

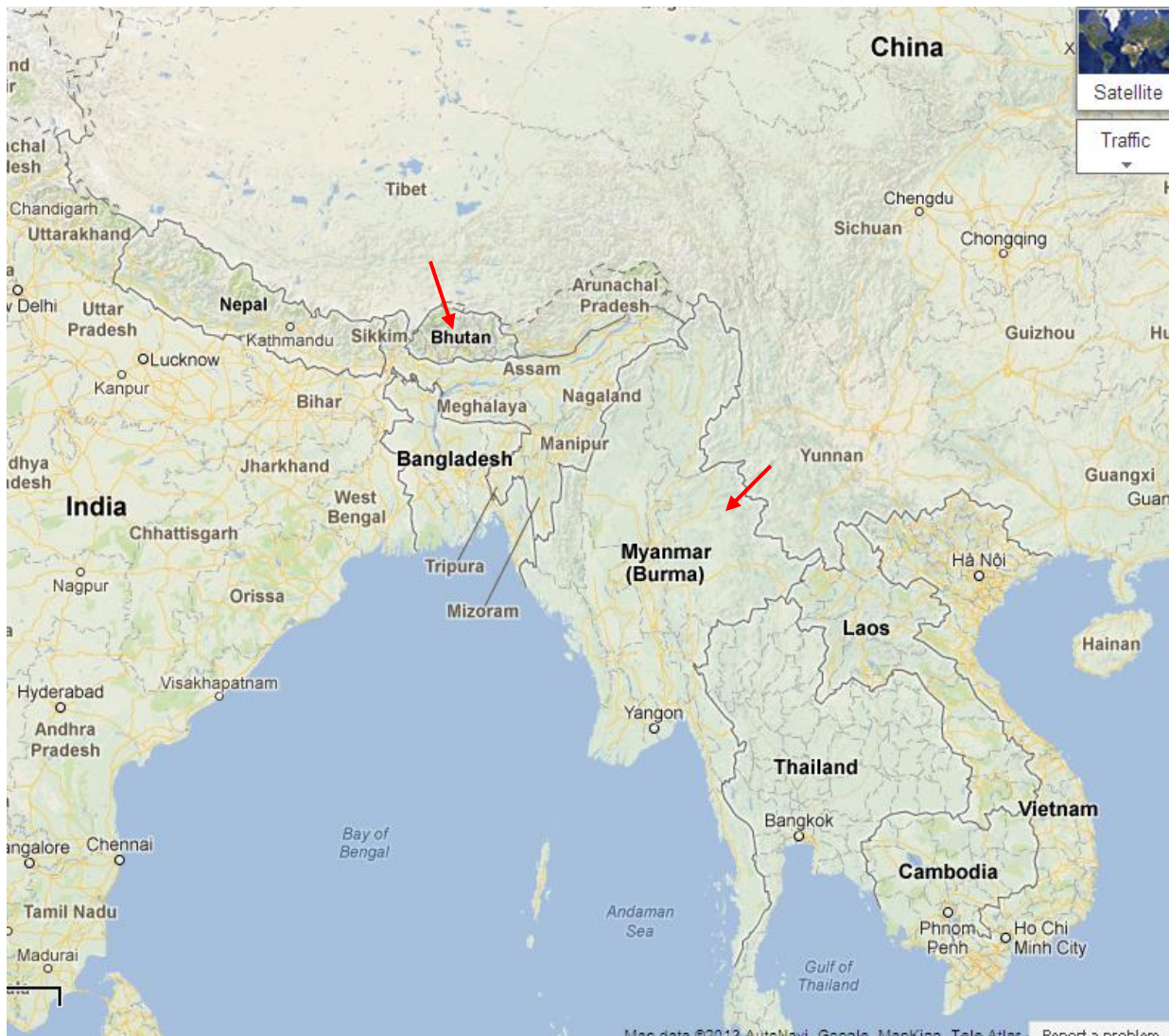
WIC CULTURAL GUIDE

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SOUTH ASIA



BHUTAN

Culture name of refugees	Nepali Bhutanese
Alternative country names	Kingdom of Bhutan; Druk-Yul*
Location	Northern area of South Asia, eastern Himalayas; borders China to the north and India to the south, east, and west
State of domestic affairs	Ethnic conflicts between the Buddhist majority and the largely Hindu Nepalese in the late 1980s and early 1990s forced tens of thousands Nepalese into refugee camps in Nepal and India. The Bhutanese government does not recognize the citizenship of the

