

**Fact Sheet**

Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Washington, DC  
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## Refugee Admissions Program for Latin America and the Caribbean

**Background**

Since 1975, over 79,000 refugees from Latin American and Caribbean countries have been offered resettlement in the United States. Over 50,000 have come from Cuba, with other significant representation from Haiti, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

**Cuban Program**

At present, the majority of all refugee processing in the region is based in Cuba. As of September 9, 1994, all refugee admissions of Cubans are considered a part of the U.S.-Cuba Bilateral Migration Agreement. The Agreement provides for the approval of at least 20,000 Cubans for legal admission to the United States annually, in a combination of immigrants, parolees, and refugees. The majority of Cubans admitted as refugees have been political prisoners or forced labor conscripts who have served sentences in the 1960s and 1970s. The program was expanded in 1991 to include human rights activists, displaced professionals, and others. In addition to individuals processed in-country, Cubans outside Cuba may be considered for resettlement under the Priority 1 (P-1) category if referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or a U.S. Embassy.

Cubans eligible to apply for admission to the United States through the in-country refugee program under the Priority 2 (P-2) category include:

- Former political prisoners
- Members of persecuted religious minorities
- Human rights activists
- Forced labor conscripts during the period 1965-1968
- Persons deprived of their professional credentials or subjected to other disproportionately harsh or discriminatory treatment resulting from their perceived or actual political or religious beliefs
- Others who appear to have a credible claim that they will face persecution as defined in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol

**Colombian Program**

In FY 2002, PRM began the development of small pilot programs to resettle particularly vulnerable Colombian refugees in Ecuador and Costa Rica. In FY 2003, 149 Colombian refugees were admitted to the United States for resettlement. The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration anticipates several hundred additional resettlement referrals from UNHCR in 2004.

**FY 2004 Admissions Program**

Because of continued disruptions in processing and new security requirements imposed on the U.S. refugee admissions program in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, we were only able to admit 452 refugees, primarily Cubans, from the region in FY 2003. The FY 2004 ceiling for refugee admissions from Latin America and the Caribbean is 3,500. As we are continuing to streamline security processing, we are optimistic that that we will be able to increase refugee admissions from the region.

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