



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 18, 2021

Biden to Increase Refugee Cap After Pressure From Far-left Democrats

Once again, the Biden administration has caved in to bullying from the radical left wing of the Democrat Party, increasing the cap on refugee resettlement after initially keeping it roughly where it was under the Trump administration.

On April 16, President Joe Biden signed a [memorandum](#) on the Emergency Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2021. The Determination will speed up refugee admissions to the United States, and it precisely follows former President Trump's plan to set the ceiling at 15,000 refugees in 2021, slashing 18,000 resettlement spots set for FY 2020.



AP Images

Biden's Determination acknowledges that the admission of up to 15,000 refugees "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest." At the same time, it is adjusting the allocation limits set by President Trump, which officials said have been the driving factor in reducing refugee admissions this year. The new allocations provide more slots for refugees from Africa, the Middle East and Central America, and lift Trump's restrictions on resettlements from Somalia, Syria, and Yemen.

The Determination seems like a major departure from the promises Joe Biden made during his presidential campaign. "President Trump's decision to close America's doors to refugees fleeing persecution is cruel and shortsighted," then-candidate Biden [said](#) in November 2019. "As president, I will restore America's historic commitment to welcoming those whose lives are threatened by conflict and crisis." In February 2021, his administration [vowed](#) to raise the ceiling more than 400 percent on Trump's refugee cap, upping it from 15,000 to 62,500 for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021. For the next fiscal year, the ceiling is to be [raised](#) even higher — to 125,000. Biden also [said](#) he directed the State Department to consult with Congress "about making a down payment on that commitment as soon as possible."

"This phased approach considers the work needed to rebuild our resettlement program and the global challenges for refugee resettlement," a Biden official [told](#) Axios, "including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic." But it appears COVID-19 is not the primary reason for Biden's pivot. Instead, a senior administration official said that the increase in unaccompanied children at the U.S.-Mexico border had put a strain on the refugee-resettlement branch of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), [according](#) to the *New York Times*.

Though the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has helped the administration with placing some unaccompanied children, that is not the system that typically processes those migrant minors. Prior to



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the administration's Friday announcement, sources from inside the administration said Biden had pushed back on fulfilling his promise on refugee programs because he is concerned about the negative political optics at the U.S.-Mexico border, CNN [reported](#) Thursday. A [Quinnipiac poll](#) released earlier this week showed that although Biden has an overall approval rating of 48 percent, only 29 percent of Americans approve of his border policies. Only 27 percent of Hispanic Americans and 58 percent of Democrats favor it.

Whatever the reason behind Biden's decision on keeping refugee admissions low, refugee advocates, faith-based organizations and resettlement agencies, some of whom have contracts with the government to process and receive refugees, sharply criticized it for what they said was tortured logic. Meredith Owen, the director of policy and advocacy at Church World Service, one of nine national refugee resettlement agencies, [said](#) there is "no moral reason" to continue enforcing Trump's cap. Sunil Varghese, policy director at the International Refugee Assistance Project, [told CBS News](#): "There's no real excuse to propose an increase from 15,000 to 62,500, consult with Congress and then go back."

Biden's congressional allies, who had been pressuring him for weeks to sign the refugee directive, were [outraged](#). Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), House Judiciary Chairman Jerry Nadler (D-N.Y.), and Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), who chairs the House Immigration and Citizenship Subcommittee, slammed the Biden administration's refugee-admissions decision as "unacceptable."

There had been especially swift backlash from the radical left wing of the House. Representatives Ilhan [Omar](#) (D-Minn.), Pramila [Jayapal](#) (D-Wash.), and Alexandria [Ocasio-Cortez](#) (D-N.Y.) took to Twitter to blast Biden's decision using words "racist," "xenophobic," "disgraceful," "broken promise," and "unacceptable."

Following the backlash from its comrades, the Biden administration was fast to backtrack the decision it announced just hours earlier. "We expect the president to set a final, increased refugee cap for the remainder of this fiscal year by May 15," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki [said](#) in a statement, calling today's directive a "subject of some confusion." Psaki did not say what the new cap would be. However, she said it likely won't be as high as Biden initially hoped.

Biden himself [complained](#) that his job is tough: "The problem was that the refugee part was working on the crisis that ended up on the border with young people.... We couldn't do two things at once."

The increase of the refugee cap amid the economic devastation caused by COVID-related economic restrictions, and the immigration crisis on the country's southern border seems like another victory of the radical left that bullied the Biden administration into submission.



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