

Before you start, answer the questions below.	
Who is the audience?	<i>E.g. "People in Germany with displaced family members"</i> - Situation: <i>"They have residency here but don't know how to bring other family members to join them"</i> - Goals: <i>"Figure out what options they can pursue"</i>
What do they need?	<i>E.g. "A clear explanation of the different options available to them and how they will know which ones might apply in their situation"</i>
Is there anything that might be confusing or they might have additional questions about?	<i>E.g. "Whether they can bring a family member if that family member has applied for resettlement elsewhere"</i>

I am a member of an Iranian religious minority. I was denied U.S. refugee resettlement after traveling to Vienna in the HIAS program.

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This information was revised in February 2022. Requirements may change. Always check for current requirements from the government or agency deciding your request.

If you have questions about the settlement, email the lawyers for the class at vienna@refugeerights.org.

Summary

This page is for Iranian Christians, Mandeans, and other religious minorities who were denied refugee resettlement in or around 2018 after traveling to Vienna through the HIAS program (also called the **Lautenberg** program).

IRAP and the law firm Latham & Watkins LLP filed a lawsuit to challenge these denials. On February 10, 2022, the judge approved a settlement agreement to end the lawsuit. As part of the settlement agreement, the U.S. government agreed to certain things for the lawsuit to be ended.

- [You can read the full settlement agreement here.](#)
- [Court-ordered information on the settlement is here.](#)
- [More documents from the case are here.](#)

How am I affected by the lawsuit's settlement?

If you are an Iranian religious minority who traveled to Vienna through the HIAS program to apply for refugee resettlement to the United States and you were denied refugee admission, contact vienna@refugeerights.org to learn how you will be affected by the settlement. [You can also find out if you are a class member by visiting this website and entering your case number](#) (also called "IR-number," which you can find at the top of the letters you receive from the government about your application).

You will be affected in one of two ways, depending on the reason that you were denied:

- **Reopening:** If you were denied based on a vetting change that we are challenging in this case, the U.S. government will agree to reopen your case, as explained in this notice and below.
- **Review:** If you were denied for another reason, you will have 90 days from the date of the court approval of the settlement to submit a Request for Review ("RFR"). IRAP's resources on RFRs are available [here](#).

You will not be affected by the settlement if you are an Iranian religious minority who applied for refugee admission to the United States but you have **never** traveled to Vienna.

What do I do if I am affected by the lawsuit and its settlement?

- Within 2 weeks, the U.S. Government should contact you through HIAS-Vienna to let you know that your case has been reopened. They may ask you for updated case

information or if you have any extraordinary circumstances (for example, health concerns) that require further expedited case processing.

- If you do not hear from the U.S. Government or HIAS in the next two weeks, please email us at vienna@refugeerights.org to let us know.
- Once the U.S. government has received all information required for reprocessing of your case, they will make best efforts to decide your application within 3 months unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The U.S. government may want to interview you again before they decide your case.
 - If the U.S. government wants to interview you, you will receive a notice at least 2 weeks before the date of the interview.
 - You have a right to have an attorney at that interview.

IRAP is able to connect you to an attorney who can represent you at that interview free of charge. Please email IRAP directly at vienna@refugeerights.org if you are a class member and need information about how to request an attorney for an interview.

What did the lawsuit challenge?

In April 2018, the International Refugee Assistance Project and the law firm of Latham & Watkins filed a lawsuit. The lawsuit challenged the denial of refugee status to Iranian religious minorities who had traveled to Vienna in the HIAS program. The lawsuit is a **class action**, which means that it is brought on behalf of a group of people who have been harmed in similar ways.

There have been two stages to the lawsuit.

- **Stage One:**

Initially, the lawsuit covered people who received denials in or after February 2018. The denials said only that their applications were denied “as a matter of discretion.” [An example of this type of denial is here.](#)

In July 2018, we [won a decision](#) from the court finding that the explanation was not enough and undoing those denials. The U.S. government then decided to allow some people into the United States and issued new denials to some people. An example of the new denials issued is here. This ended the first stage of the lawsuit.

- **Stage Two:**

Stage Two of the lawsuit challenged a change to the U.S. government’s vetting process that led to most of the denials for Iranian religious minorities who had traveled to Vienna. **Vetting** is a process by which the government reviews whether it has information about you in its databases that raises concerns. We argue in the lawsuit that this vetting change was unlawful. Read more about [the vetting change here](#).

You can find [more information about the lawsuit here](#), including the court documents.

What other options do I have if I was denied U.S. refugee admission?

Iranian religious minority applicants who have received refugee application denials may have other options for immigrating to the United States:

- **Family-Based Immigration:** A person with a close relative in the U.S. who is a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident may be able to apply for family-based immigration. [IRAP's guide on that process is here.](#)
- **Humanitarian Parole:** You could also apply for **humanitarian parole**. Humanitarian parole is a process that allows individuals to enter the United States temporarily for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit. Humanitarian parole is only given for exceptional cases. [IRAP's guide about humanitarian parole is available here.](#)