	majority of these refugees. There are an estimated 112,000 Nepalese refugees currently residing in refugee camps in Nepal and India.
Language	Nepali
Religion	60% Hindu; 27% Buddhist; 10% Kirat (indigenous religion)
Food customs	Rice, lentils, and curry; some are vegetarian; refugees often eat chicken and goat Orthodox Hindus may not eat meats, eggs, or any food that has been previously cooked
Ethic groups of Bhutan	Sharchops: eastern Bhutan; decedents of earliest inhabitants Ngalops: western Bhutan; migrated from Tibetan plains Lhotshampas: migrated from Nepal*
Gender roles	Clearly defined; women take on more household work and do not have equal decision-making authority
Other cultural practices	Early, arranged marriages are common Polygamy sometimes practiced (polygamous husbands must divorce all but one wife to gain admission to US) Due to caste systems, ask permission before entering home, prayer rooms, and kitchens. Do not touch food.
Learning needs	Most unfamiliar with modern appliances and cooking practices; many with little or no English abilities

BURMA (CHIN)

Culture name of refugees	Burmese; Chin Of the many sub-groups of Chin, the largest group that is re-settling in the United States is the Hakha Chin.
Alternative country names	Myanmar
Location	Bordered by Bangladesh to the west, India and China to the north, and Laos and Thailand to the east
State of domestic affairs	The Chin are an ethnic group in Burma (Myanmar) who are persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons. Many Chin have fled to refugee camps in Malaysia, Thailand and India.
Languages	At least 110 distinct ethno linguistic groups exist in Burma. The Chin are made up of many different ethnic groups, who speak 20 to 25 languages that are not mutually intelligible, but can be divided into four groups based on linguistic similarity.
Religion	Missionaries arrived in Chin State in 1899, which accounts for the large number of protestant Chin Burmese, although some are Roman Catholic.
Food customs	Corn and rice cultivation and farming are a large part of life for the Chin, and corn and rice are the main staples of their diet.

	Every Chin household has a garden for growing vegetables.
Ethic groups of Burma	The government recognizes 135 ethnic groups (referred to as races) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burmese (~68% of the population) • Other major ethnic groups: Shan (~9%), Karen (~7%), Arakanese or Rakhine (~4%), Chinese (>2%), Chin (>2%)*, Wa (~2%), Mon (~2%), Indians and Bengalis (~2%), Jingpho (<2%), Palaung (<2%)
Gender roles	The husband is the head of the household, but the wife has considerable authority. Women are responsible for most domestic chores. Sons and daughters are equally valued, but only sons may inherit property.
Other cultural practices	It is polite to remove footwear when entering a house. Eye contact can be seen as an act of challenge by the Chin. Crossing the arms in front of the body is thought to be polite behavior, and should not be read as a sign of hostility.
Learning needs	The Chin have varying levels of education; there is little opportunity of education for youth at the refugee camps in Malaysia. Most Chin are familiar with the Roman alphabet.

