



REFUGEES WELCOME: HIGH SCHOOL RESOLUTIONS TOOLKIT

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#IWELCOME

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GET THE FACTS

22,500,000

Refugees around the world

1/2

More than half of all refugees are children

50%

Percentage of refugee children who attend primary school, compared to the 91% average worldwide



We are living in the worst global refugee crisis since World War II. But you are human rights defenders. You can take action by declaring your school a “Refugees Welcome” zone.

Imagine how you’d feel if you lost your home, your parents, and your friends. What if you needed the help of total strangers? That is the situation of millions of people around the world.

They are refugees -- people fleeing war, violence and persecution. Right now, there are 22.5 million refugees around the world. More than half are children, and they all need safety and a home.

Most refugees are living in neighboring countries, waiting to return to their homes or trying to rebuild their lives in a new country. A tiny percent--1.2 million--are extremely vulnerable and need to resettle abroad. These include torture survivors, people with severe medical conditions, at-risk women and children and LGBTI individuals.

The U.S. has historically been the largest resettler of refugees. But instead of continuing to lead during this critical global crisis, the U.S. has stepped back. The current administration has slashed the number of refugees who can enter the U.S. through a series of discriminatory executive orders.

The President has limited refugee admissions for 2018 to 45,000--an all-time low. The average U.S. limit since 1980 has been 95,000 refugees, but during this year of critical need, the U.S. is on track to resettle a mere 21,000.

Pictured below: Wissam Hajj Mouhamed Ali holds her daughter Julia while her twins look on. Julia was born in Canada after the family fled the war in Syria. They found refuge in Canada after living in a tent in a refugee camp in Jordan for three years.





This administration's discriminatory bans and policies have wreaked havoc on ordinary people, tearing families apart and stranding people fleeing violence and persecution.

For the most vulnerable refugees, these bans amount to a death sentence.

But you can help.

Our collective voices welcoming refugees must be heard. Elected officials need to know that they do not speak in our names when they slash refugee admissions and ban refugees from entire countries, separating families and leaving people in danger.

We are creating an expanding blanket of support by passing local and school resolutions across the U.S. Elected officials cannot pretend that the U.S. does not want to welcome refugees when local and school officials across the country are put on the record saying "yes" to refugees.

Passing a Refugees Welcome resolution in your high school is a powerful way to get loud and insist that your government supports refugees. Thank you for being part of the solution.

Naureen Shah
Senior Director of Campaigns
Amnesty International USA

What is a resolution?

A resolution is a motion adopted by an official body such as a student council, town council or state legislature. It is a formal expression of an opinion.

What is a Refugees Welcome resolution?

A Refugees Welcome resolution is a declaration of support for refugees passed through your student council. They are non-binding statements, not laws that decide whether a community will accept refugees. Rather, they tell community leaders that students in your school are supportive of refugees. There is a draft resolution in Appendix A.

