

# ROOTS & ROUTES

Vol 12, No. 7, July 2023

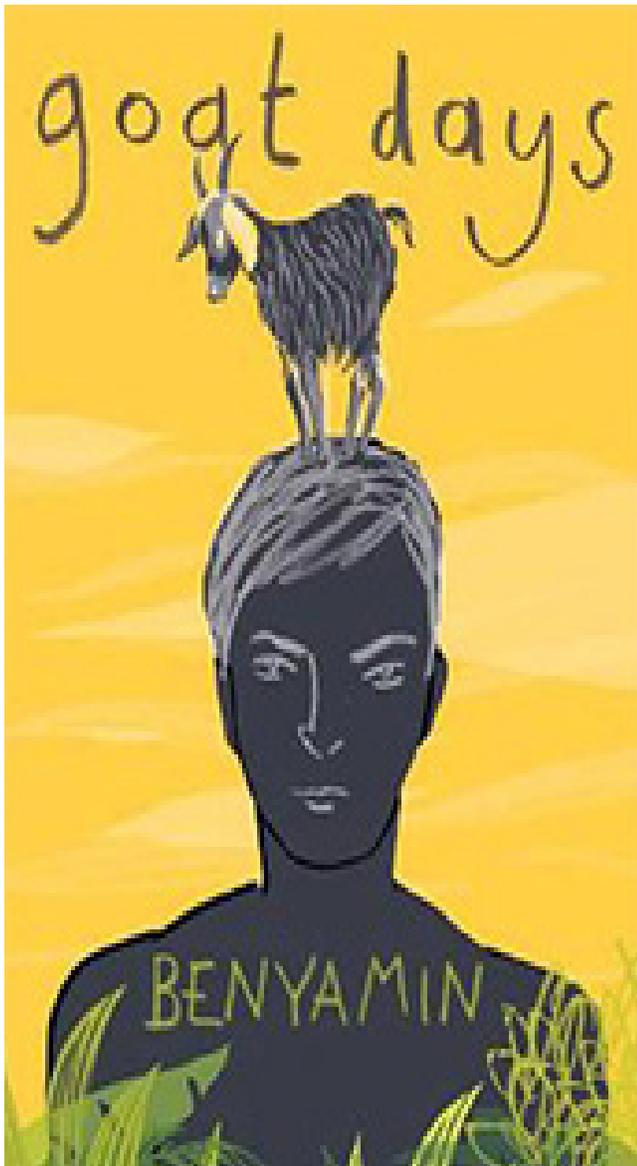


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# Editor's Note



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Dear Readers,

Greetings!

The issue of refugee is not new to the world, and almost daily, we come across to the news of challenges that refugees face. Nonetheless, the resettlement of refugees is one of the areas that provide a relief in the hard journey of refugees. Resettlement is the process that help the refugees to find a new place or home. It is process that help the refugees to get a fresh or a new start in a foreign land. Depending on the environment of the host nation the process of resettlement gives refugees a chance to bridge a safe future for them.

In this edition, we bring you the insightful article that deals with resettlement of the refugees. The current edition contains an article, an event and a book review. The article “*Refugee Resettlement in the United States*”, by **Himani Chauhan** deal into policies, process, and practice for the resettlement of the refugees. The current issue shares a special coverage on “4<sup>th</sup> International e-Conference – theme *Migration Governance and COVID-19: Perspectives, Policies, Opportunities, and Challenges*”, Session -V by **Angelo GianturcoColetta**. The issue also carries a book review “*The Goat Days*”, by **Mohammed Unais A V**.

Your feedback is invaluable to us. We encourage readers to participate and share their experiences with us to have a meaningful engagement. You can communicate with us through email at [editorinchief@grfdt.com](mailto:editorinchief@grfdt.com). We wish you happy reading and look forward to your suggestions and comments.

Feroz Khan

## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

In mid-October 2021, President Joe Biden announced that the United States would be allowing up to 125,000 refugees into the country for this financial year. However, it is unsure whether or not the United States will be able to meet its goal due to the backlog from various events, including COVID-19 and, more significantly, the previous Trump administration. As a result, the month (October) began with the release of the most recent refugee admittance and resettlement figures, which were not even close to the ceiling Biden announced last year.