BURMA (KAREN)

Culture name of refugees	Burmese; Karen
Alternative country names	Myanmar
Location	Bordered by Bangladesh to the west, India and China to the north, and Laos and Thailand to the east
State of domestic affairs	The Karen are an ethnic group from Burma (Myanmar), many of whom fled Burma due to religious and ethnic persecution by the government. In 1962, Civil war broke out between the military government and various factions. In 2004, a ceasefire between the Karen and the Burmese government was brokered, but human rights abuses continue, including forced labor, village burnings, arbitrary taxation, rape, and extrajudicial killings. 140,000 refugees from Burma, mostly Karen, are living in refugee camps in Thailand, some for as many as 20 years.
Languages	The Karen speak several different dialects of Karen. 70% of Karen refugees speak Sgaw Karen, 7% speak Pwo Karen, and the others speak either Karenni or Pa-o/ Taung Su. Sgaw and Pwo do not differ significantly in word root or

	structure, but differ in pronunciation so that a refugee who speaks one will not necessarily understand the other.
Religion	70% of Karen are Buddhist, Buddhist-animist, or animist. About 20% to 30% are Christian.
Food customs	White rice is a central component in the diet of the Karen, and is typically eaten at all three meals. Families generally eat together, without much chatting or fanfare, at meals taken on the floor three times a day.
Ethnic groups of Burma	The government recognizes 135 ethnic groups (referred to as races): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burmese (~68% of the population) • Other major ethnic groups: Shan (~9%), Karen (~7%)*, Arakanese or Rakhine (~4%), Chinese (>2%), Chin (>2%), Wa (~2%), Mon (~2%), Indians and Bengalis (~2%), Jingpho (<2%), Palaung (<2%)
Gender roles	Men and women are generally free to choose their own marriage partners; after marriage strict monogamy is expected. Men assist with the raising of children.
Other cultural practices	Important values include respect for elders, duty to parents, modesty and humility. Karen use names and nicknames; there are no first and last names. Often when answering a question that demands an affirmative answer, the Karen will say “no” instead of “yes.” This is a sign of modesty and politeness. Often the Karen are polite to a fault, and it can be hard to assess their needs. Indirect eye contact is considered polite when conversing with someone.
Learning needs	The Karen are quick learners, but many who have been living in the refugee camps for years will need to be taught how to use modern conveniences, such as running water, electricity, toilets and phones.

EAST AFRICA



EGYPT

Culture name of refugees	Egyptian; Arab Egyptian; Arab
Alternative country names	Official name: Arab Republic of Egypt Previously: The United Arab Republic In Arabic, the name is Misr*
Location	Northeast Africa; bordered to the north by the Mediterranean Sea and to the east by the Red Sea; separated from Libya to the west and Sudan to the south by the Western Desert; separated from Palestine and Israel by the desert of the Sinai Peninsula
State of domestic affairs	Coptic Christians from Egypt are seeking asylum to escape religious persecution by Islamic extremist. Attacks have increased due to Islamic political gains during the current political revolution in Egypt.

Languages	Arabic (90%)
Religion	Over 90% Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslims. About 6% Christians, who are indistinguishable in other respects from the Muslims. Muslims usually congregate to pray on Fridays
Food customs	<p>The bread loaf is the most important food item; rely heavily on lentils; animal protein consumption depends on wealth; Muslims do not eat pork.</p> <p>In villages, people sit on a carpet, and food is placed on a very low round wooden table. Each person has a spoon, and everyone eats directly from the service dish. In cities, people sit on chairs around Western-style dining tables. Each person has his or her own plate, spoon, fork, and knife. In rural areas, the main meal is after dark; in the urban areas it is often in late afternoon after office workers return home.</p> <p>Fasting is seen as a spiritual exercise by both Muslims and Christians. The Muslim fast entails abstaining from food and drink from sunrise to sundown, notably during the lunar month of Ramadan (either twenty-nine or thirty days). Egyptian Christians fast mostly in the periods leading up to Christmas and Easter. Christian fasting means avoiding meat, fish, eggs, milk, butter, and cheese. In the Christian tradition, one theme of fasting is the domination of the body and of emotions by the mind in order to reach a greater purity.</p>
Ethnic groups of Egypt	Fairly homogenous; identify with the Arab culture
Gender roles	Public spaces are often segregated by gender; women are responsible for household chores and child rearing, but also participate in work outside the home; men are head of household; men and women have equal legal right, but men have more social power
Other cultural practices	Women usually breastfeed for 2 years; grandparents pay an active role in raising children; some kind of title usually precedes a name, and to address someone by their first name alone is impolite
Learning needs	Education is highly valued. Even low-income families try to educate their children as much as possible. Education, especially having a university degree, is considered an important avenue for social mobility.