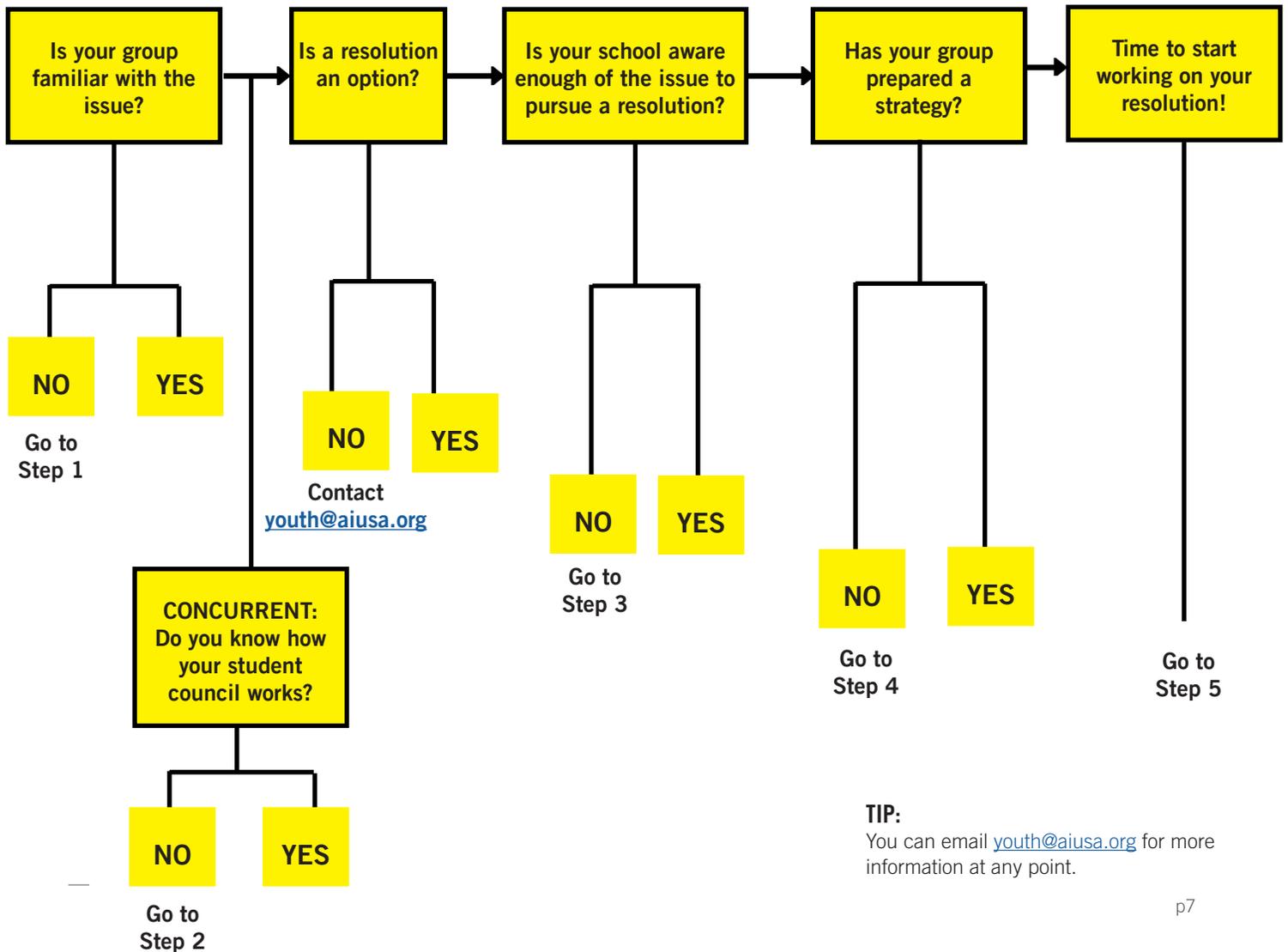
Why should we pass a Refugees Welcome resolution?

- To show support for refugees in your school community
- To show that your student body supports resettling refugees
- To counter the messages of anger and hate toward refugees that are in the media
- To provide accurate information about refugees to people in your community

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit takes you step-by-step through the process of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution.

This flow chart can help you determine where to start as you move toward completing your goal, and the following steps will help guide the rest of your process. But we encourage you to review and use as much of the toolkit as you like!

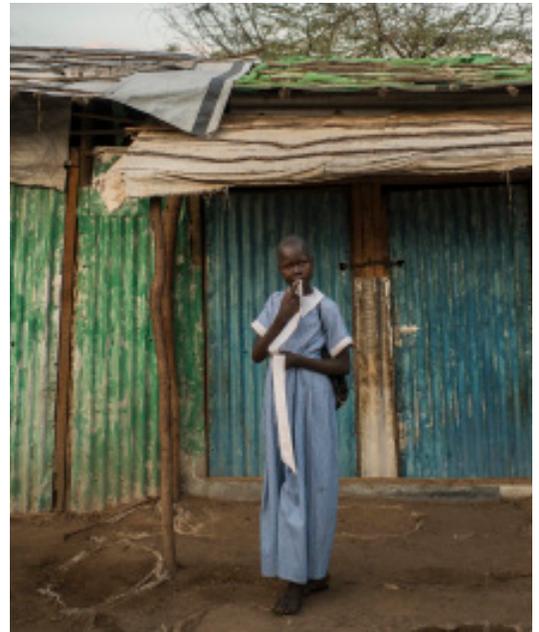


STEP 1: DOES YOUR GROUP KNOW ABOUT THE REFUGEE CRISIS?

The first step in working towards passing a resolution is learning about the refugee crisis. Before you begin educating your school and student government, it is important that your group knows who refugees are, reasons why they may be fleeing their home countries and what Amnesty International is calling on governments to do in support of refugees.

