

**Title:** Invisible Scars: A Glimpse into Mental Health Issues Faced by Refugees  
**Presenter:** Hedieh Sorouri, Irvine Valley College  
**Mentor:** Natasha Synycia

In 2019 the United Nations reported that over 25 million refugees worldwide were forced to flee their country of origin. The past and current experiences of refugees leave them psychologically vulnerable, fueling the critical need for mental health programs in refugee camps. Language barriers, family separation, hostility from the host population, social isolation, and traumatic experiences contribute to the development of mental health problems among refugees throughout their translocation (Gulland). A systematic review of the more than 167,000 refugees who currently live in America, revealed approximately 40% have anxiety, 44% have depression, and 36% have symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and only 3% were referred to mental health services following a screening (Krogstad). These drastic numbers shed light on the urgency of the refugee mental health crisis, demanding action to remedy and raise awareness of the issues that refugees face.

Furthermore, powerful poetry by refugees provides first-hand evidence of detrimental dislocation effects. Poetry is a medium where people release troubling thoughts and festering emotions. Countless refugees find momentary, therapeutic relief in their musings and connect with their locked-up emotions. When taken together, psychological studies and personal testimonies of refugee poets make an eloquent case for the urgent need for refugee mental health services, reform of existing services, and a lasting solution to the worldwide refugee crisis. Refugees are inextricably woven into the fabric of their host country's communities. The promotion, protection, and restoration of their well-being and mental health should be viewed as a vital concern for all human beings across the world.

## Citations

Gulland, Anne. "The Refugee Crisis: What Care Is Needed and How Can Doctors Help?" *BMJ:*

*British Medical Journal*, vol. 351, 2015. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/26521797](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26521797).

Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "Key Facts about Refugees to the U.S." *Pew Research Center*, Pew

Research Center, 7 Oct. 2019, [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/).

Mahmoud, Emtithal. *Sisters' Entrance*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2018.

"Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response." *World Health Organization*, World Health

Organization, 30 Mar. 2018, [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response).

Sajja, Shilpa. "Psychiatry researcher studies mental health in refugee camps". *The Stanford Daily:*

*Stanford University*, October 5, 2016, Wednesday. [https://advance-lexis-com.ezproxy.ivc.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5KW7-4WG1-DY7P-T1RX-00000-00&context=1516831](https://advance.lexis-com.ezproxy.ivc.edu/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:5KW7-4WG1-DY7P-T1RX-00000-00&context=1516831).