



# I am a refugee or asylee

# D4

## How do I get a refugee travel document?



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

**A person with refugee or asylum status** who wishes to travel outside the United States needs a Refugee Travel Document in order to return to the United States.

In most cases, a refugee or asylee may use the Refugee Travel Document for travel in place of a passport. The Refugee Travel Document is similar in appearance to a U.S. passport.

### How do I apply for a Refugee Travel Document?

To apply for a Refugee Travel Document, file **Form I-131, Application for Travel Document**. Filing instructions and forms are available on our Web site at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). Follow the instructions on the form carefully. For further information please visit our Web site or call Customer Service at **1-800-375-5283**.

### How long is a Refugee Travel Document valid?

A Refugee Travel Document is valid for up to 1 year.

### I have been granted asylum or refugee status in the United States, and I need to travel abroad. Can I file a Form I-131 for a Refugee Travel Document after I leave the United States?

You should file a Form I-131 for a Refugee Travel Document **before** you leave the United States. We recommend that you file the form no less than 60 days before you leave the United States.

If you do not file for a Refugee Travel Document before you leave the United States, a USCIS office overseas has discretion to accept your application. You may only apply **if** you have been outside the United States for less than 1 year at the time of filing. You should not, however, assume that an overseas office will automatically exercise this discretion, particularly if it is evident that you could have filed your Form I-131 before you left the United States.

### If I file Form I-131 to get a Refugee Travel Document while I am in the United States, will USCIS deny the Form I-131 if I leave the United States while the form is still pending?

We recommend that you file Form I-131 while you are in the United States. However it is not required for you to be present in the United States for USCIS to approve your Form I-131 and issue a Refugee Travel Document if your biometrics (photograph, fingerprints) have been obtained. You can indicate on your Form I-131 that you want USCIS to send your Refugee Travel Document to a U.S. Embassy or consulate, or a DHS office overseas, so you can pick it up from one of those facilities.

### If I file Form I-131 for a Refugee Travel Document while I am in the United States, can I submit my biometrics while I am outside the United States?

No. When you file your Form I-131 to obtain a Refugee Travel Document, USCIS will notify you when to appear at the designated Application Support Center (ASC) for collection of your biometrics. You must provide your biometrics at the ASC while you are in the United States. If you leave the United States before you have your biometrics collected, USCIS may deny your application.

If a USCIS office overseas in its discretion permits you to file Form I-131 for a Refugee Travel Document while you are abroad, that office will advise you about the procedures for submitting biometrics. To complete your biometrics, you may need to visit a USCIS office or a U.S. Embassy, consulate, or military installation for fingerprinting.

### Can I travel back to the country where I experienced past persecution or claim a fear of future persecution?

Yes. However, if you have been granted asylum, you should be aware that your grant of asylum may be terminated if, among other things, it is determined that you voluntarily availed yourself of the protection of your country of nationality, you have acquired a new nationality, or you are no longer eligible for asylum due to a fundamental change in circumstances. Similarly, your asylum status may be terminated if there was fraud in your application such that you were not eligible for asylum. Therefore, if your travel suggests

that you may have re-availed yourself of the protection of your country, you should be prepared to explain how you were able to return to the country from which you fled.

If you have been admitted as a refugee, your status may be terminated if the U.S. Government determines that you were not, in fact, a refugee at the time you were admitted to the United States as a refugee. As a result, if your travel patterns indicate that you did not experience past persecution, that you did not have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of a protected ground, or that you persecuted others, you may need to explain your travel to that country to avoid losing your refugee status.

## Key Information

Key USCIS forms referenced in this guide	Form #
Application for Refugee Travel Document	I-131

Other U.S. Government Services—Click or Call		
General Information	www.usa.gov	1-800-333-4636
New Immigrants	www.welcometoUSA.gov	
U.S. Dept. of State	www.state.gov	1-202-647-6575

For more copies of this guide, or information about other customer guides, please visit [www.uscis.gov/howdoi](http://www.uscis.gov/howdoi).

You can also visit [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) to download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start!

If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your local library.

If you cannot find what you need, please call **Customer Service at: 1-800-375-5283**  
*Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service:*  
*1-800-767-1833*

**Disclaimer:** *This guide provides basic information to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, please visit our Web site. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.*