First, think about who in your Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) group will work on the resolution. For some groups this will be everyone, especially if your group is small, or if this campaign will be your group's primary goal.

For others, you may form a "campaign team" focused on this effort alone. Either way, all members of your group should have a basic understanding of Amnesty's refugee rights campaign.



Pictured above: A young girl heads to school in the Kakuma Refugee camp in Kenya.

STEP 1

Learn and discuss key facts about refugees around the world, in the U.S. and in your community.

STEP 2

Write down and discuss common myths about refugees that you may encounter at the national or local level. What are you hearing about refugees? What about that is true, and what is hurtful and false?

STEP 3

Brainstorm how you could politely counter some of the myths that you might encounter while you work on refugee rights.

TIP:

Visit our talking points section (Appendix F) for suggestions.



STEP 2: HOW DOES YOUR STUDENT GOVERNMENT WORK?

In order to pass a resolution, you need to understand how your student government works. Here are some questions to help get you started.

Who is on the student government? Who is the faculty advisor?
Can you submit a resolution? If not, what is the alternative?
What is the process for submitting a resolution?
Is there a certain time of the school year when resolutions can be submitted?
How long might the resolution process take?

After answering these questions, do you believe that a Refugees Welcome resolution is an option for your group? If so, move on to Step 3! If not, reach out to youth@aiusa.org for alternative options.



STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL CLIMATE AND BUILD SUPPORT

Around the world and in the U.S., refugees face discrimination, violence and hate. Resolutions can help counter this rhetoric and demonstrate support for refugees, but you should first assess what people in your school already think or feel about refugees.

1. Here are some questions to consider when assessing your school climate:

- What have you heard within your school or community about refugees?
- If you hear people talking about refugees, what is their tone?
- Are people in your school supportive of refugees coming into the U.S.?
- Does there seem to be outspoken opposition to refugees in your school or community?

Tip: Visit Appendix B for an easy exercise to help you assess your school climate.

2. There are many ways in which your group could find the answer to these questions. You know your school best, so brainstorm as a group. You might consider:

- Looking at local or school newspapers, blogs or social media;
- Discovering whether there have been refugee-focused events in your community or school. This research may also help you understand how much education your school may need on the refugee crisis;
- Talking to your faculty advisor or other trusted teachers;
- Talking to other students.

Once you have an idea of what people at your school know and feel about refugees, your group should plan a few activities to start building support while continuing to assess how your school might respond to a resolution.

Some ideas include:

- Hosting a school film screening followed by a conversation about refugees;
- Inviting a guest speaker with expertise on refugees. Email youth@aiusa.org for speaker suggestions;
- Table in a well-traveled area of school, talking to students about refugees and gathering signatures of people who are interested in refugee rights;
- Working with the school newspaper to write a positive article about refugees.

Reach out to youth@aiusa.org for more ideas!

Now that you have gone through these steps...

Did your group decide to pursue a Refugees Welcome resolution?

- If yes, use Appendix A to draft your resolution, and then move on to Step 4.
- If your group decides that your school is not yet ready to pursue a Refugees Welcome resolution, there are still ways to take action! Reach out to youth@aiusa.org for possible next steps.



Pictured above: Collecting signatures in support of the school resolution.

No matter what you decide, you have already done amazing work for refugee rights.

Pictured below: Seven-year-old Aya kisses her brother Adam. Aya and her family escaped Syria after their house was bombed. Activists in Canada worked for nearly a year to be able to welcome the family to safety and their new home in Toronto.



STEP 4: DEVELOP YOUR STRATEGY

Organizing is the process by which you build power as a group, and then use that power to create change--in this case, fulfilling your goal of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution.

Use this chart to create a smart strategy for your group, addressing the questions that you need to answer in order to reach your goal. Fill out this chart while brainstorming as a group. You may want to start in the left column and move right. You will find a blank copy of the chart at Appendix C.