### **Presidential Determination during past Administrations**

The number of refugees that have been allowed to enter the United States has significantly decreased ever since Trump came to power. This number has traditionally been set through a refugee resettlement ceiling officially known as the Presidential Determination (LIRS 2020). The ceiling is a figure that the government of the day sets by consulting and reaching an agreement with the House and Senate of Judiciary Committees to explain how many refugees they plan to admit and the impact this will have on their economy and foreign policy (LIRS 2020). However, there is no formal obligation to meet this goal. So whilst on paper, they have written how many they plan to admit, in practice, they can stop admitting refugees once they have met this Presidential Determination (LIRS 2020).

The number of refugees admitted and resettled under the Obama Administration has remained rather high. In particular, since 1980, the Presidential Determination has tended to be around 95,000 persons (LIRS 2020). Although due to 9/11, 2002 had the lowest Presidential Determination of 70,000, with only 27,131 refugees being admitted (Migration Policy Index n.d.). The highest Presidential Determination was set to 110,000 refugees by Obama in 2016 (LIRS 2020). However,

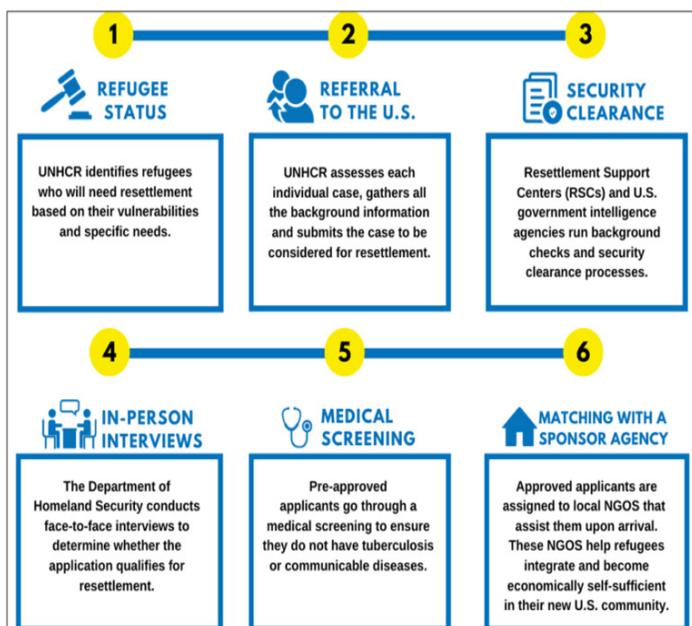
this figure was significantly reduced to 50,000 as soon as the term of the Trump Administration began (LIRS 2020). Unfortunately, these figures continued to decrease during the four years that Trump remained in power. The ceiling dropped to 45,000 in 2018, 30,000 in 2019, and 18,000 in 2020 (Migration Policy Index n.d.). The 2020 ceiling was the lowest that it had ever been, which was heightened by the restrictions posed as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This is because the Pandemic “restricted travel, as well as the ability to safely interview resettlement applicants” (Abdalla, 2021).

Since Biden’s Presidential Term began, he has slowly been increasing the ceiling. In 2021, the figure increased to 62,500, and for this year (2022), it has increased to 125,000 (Migration Policy Index n.d.). This is a highly significant figure as it is 15,000 more than what Obama had set in 2016. It is also important to look at the ceiling with regard to the number of refugees that were actually admitted and resettled by the Biden Administration. Despite 62,500 refugees being set in 2021, only 11,411 refugees were admitted and resettled, which is a mere 18% (Migration Policy Index n.d.). In addition, only 25,465 have been admitted and resettled this year, which accounts for 20% of their set goal (Montoya-Galvez 2022). This reflects how despite the Presidential Determination being set very high, only a mere percentage of refugees are actually being admitted and resettled in the United States.

### **Resettlement Process in the United States**

The process of resettlement in the United States takes approximately 2 years; however, in reality, it often takes many more years. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has provided a brief summary of the process, which I have attached below. In addition, the top ten states for refugee resettlement in the United States are California, Texas,

New York, Michigan, Washington, Kentucky, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Ohio (UNHCR 2022).



