

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM NEWS

A Day in The Life of UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), its partners, and the Chadian Government are protecting and caring for 200,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur as part of one of the world's worst ongoing humanitarian situations. Hazel Reitz, Program Officer in Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, chronicled a typical day for UNHCR staff in Chad during her most recent visit there, in November 2004. The incidents described reveal the wide nature of issues that can arise in refugee situations

PROBLEMS WITH VISITORS: UNHCR staff and Chadian officials met with refugee leaders at Touloum Camp to calm tensions after the visit of a delegation from Sudan several days earlier. The delegation, although por-



A Sudanese child in Chad, against the backdrop of a stormy sky.

trayed as unofficial, included military and civilian Sudanese officials. Their mission was to bring medical supplies along with good wishes on the Eid al Fitr, an Islamic holiday. A small group of refugees agreed to meet with the delegation away from the camp after the delegation was refused entry by

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Volume 3, Issue 1
February 2005

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Responding to the Tsunami

The devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunamis that struck the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004, caused massive loss of life and destruction of property. For information on the U.S. government's response to the tragedy, including information on how to help, please visit www.state.gov or www.usaid.gov. Many of the Bureau's principal partners, including the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Organization for Migration, are involved in the relief effort.

Resettlement Success in Pennsylvania

On January 10, Assistant Secretary of State Arthur E. Dewey met with a delegation of civic leaders from Erie, Pennsylvania, to discuss the success of the refugee resettlement program in Erie. The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) also participated. The group noted the positive impact that refugees have had on Erie's population, economy, and urban renewal. The International Institute of Erie is the largest resettlement affiliate in Erie. Assistant Secretary Dewey thanked the International Institute and the larger Erie community for its exemplary commitment to refugees.

The Erie Times-News published an article, reprinted below with the paper's permission, about the visit and the city's resettlement program.

**Erie opens arms to refugees
January 12, 2005
By Kevin Flowers**

If the U.S. Department of State needs proof that Erie is a good fit for foreign refugees, James Barclay is more than willing to offer his life as evidence. Barclay, his wife and their two children fled civil war-ravaged Liberia in February, leaving behind an existence of abuse, frequent hunger and pervasive fear.

Mayor Rick Filippi and others want to see more families like Barclay's resettle here - and they took that message to Washington,

D.C., this week. Filippi and Michael Murnock, executive director of the International Institute of Erie, urged the State Department to strongly consider Erie as a priority location for refugee placement, mostly because Erie has a strong track record when it comes to refugee relocation.

Filippi and Murnock were among a group of local officials who met with Gene Dewey, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Other local people who attended Monday's meeting in Washington were U.S. Rep. Phil English of Erie, R-3rd Dist.; Jake Rouch, chief executive of the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership; and Ed Grode, a member of the International Institute's board of directors.

Dewey said he was impressed with Erie's relocation efforts, and said Erie and other cities nationwide will likely see more refugees in the future, now that new security measures are up and running. "We've been keeping track of the performance of Erie, and we'll spread the story of the good work Erie's doing whenever we get the chance," Dewey said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

Barclay's family now lives in a small duplex apartment in the 700 block of East Fourth Street. With the help of local officials, the family got the assistance it needed to start and sustain a new life in the United States. "It was difficult," said Barclay, 30, a former professional soccer player who can viv-



Assistant Secretary of State Arthur E. Dewey with visitors from Erie, Pennsylvania, in his office in Washington, DC.

idly recall being beaten by soldiers. "Sometimes there was no food for a week or two weeks. ... Sometimes we ate roots and flowers to survive." Benetta Blamo, Barclay's wife, said the first time she and her husband took a winter walk through their neighborhood in February, her husband "wanted to call 911" because the biting winds and frigid temperatures left his ears numb. The couple had never seen snow before. "But we like Erie," said Blamo, 29, who works as an in-home caregiver for the physically disabled. "It's cheap to live here, the people are nice and we get a lot of help. Erie has been a good place for us."

Much of the local placement work is handled by the International Institute, an 85-year-old agency that specializes in resettling refugees from unstable and war-torn countries.

But the number of refugees arriving in Erie has fallen sharply since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks because of security concerns, Filippi

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the refugee leaders. The group vented its anger upon the visiting Sudanese officials. A woman among the refugees reportedly told the Sudanese delegation, "You killed my husband, burned my house and drove me from my country and now you come to bring me medicines? We want nothing to do with you or them."