GOALS	CURRENT RESOURCES	POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS/ALLIES	DECISION-MAKER	TACTICS
<p>What is your goal? For example: <i>"Pass a resolution through student council"</i></p> <p>If you have a concrete timeline for your goal, include it here. For example: <i>"We'll pass the resolution by May 15"</i></p>	<p>What resources do you have now? For example: a draft of the resolution (Appendix A), 8 members, friends with school newspaper editor, access to tabling space, two meeting</p> <p>What resources do you need in order for your campaign to be successful?</p> <p>How might your group benefit from the campaign? Increase members, visibility, etc.</p> <p>What problems might arise within our group?</p>	<p>Who cares about the issue and might join or support us? Other groups in the school or community?</p> <p>How will you reach out to potential supporters?</p> <p>Who might oppose us and why? How might they oppose you?</p>	<p>Who has the power to give you what you want? This will likely be your student government body, but try to focus on an individual council member who you think would be important to win over in order to pass the resolution. How could you influence them?</p> <p>Secondary targets (if necessary): If you can't influence the target, who can? And how could you influence them to speak to your target?</p>	<p>What things will you do to influence the decision-maker so they will say yes to your goal?</p> <p>Tactics must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant to the goal • Flexible and creative • Directed at the target • Possible within your groups resources • Able to influence your target <p>Check out Appendix D for a list of possible tactics, or get creative!</p>

COLUMN ONE: STATE YOUR GOAL

- What is your goal? For example, “Pass a resolution through the student council”
- Establish timeline

COLUMN TWO: UNDERSTAND YOUR GROUP

Your group understands the issue and the process of passing it through the council. What else do you need to consider?

- Do you have the energy and interest needed to begin the process?
- What resources do your group have access to? Remember that resources don't have to only be physical materials—they can also be the connections, relationships and skills your group members have.
- What does your group need?
- How might the process of passing a Refugees Welcome resolution help your group?
- What problems within the group might get in the way? (For example, group members not committed, conflicting priorities, etc.)

COLUMN THREE: KNOW YOUR ALLIES AND OPPONENTS

Who will help? Who could harm? You might consider:

- Who else cares about this issue?
- Does your group have an ally on the council itself?
- What other groups at school might care about the issue?
- How might you find other allies?
- Remember that your group members might belong to other groups, such as Model UN or a student LGBTI organization, and can reach out that way.

When brainstorming possible opponents, consider:

- Who might oppose this effort?
- Why might they be opposed?
- What are their resources?
- What might they try to do?

COLUMN FOUR: IDENTIFY THE TARGET

- Who are the voting members of the school council you will need to convince to pass the resolution?

-
- What do you know about this target? What motivates them, what do they care about, and how could you use this information to secure their support?
 - Is there a teacher or faculty advisor that might need to influence?
 - Are there other people whose support you might need to succeed? (School administrators, etc)

COLUMN FIVE: TACTICS

What actions could you take in order to either build support or get your target to give you what you want? Remember, tactics must be:

- Relevant to the goal
- Flexible and creative
- Directed at the target
- Possible within your group's resources
- Able to influence your target

Check out Appendix D for a list of possible tactics.

For any support with tactics or generating ideas, contact youth@aiusa.org.





STEP 5: PASS YOUR RESOLUTION

Now that your group has learned about refugees and the resolutions process within your student government, built support around your school, and prepared your strategy chart, you're ready to get to work!

1. REMEMBER THE ALLIES YOU BRAINSTORMED IN STEP 4? IT'S TIME TO GET THEIR SUPPORT. CONSIDER:

- Reaching out individually to those likely to support your goal and ask if they would be willing to join you;
- When asking for their support, consider what resources or relationships they or their group have that could help you publicize the resolution or gain more supporters;
- You might also consider how enthusiastic they seem. If they agree to support you but don't seem too excited, you might want to start by asking them to do something small, like post on social media or sign onto a joint letter announcing the resolution;

2. IS THERE A STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER WHO IS LIKELY TO SUPPORT YOUR GOAL?

- Approach them and be ready to make your case. Why is this resolution important to you? Why should they support it? Ask if they will support your resolution within the student council.
- Before your meeting, you might brainstorm answers to possible questions that they might ask before deciding whether or not to support.
- Depending on how your school government works, you may ask them to introduce the resolution at an upcoming student council meeting.
- Then you might also ask whether they know of other student council members who would also be likely to support it, and approach them too, to build as much support as possible.



STEP 5: PASS YOUR RESOLUTION (CONT'D)

If there isn't a specific student council member who you think would be an ally, you might choose someone neutral and use the strategy chart to create a plan in order to secure that council member's support. You can think through what your group would need to do in order to convince that person to support your resolution.

3. MAKE YOUR CASE TO THE STUDENT BODY! SPREAD AWARENESS, ENERGIZE AND BUILD SUPPORT. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS, BUT YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO BE CREATIVE!