ERITREA

Culture name of refugees	Kunama
Alternative country names	N/A
Location	Northeastern Africa; borders Sudan to the north and northwest, Ethiopia to the south, Djibouti to the southwest, and the Red Sea to the east
State of domestic affairs	During the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the Kunama remained in an area occupied by Ethiopia. For this reason, the Kunama were seen as being disloyal to Eritrea and had to flee; they are currently living in Shimelba Refugee camp in Ethiopia. The Kunama cannot stay in Ethiopia because there they are prohibited from earning a working wage and from leaving the refugee camp. 1,200 Kunama refugees have been referred for immigration to the United States by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Languages	Kunama; most other Eritreans speak Tigrinya
Religion	Kunama from rural areas practice their own religion, a monotheistic set of beliefs distinct from Islam or Christianity. Those who practice the traditional religion also loosely practice Christianity. Kunama from urban areas are usually Christian or Muslim. Inter-religious marriage is common.
Food customs	Common foods are injera, a kind of pancake, along with a sauce, usually shiro, made from chickpeas; millet; carrots, tomatoes, onions, and garlic. The Kunama generally do not eat pork, apparently for cultural reasons.
Ethnic groups of Eritrea	Kunama are a minority group in Eritrea of between 60,000 and 100,000 people
Gender roles	Women hold traditional roles, cooking, working in the home, and delivering and rearing children. They do not typically work outside of the home. Female circumcision is common; girls often marry to 13 or 14 to a much older man.
Other cultural practices	No public affection shown between members of the opposite sex; boys and men, however, frequently hold hands as a sign of friendship. Foods are eaten using the right hand only and without the use of silverware.
Learning needs	Many lack formal education; little experience with cars, television, electricity, running water, and electric stoves and ovens; may not have many friends or relatives in the US; little work experience outside of agriculture, sewing and weaving. Kunama will have had a three to five day orientation to life in America in the refugee camp to help familiarize them with modern amenities and air travel.

SOMALIA

Culture name of refugees	Somali
Alternative country names	Somali Democratic Republic; Soomaaliya*
Location	East African coast on the outer edge of the Somali Peninsula or “Horn of Africa”; border to the north Gulf of Aden, on the east by the Indian Ocean, on the southwest by Kenya, and on the west and northwest by Ethiopia and Djibouti Somalis also live in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, and Djibouti.
State of domestic affairs	In the early 1990s, a civil war erupted over political power; the U.N. began Operation Restore Hope in 1992, and the last U.N. troops left in March 1995; ~400,000 Somalis died from famine, disease, and war; ~45% of the population was displaced; currently no central government has formed
Languages	Somali; may also speak Arabic for religious purposes
Religion	Vast majority are Sunni Muslims
Food customs	Nomads: milk from camels, goats, and cows; meat and liver from camels, sheep, and goats (usually reserved for special occasions); durra (a grain sorghum), honey, dates, rice, and tea Farmers: corn, beans, sorghum, millet, squash, a few other vegetables & fruits; boiled millet & rice; pasta & marinara sauce Season food with butter and ghee; generally do not like fish; do not eat pork or drink alcohol and adhere to halal; usually cook outside over a wood or charcoal fire; often eat with fingers
Ethic groups of Somalia	Despite of residential location, all Somalis consider themselves one people. This unity makes them one of Africa's largest ethnic groups. 95% ethnic Somalis; 5% Indians, Pakistanis, other Asians, Arabs, Europeans, and groups of mixed ancestry
Gender roles	Publicly male-centered culture; Somali women are expected to submit to men; women generally don’t socialize with men in public places; nearly all Somali girls undergo female circumcision; men are allowed up to four wives; divorce is common
Other cultural practices	Somalis belong to clans and sub-clans, each originating from a single male ancestor; partly nomadic culture; many do not have electricity or running water in their homes; the left hand is considered unclean b/c it is used for cleaning the body; observe Islamic traditions such as Ramadan and praying five times a day facing Mecca; Somalis believe strongly in independence, democracy, egalitarianism, individualism, and generosity; “eye for an eye” justice mentality
Learning needs	May not be familiar with modern cooking appliances and food preparation methods