WOUNDED OFFICER: The government of Chad has provided 100 gendarmes (police officers) to maintain security at Touloum Camp. One of the gendarmes had been shot in the leg, apparently accidentally, when attempting to retrieve weapons that had been hidden outside the camp, allegedly by one of the refugees. UNHCR arranged immediate medical evacuation by plane to N'djamena. Chadian officials cautioned the refugees that the camp represents a safe haven for civilians. UNHCR is concerned about possible infiltration of refugee camps by rebels or criminals.



Schoolchildren in Bahai play soccer while international officials negotiate with their teachers in the school facilities in the background.

REGISTRATION: UNHCR was preparing for the re-registration of refugees at Am Nabak Camp. An accurate count and categorization of refugees is essential to determining the needs of the population. Refugee leaders argued for postponing the registration, saying that not everyone was in the camp. The refugees were also clear that they would not identify any Chadians who were in the camps. (When impover-

ished nations host refugee populations, local residents sometimes move into refugee camps in order to receive perceived benefits offered to the refugees. To address this issue in Chad, donors have begun to finance a food program for Chadians.) The registration was eventually postponed by a week after disturbances triggered by the arrival in the camp of an Islamic aid organization that some refugees thought was from Sudan.

"You killed my husband, burned my house and drove me from my country and now you come to bring me medicines?"

BEST INTENTIONS: While monitoring a food distribution in Oure Cassoni Camp, UNHCR heard that kerosene stoves were being distributed to vulnerable refugees. UNHCR went to investigate and found that the organization distributing the stoves had not trained the refugees in how to use the stoves, or alerted them to the possible dangers involved. One recipient, an elderly woman, revealed that she did not even know what the stove was, let alone how to use it. UNHCR stopped the distribution until proper instruction could be provided.

EDUCATION: At a camp school, instead of children attending class, UNHCR found a meeting in progress between the camp management NGO and the teaching staff of the school. The teachers were threatening to strike over salary issues. After discussions with the NGO and UNHCR, the teachers decided not to strike.

For the latest figures on United States Government assistance to refugees in Chad, visit www.state.gov/g/prm. For information on the situation in Sudan, including the North-South Peace Agreement, see www.state.gov/p/af.

Fiscal Year 2005 Admissions Statistics

Region	FY 2005 Regional Ceiling	December 2004 Arrivals	January 2005 Arrivals	Arrivals in FY 2005 Year to Date
Africa	20,000	1,368	984	5,655
East Asia	13,000	957	370	3,919
Europe & Central Asia	9,500	658	677	2,309
Latin America & Caribbean	5,000	354	497	1,558
Near East & South Asia	2,500	200	173	632
Unallocated	20,000			
TOTAL	70,000	3,537	2,701	14,073

President Bush has authorized the admission of up to 70,000 refugees for fiscal year 2005, 50,000 regionally allocated and an additional 20,000 unallocated.

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said. According to International Institute statistics, the agency saw 203 refugees - from countries like Liberia, the Sudan and Somalia, and areas of the former Yugoslavia - resettle in Erie during the past 12 months. Before the terrorist attacks, Erie typically received more than 400 refugees annually, Filippi said. "Our goal is to get back to those pre-9/11 numbers," Filippi said. "For us, (resettlement) really gives us a pool of immigrants that can help revitalize the city."

When refugees decide to make Erie their home, the city benefits in a number of ways, Filippi said. For example, the city gets a population boost while simultaneously becoming more ethnically diverse, he said. Many refugees also are willing to renovate blighted property in exchange for the chance to become a homeowner for the first time, Filippi said. "And these are people who are not going to become a drain on our economy," Filippi said. "By and large, they become self-sufficient within four to six months. Many of them are very driven to succeed because of what they've gone through."

Murnock said the institute helps resettled families like Barclay's in a number of ways. The International Institute and related agencies like the United Way help secure food, clothing, furniture and appli-

ances through donations; provide help with job placement and training; offer English courses; and help refugees enroll their children in schools.

"We also help prepare people for the U.S. citizenship tests and interviews," Murnock said. "We wanted the State Department to know Erie has been doing this work for 85 years, and that our community is quite welcoming and quite accommodating. "And these attributes are matched by the people we help, who are hard-working folks that are very appreciative of our country," Murnock said.

The State Department identified a number of cities besides Erie where refugee relocation has worked well. They include Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Providence, R.I. Dewey said about 53,000 refugees relocated to the United States in 2004. In 2003, less than 28,000 were allowed to relocate. "It's been costly and time-consuming," Dewey said of new security measures. "But we're building up the numbers and opening the borders back up now."

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