- Make use of existing events--is there a school event coming up at which you can table, talk to people and collect signatures?
- Set a goal for how many petition signatures to receive: maybe you want to get enough signatures to be able to say that a certain target percentage of the school supports the resolution.
- Talk to your faculty advisor to discover other ways to get your message out there. You might ask for permission to visit a few classrooms and make presentations or lead discussions.
- Do you have a school newspaper? Ask them if you can submit a letter or column on behalf of your group talking about why your resolution should pass.
- Host a conversation or vigil.
- And more!

Reach out to youth@aiusa.org for materials or support on any of these ideas.

4. ATTEND ANY PUBLIC STUDENT COUNCIL MEETINGS ABOUT THE RESOLUTION

- Attend in large groups in order to demonstrate that the resolution has broad support.
- Have spokespersons from your group ready to speak on behalf of the resolution.
- Take pictures! Tweet @amnestyusa using #iWelcome, and be sure to send pictures and updates to youth@aiusa.org.

Final strategy session before we present our [#iwelcome](https://twitter.com/amnestyusa) refugees resolution to [@WilmingtonColl](https://twitter.com/WilmingtonColl) SGA



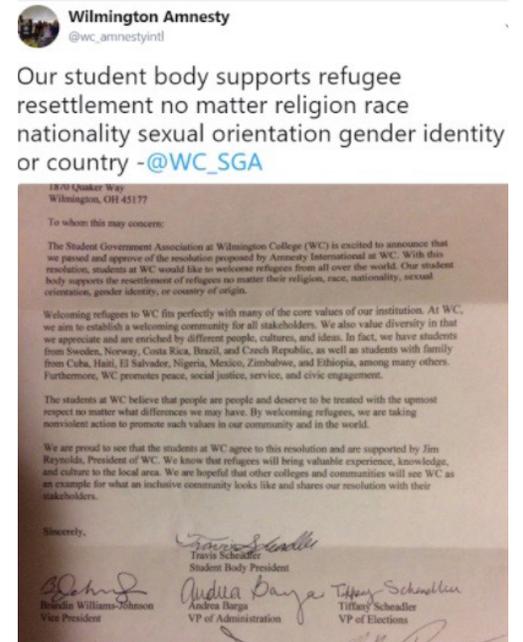
Pictured above: Getting ready to present the resolution to the student government body.

STEP 6: CELEBRATE

If the resolution passes, celebrate! It's important to ensure that your community knows about the great work you did.

WAYS TO SPREAD THE WORD:

- Share your pictures! Use the hashtag #iWelcome and tag @amnestyusa on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.
- Write a blog post about your experience. Send it to youth@aiusa.org and we may feature it on AIUSA's blog site.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper.
- Send 'thank you' notes to anyone who supported the resolution: student council members, leaders of other groups, etc.
- Leverage the passage of your resolution by meeting with local, state or other elected officials representing your community. Your Members of Congress care about what's happening in your school!
- Whatever you do, let youth@aiusa.org know so Amnesty can publicize.



Pictured above: Resolution passed!

If your resolution didn't pass, it's okay! You have still done amazing work educating your community about refugee rights.

Maybe you will want to try again next semester, or after the next round of student council elections.

Regardless, send us an email at youth@aiusa.org. We would love to thank you for your dedicated activism, and help you come up with a new plan to support refugees in your community.



DRAFT STUDENT RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

WHEREAS there are 22.5 million refugees in the world today, more than at any time since World War II, and more than half of the world’s refugees are children;

WHEREAS refugees are fleeing armed conflict and persecution in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central America, and other regions;

WHEREAS more than half of the world’s refugees are hosted by only ten countries, and many of these countries do not have adequate resources to keep refugees fed, housed, or safe;

WHEREAS the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has determined that 1.2 million refugees need immediate resettlement, representing only .3 percent of the world’s population;

WHEREAS refugees who need to be resettled include torture survivors, people with severe medical conditions, LGBTI individuals, orphaned children, and at-risk women and children – all of whom cannot return home and cannot stay in their host country due to their extreme vulnerability;

WHEREAS in 2016, there were only 36 countries in the world that resettled refugees, and the U.S. took in the largest number;

WHEREAS we applaud the historic, bi-partisan tradition of the United States in welcoming refugees, in keeping with our country’s values and respect for human rights;