MIDDLE EAST



IRAN

Culture name of refugees	Iranian, Persian (Persian may be used to describe those who identify with the culture but don't live in the modern state of Iran, or immigrants who don't wish to be associated with the Islamic Republic of Iran)
Alternative country names	Islamic Republic of Iran
Location	Southwestern Asia. Its neighbors are, on the north, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Turkmenistan; on the east, Pakistan and Afghanistan; and on the west Turkey and Iraq. Sits between the Caspian Sea to the north and the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to the south.

State of domestic affairs	<p>Significant events: Islamic Revolution in 1979; passage of a Penal Law in 2008 authorizing the death penalty for apostasy; June 2009 fraudulent presidential election resulting in widespread protest and bloody street violence</p> <p>Since Iran's dramatic crackdown on anti-government protesters after the disputed 2009 presidential election, thousands of Iranian activists (including dissidents, college students, journalists, athletes and other elite Iranians) have fled harassment and detention to seek refuge.</p>
Languages	<p>Persian (50%); Turkic (20-25%); Arabic (10%)</p> <p>Most Iranian can speak Persian, even if it's not their first language</p>
Religion	<p>Vast majority are Shi'a Muslims, which has distinct beliefs and practices that differ from Sunni Islam practiced in most of the Muslim world</p>
Food customs	<p>Mixture of Greek and Indian; centered on fresh fruits, greens and vegetables. Meat (usually lamb, goat, or chicken) is used as a condiment rather than as the centerpiece of a meal. Rice and fresh unleavened or semi-leavened whole-grain bread are staple starches. The primary beverage is black tea. Do not eat pork. <i>Chelow kabab</i> is the national dish.</p>
Ethnic groups of Iran	<p>Persians, Kurds, Lurs, Baluchis, Armenians, Turkics, Arabs, Assyrians; all ethnic groups living in Iran identify strongly with Iranian culture, as well as many Persians living outside Iran</p>
Gender roles	<p>Iranian women are progressive and have a strong role in Iranian life. They are politically involved and well educated, with a 90% literacy rate. However, female employment has suffered due to conflicts with the cultural practice of modest dress. Any public activity that requires women to depart from modest dress in mixed company is expressly forbidden.</p> <p>It is considered manly for men to be emotionally sensitive, artistically engaged, and aesthetically acute. Women can be emotionally distant without seeming unfeminine. Open weeping is not shameful for either sex. Kissing and hand-holding between members of the same sex is common. Physical contact between members of the opposite sex is avoided except between relatives.</p>
Other cultural practices	<p>Women are expected to be very modest in public. Western men offering to shake a traditional Iranian woman's hand may see her struggling between a desire to be polite, and a desire not to breach standards of decency. The solution for many is to cover her hand with part of her chador and shake hands that way.</p> <p>Under no circumstances should a proper man or woman willingly find themselves alone in a closed room with a member of the opposite sex (except for his or her spouse).</p>

	<p>One must be very careful about praising any possession of another. The owner will likely offer it immediately as a present. Greater danger still lies in praising a child. Such praise indicates envy.</p> <p>All rooms of the house (except the kitchen and bathroom) are multi-purpose; family, friends, and acquaintances may come at a moment's notice, so Iranian families are always prepared to be hospitable</p>
Learning needs	Iranians are generally very well educated.

