Emrah Gurel

Some people are afraid in their own countries. They worry their governments will harm them. This might happen because what they believe is different. So they ask another country to let them live there. This is called asylum.

Most countries offer asylum. But not everybody agrees with it.

The United Nations (U.N.) is made up of different countries. They work together for cooperation around the world. The U.N. says asylum is a human right. This also includes fair treatment and freedom.

The number of people seeking asylum is now the highest ever. There is unrest in many parts of the world. People want to leave these countries for safer ones.

There is disagreement over who should be given asylum.

The Situation

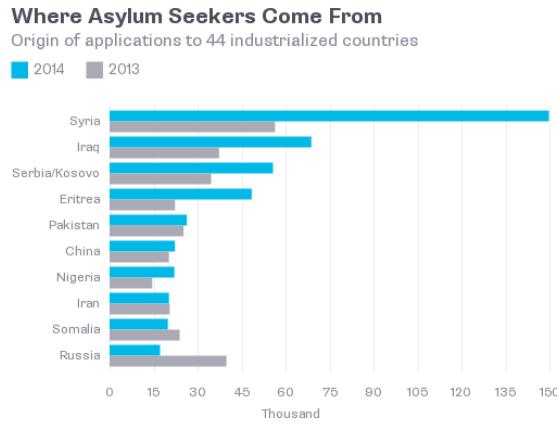
U.S. President Donald Trump made a new rule his first week in office. He decided not to allow people from Syria into the United States. There has been a war in Syria for years. It is not safe to live there. Many Syrians want asylum.

Trump also is not allowing others to enter the United States for 90 days. Trump will not allow people from seven countries. These countries are mostly Muslim. They believe in the religion of Islam.

Terrorist attacks have caused fear. Many think that terrorists are among the people who want asylum. Most people seeking asylum are from Syria.

One example of an American seeking asylum is Edward Snowden. He released U.S. government secrets that he saw at his job. Snowden left the U.S. He was given asylum by Russia. This means Russia will allow him to stay there. He would be punished in the United States. What he did was against the law.

The



Background

The U.N. defines refugees as people who can prove they will be harmed at home. This may be because of their race, religion or what they believe. They might also be running away from a war.

Hundreds of thousands of people receive asylum every year. But almost as many people are turned down.

The Argument

Those against asylum say the rules are too soft. They say it could overthrow the regular rules that let immigrants come to the United States. These laws must be followed by others who want to move to America.

Trump argues that the United States has not looked into the backgrounds of refugees enough. He thinks the United States needs to look more closely at them to keep out terrorists.

DEFINITIONS

asylum

Protection given by a government to someone who has left another country to escape being harmed

human rights

Basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to, no matter their nationality, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, or political views

refugees

People fleeing wars, conflict, or persecution in their countries

People who support asylum say refugees are often trying to escape terrorism. They also say human beings should protect other human beings.

Where They Want to Go

Asylum applications submitted

2014 2013