WHEREAS refugees undergo a security vetting process that is lengthy, extremely detailed, and very safe, involving multiple law enforcement and intelligence agencies to come to the U.S.;

WHEREAS the current administration is capping refugee admissions to the historically low number of 45,000 for 2018, and already slashed refugee admissions to around 51,000 in 2017, compared to 85,000 in 2016;

WHEREAS, the U.S. is no longer welcoming refugees in same way, leaving refugees stranded and at risk of harm and even death, with no home to go to;

WHEREAS [RESETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY], the organizations responsible for resettling refugees in this community, as well as numerous other community groups and religious institutions, have declared their support for resettling refugees in [CITY];

Note: Contact youth@aiusa.org for information regarding the resettlement organizations that work within your community.

WHEREAS [RESETTLEMENT ORGANIZATIONS] have resettled more than [NUMBER] refugees in [CITY] since [YEAR] from more than [NUMBER] countries including [LIST COUNTRIES];

APPENDIX A (CONT'D)

WHEREAS the students of [SCHOOL] include individuals from all parts of the world who represent many cultures and celebrate diversity and welcome all people;

WHEREAS over [XX] languages are spoken in our school and [XX] countries are represented;

WHEREAS these diverse students have enriched [SCHOOL] through sports, academics, sciences, and arts;

WHEREAS the school community welcomes and benefits from students from around the world;

RESOLVED, the student body of [SCHOOL] welcomes refugees and declares its support for the resettlement of refugees no matter their religion, race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity or country of origin, in [CITY] and calls upon other [STATE] communities to join them in supporting a stronger national effort to resettle the world's most vulnerable refugees.

“Sensing” is a campaign development tool with which you can build a deeper understanding of and empathy with the specific audiences you’ll need to interact with in order to achieve your goal.

During the sensing phase you can learn directly from people in order to learn how to motivate and engage those audiences to be a part of the solution. Interviews are one element of the sensing tool that you can use in your community:

- 1. Identify where to find your target group (school events, the cafeteria, hallways, the library, etc)**
- 2. Create a prepared set of questions. Questions regarding the refugee crisis may include:**
 - a. Do you know what a refugee is?
 - b. When you think of the word “refugee”, what comes to your mind?
 - c. What do you hear about refugees in the news? (Or online, or in conversations)
 - d. Do you know whether there are any refugees in our school or city?
 - e. Do you think that the U.S. should do more to help refugees?
- 3. Spend about 5-10 minutes informally asking your questions.**
 - a. Try to keep interviews to one or two group members per interviewee.
 - b. Your goal here is not to convince the person you’re interviewing of anything--you’re merely seeking their existing thoughts and feelings so you know how to “meet them where they’re at” with your campaigning.
- 4. Try to write down exactly what the person says, not what you think they may mean. You may also want to write down the body language, expressions, and tones that you observe.**
- 5. Debrief with each other after each interview.**

The purpose of these conversations is not to convince the people with whom you are speaking: instead, you are simply trying to understand what they think and feel about the issue. However, you are welcome to answer questions and engage in natural conversation.

You can use what you learn during this exercise to inform how you approach the student body with your campaign to pass the resolution. Do people express misconceptions about refugees that your group needs to counter? Are people unfamiliar with the concept of refugees in general?

Contact youth@aiusa.org for support or more information.

APPENDIX C - BLANK STRATEGY CHART

TACTICS	
DECISION-MAKER	
POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS/ALLIES	
CURRENT RESOURCES	
GOALS	

WHAT IS A TACTIC?

“Tactics” are the things you do to either generate support or to get your message in front of your decision maker in order to convince them to grant your primary objective. Categories of tactics include grassroots activism, coalition building, lobbying, media and social media.