IRAQ

Culture name of refugees	Iraqi
Alternative country names	Republic of Iraq
Location	Bordered by Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and the Persian Gulf
State of domestic affairs	<p>Following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the United Nations imposed an economic embargo and trade sanctions against Iraq. In 1996 the United Nations modified the sanctions and implemented the oil-for-food program, which allows Iraq to pump and sell a limited amount of oil for humanitarian purposes, with all transactions taking place through an offshore escrow account. Two-thirds of the proceeds are to be spent on food and medicine for the Iraqi people; the remaining third is to be directed to victims of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.</p> <p>Many civilians suffer from targeted persecution, attacks by insurgent groups, kidnappings, assassinations, military offenses, criminal activity, and rape. An estimated 100 Iraqis die each day. The neighboring countries are closing their borders to Iraqi refugees, so thousands are currently living without access to security and basic provisions.</p> <p>Many Iraqi refugees were working closely with and helping the U.S. military, U.S. contractors, and American humanitarian organizations. The fact that refugees work with the U.S. is the very reason why they were targeted for persecution and had to flee Iraq.</p>
Languages	Iraqi Arabic (spoken language); Modern Standard Arabic (taught in school); Kurdish
Religion	95% Islamic; there are two forms of Muslims in Iraq, the majority Shias (Shiites) and the minority Sunnis. Muslims gather at the mosque every Friday for afternoon prayer.
Food customs	Prior to the United Nations economic sanctions, the traditional

	<p>diet included rice with soup or sauce, accompanied by lamb and vegetables.</p> <p>Today, because food is tightly rationed, most people eat rice or another grain sometimes with sauce. Both vegetables and meat are hard to find.</p> <p>Since the sanctions, items that are imported through the oil-for-food program are distributed to people in a food basket on the first of each month. The rations are estimated to last twenty to twenty-three days and include flour, tea, sugar, rice, beans, milk, cooking oil, soap, and salt.</p> <p>In rural areas it is customary for families to eat together out of a common bowl, while in urban areas individuals eat with plates and utensils.</p>
Ethnic groups of Iraq	<p>75% Arabic ; 25% Kurdish; the remaining population is divided between Assyrian, Turkoman, Chaldean, Armenian, Yazidi, and Jewish</p>
Gender roles	<p>Iraq is one of the more progressive Muslim countries, where women have been able to pursue careers and maintain a family. Public dress is less restricting.</p> <p>Marriage is expected of everyone. Children belong to their father's family, and he is automatically awarded custody in divorce cases.</p> <p>Women are responsible for all domestic and child-care activities. In extended domestic units other female members also take care of the children.</p> <p>Cross-gender platonic friendships almost never occur in Iraqi society: Just about any friendly overture on the part of an American woman to an Iraqi man will be interpreted as a sexual or romantic advance. Expressing affection in public is never done in Arab society.</p>
Other cultural practices	<p>Traditional Arab homes are very private, and usually consist of a man, his wife and children, mother (if she is still living) and any unmarried sisters.</p> <p>In general, both adults and children keep to themselves and are not loud and boisterous, especially in public.</p> <p>Men commonly hold hands or kiss when greeting each other, but this is not the case for men and women. Respect is given to the elderly and women, especially those with children.</p> <p>The extended family is important socially and politically, and controls one's social status. Individual behavior is very much constrained by the desire not to bring shame on the family.</p> <p>Arab refugees might be puzzled at our American customs involving the necessity of invitations and giving notice before we visit. An Iraqi family might issue a general invitation, not realizing</p>

	<p>that they must pin down a specific time and place, then sit at home socially isolated and lonely, wondering why Americans are so unsociable.</p> <p>Hospitality is cherished tradition, to the point that Iraqis might insist on paying, even when it is spending more than they can afford.</p>
Learning needs	<p>Iraqis are generally very well educated. Many are trained professionals, entrepreneurs, and tradesmen.</p> <p>Fewer women than men receive the highest levels of education. Most educated Iraqis will have at least a limited ability to speak English.</p> <p>Many Iraqis who will be resettled in the U.S. will have suffered psychological and often physical trauma, including torture. Many of them may have lost family members and loved ones, leaving deep emotional scars. Like all refugees, Iraqis are looking for a community that will welcome them and help begin to regain their sense of security and human dignity.</p>

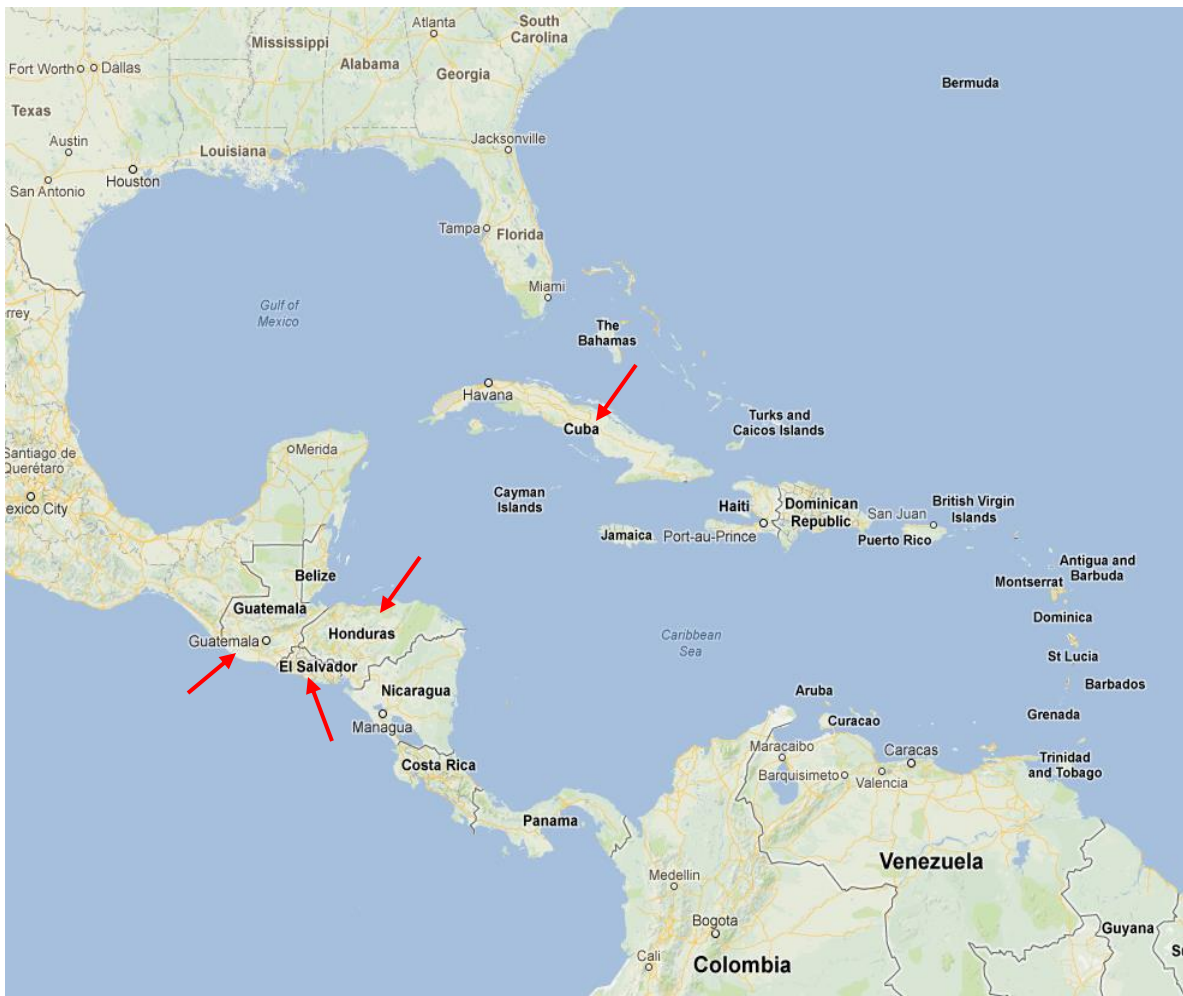
KURDISTAN

Culture name of refugees	Kurdish, Kurds
Alternative country names	Kurdistan is not its own country, but a region made up of adjacent parts of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq
Location	Southwest Asia
State of domestic affairs	<p>Turkey: During the 1920s and 1930s, large scale Kurdish rebellions in Turkey resulted in massive massacres and expulsion of hundreds of thousands. Since the 1970s, renewed violence of the Kurdish–Turkish conflict created about 3,000,000 displaced, many of which remain unsettled.</p> <p>Iraq: In the 1980s the Iraqi-Kurdish conflicts under Saddam Hussein’s regime aimed to “Arabize” the country and cleanse northern Iraq of its Kurdish majority using chemical weapon and genocide. The Iran–Iraq War, which spanned from 1980 to 1988, the first Gulf War and subsequent rebellions all together generated several millions of primarily Kurdish refugees, who mostly found refuge in Iran, while others dispersed into Kurdish diaspora in Europe and the Americas.</p>
Languages	Kurdish
Religion	Majority are Sunni Muslim
Food customs	<p>The Kurdish diet includes a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Cucumbers are especially common. Lamb and chicken are the primary meats. Breakfast is typically flat bread, honey, sheep or buffalo yoghurt, and a glass of black tea. Savory dishes are usually served with rice or flat bread. Lamb and vegetables are simmered in a tomato sauce to make a stew usually served with rice. Do not eat pork.</p>

Gender roles	Unlike many neighboring Muslim populations, Kurdish women are not secluded and do not wear the face veil. Kurdish men and women participate in mixed-gender dancing during feasts, weddings and other social celebrations.
Other cultural practices	Culturally similar to Iranian people
Learning needs	



CARIBBEAN/CENTRAL AMERICA



CUBA

Culture name of refugees	Cuban
Alternative country names	Republic of Cuba
Location	90 miles south of the Florida Keys in the Caribbean Sea
State of domestic affairs	During the 1959 Revolution, Fidel Castro came to power and the Cuban government became communist. Castro based many of his socialist reforms of the model of the Soviet Union, which was a major trading and political partner. The Cuban economy has struggled since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990. Cuban responses to this challenge have sparked a new wave of immigration to the United States, especially to Florida. An