SAMPLE TACTICS

- Public speeches
- Public letters or declarations of support
- Direct meetings with decision-makers
- Letters or emails to decision-makers
- Social media campaign (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and/or Snapchat)
- Photo actions
- Movie showing
- Art exhibits
- Chalk drawings
- Vigil
- Performance of music or theater
- A community conversation or ‘teach-in’
- Featuring a guest speaker with expertise on refugees
- Tabling for educational purposes and collecting signatures of support for the resolution (see the caveat regarding using petitions on Page 15)
- Work with your local newspaper to write a positive article about refugees
- Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in support of refugees
- Put up visible bulletin boards or posters in frequently visited public areas
- And more! The possibilities are endless, so feel free to get creative

If you have questions about planning or executing any of these tactics, or to receive materials, email youth@aiusa.org.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE

- Your voice is powerful. Our collective voices welcoming refugees must be heard. Learn more from @amnestyusa on how to pass an #IWelcome resolution in your community. [LINK]
- An #IWelcome resolution is a declaration of support for resettling refugees passed through your school council. It shows that no matter your color or creed, you are welcomed in our community. Join me & @amnestyusa to say #IWelcome: [LINK]
- Join us in our radical act of welcome. All you have to say is “#IWelcome refugees.” Join me & @amnestyusa to say #IWelcome: [LINK]
- Throughout the United States, refugees face discrimination, violence and hate. #IWelcome resolutions can help counter this rhetoric and demonstrate support for refugees. Learn more from @amnestyusa: [LINK]

SAMPLE CHECKLIST

STEP 1

- Decide who in the group will work on this campaign
- Educate your group on the issue
- Learn how to counter myths/ stereotypes about refugees
- Become familiar with talking points

STEP 2

- Determine how your student council operates
- Learn whether you can submit a resolution
- If a resolution is an option, continue to step 3
- If a resolution is not an option, contact youth@aiusa.org

STEP 3

- Develop an understanding of your local climate around refugees
- Begin to build support and awareness in your community
- Will you pursue a resolution? If yes, write the resolution, and move to step 4
- If no, email youth@aiusa.org

STEP 4

- Do the research necessary to fill out your strategy chart
- Complete your strategy chart
- Create a timeline for action. What do you want to have accomplished by when?

STEP 5

- Contact youth@aiusa.org to let us know that you're beginning
- Reach out to allies
- Reach out to the identified "decision-maker"
- Make your case to the community
- Attend public meetings about the resolution in large groups to show

STEP 6

- Spread the word!
- Thank all the people involved
- Let youth@aiusa.org know so Amnesty can publicize your victory!



TALKING POINTS

Educating your community—family, neighbors, politicians—about the crisis is critical.

We are experiencing the worst refugee crisis since WWII, with over 21 million refugees across the globe. Unprecedented numbers have fled from their homes because of war, conflict, and persecution. The vast majority of refugees are currently hosted in developing countries.

Millions of people are fleeing their homes because of war, armed conflict, violence, and persecution that forces them to leave. **They cannot safely return** to their homes, and they are incredibly vulnerable on their journey to refuge.

More than half of the world's refugees are currently living in only 10 countries, and many of these countries **do not have adequate resources** to keep refugees fed, housed, or safe. Some refugees are surviving on less than 50 cents a day.

The United Nations High Commissioner gives priority for resettlement to the most vulnerable refugees, including torture survivors, orphaned children, LGBTI individuals, and women and children at-risk. Available to less than 1% of the world's refugees, **resettlement is the last resort for refugees** who cannot return to their homes and cannot safely rebuild their lives in a country nearby.

Rhetoric that is based on fear rather than fact makes us less safe. Fear-mongering and hateful rhetoric against refugees, particularly Islamophobic rhetoric, inflames hate and violence at home and abroad.

U.S. leadership matters. In 2016, anchored by U.S. commitments, wealthy nations agreed to double global resettlement slots. Many of these countries were participating in resettlement for the first time. Instead, with the recent U.S. retreat, there has been a nearly 60% decline in refugee resettlement slots.

The refugee resettlement process in the U.S. is lengthy, extremely thorough, and very safe. **Refugees are the most vetted individuals to enter the U.S.** They undergo 18-24 months of vetting by multiple federal agencies.

Refugees cannot choose where they are resettled. The process of resettlement is determined by UNHCR and potential resettlement countries, and the U.S. government ultimately chooses refugees to be resettled in the U.S.

COUNTER-POINTS

“Amnesty International is political.”

- Amnesty International is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that does not get involved in political systems, forms of government, or advocate on behalf of any political parties.
- There is nothing political about refugee rights. However, refugees and the refugee crisis has become politicized.

“Students shouldn’t be thinking about these things.” “We can’t make a difference with high school resolutions.”

- You make a difference just by working on your resolution. It incorporates multiple ways of learning, gets people working together and engages students in human rights issues for what may be the first time.
- It shows local officials that students are paying attention: high school students are either already voting or will be soon.