	agreement reached between the United States and Cuba in September, 1994, expands the number of legal Cuban immigrants to 20,000 per year.
Languages	Spanish
Religion	Religion not been as influential in the culture of Cuba as in other Latin American nations. It is difficult to practice religion openly and be successful in Cuban society.
Food customs	Rice and beans are staples, supplemented by fried plantains, tubers, and vegetables. Pork and chicken have overtaken beef as more economic meat choices. Ice cream is a special treat and a national obsession.
Ethnic groups of Cuba	Mixture of Caucasian descendants of the original settlers from Spain, black descendants of the slave population, and Chinese descendants of immigrant workers. These main groups and smaller ethnicities have intermarried to create a distinct Cuban population. Historically has struggled with racial issues, and racism is deeply embedded in the white Cuban ideology. Cubans are acutely aware of fine gradations in phenotypes and have words to describe every shade of brown and black. All Cubans have a strong sense of “Cubanidad,” or cultural identity.
Gender roles	Gender equality is the official socialist ideal, although sexism is still prevalent and women still do most of the domestic work. Publicly, a man is considered the head of household although within the home, the woman usually has control.
Other cultural practices	Cuban music, a mixture of Spanish and African elements, is a distinctive part of culture and is well-known around the world. Because Cuban society is communist, many Cuban refugees will see social benefits, such as healthcare, a job, housing, and higher education as basic rights. Cuban values stress collective wealth and collective political awareness. People who have lived in the Cuban social system may be struck negatively by the materialism, winner-take-all capitalism, individualism, competition, crime, and racism of the United States. Being generous and hospitable is a highly valued quality. It is rude not to greet every man with a handshake and every woman with a kiss on the cheek. Touching as a demonstration of affection is not taboo and does not carry a sexual connotation. Cubans like to complain and argue heatedly.
Learning needs	There is often little motivation to learn English and move to areas with better jobs, because refugees fit so well into the Spanish-speaking, Cuban-American society.

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