Source: <https://www.voanews.com/a/biden-administration-considers-expediting-resettlement-of-ukrainian-refugees-with-us-connections-/6486906.html>

With the announcement of this year’s admitted and resettled refugees, the case of Chantal Nabageni was brought to light. Chantal is a Congolese refugee living in East Moline, Illinois, who has been waiting for her husband to join her and her daughter for the past four years (Montoya-Galvez, 2022). Before arriving in the United States, Chantal and her family were resettled refugees in Burundi for 13 years (Montoya-Galvez, 2022). During this time, she met and married her husband (Montoya-Galvez, 2022). In 2018, the family’s resettlement journey to the United States began; however, her husband was unable to join them as Chantal applied for refugee resettlement before she was married (Montoya-Galvez 2022). After arriving in the United States, in 2019, Chantal applied for her husband to join them as he was married to a refugee, yet he has still been unable to enter the United States (Montoya-Galvez 2022). Chantal also gave birth following her arrival in the United States without her husband by her side (Montoya-Galvez, 2022). In addition, the

restrictions of the Pandemic did not help her case as it just made her long for her husband more (Montoya-Galvez 2022). However, in 2021, Chantal and her daughter were able to travel to Burundi to reunite with her husband (Montoya-Galvez 2022). This reflects how despite the Biden Administration wanting to increase the numbers of refugees, not much is being done on the resettlement and processing front to actually get them to the United States.

Chantal claims that it is stressful to provide for her daughter and family as she is studying and working full-time, in addition to constantly worrying about her husband (Montoya-Galvez 2022). However, in the past year, Citizenship and Immigration Service officials have been working on processing pending refugee cases that have been held up due to Trump’s Administration and the backlog of COVID-19 (Montoya-Galvez 2022). This is reflected by 44,000 refugee applicants being interviewed in 2022 as opposed to the 9,100 interviewed in 2021 (Montoya-Galvez 2022). The refugee resettlement process typically involves 6 steps, but most of them tend to take more time. In particular, security and medical checks take a lot more time as they rely on others to take them.

### The Future of Refugee Resettlement in the United States

The case of Chantal thus reflects the flaws in the United States’ Refugee Resettlement Process. The Biden Administration claims to resettle many refugees, but the figures reflect the opposite, as only a mere percentage of their ceiling are actually being admitted and resettled in the United States. In effect, it will be interesting to see what measures the United States will take so they can meet their goal. In addition, it will also be interesting to see how the Russian Invasion of Ukraine will impact this. Thus, Chantal’s case reflects how families get separated when they are seeking refuge. In effect, future refugee resettlement should emphasise family reunifications so families can safely and happily start a new life together.

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**Himani Chauhan** is an International Relations & History graduate and is currently pursuing a Master of Migration Studies from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand). She comes from a family of immigrants, which has shaped her experiences, views, and interests in wanting to further explore and work in this area of study. Her area of interest includes – Migration, History, and Human Rights.

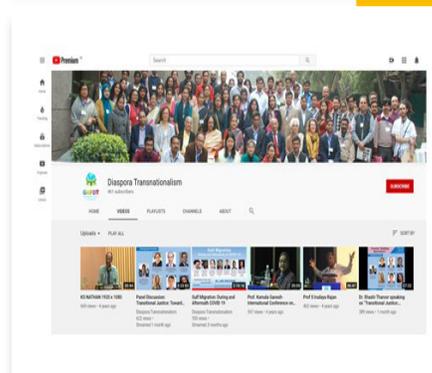
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# MIGRATION AND DIASPORAS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

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## 4TH INTERNATIONAL E-CONFERENCE ON MIGRATION, GOVERNANCE, AND COVID-19: PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES: SESSION ON FORCED MIGRATION & HUMAN RIGHTS

The seventh session of the 4th International E-Conference on “Migration, Governance, and COVID-19: Perspectives, Policies, Opportunities, and Challenges”, was held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The theme of the session was “Forced Migration & Human Rights”. The session was chaired by **Dr. Monika Bisht Ranjan**, an Executive Committee member of the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism.

The first speaker of this session was **Fiore Bran Aragon** whose paper was titled, “Forced Migration, integration, and solidarity: Experiences of Nicaraguan “Autoconvocado” women in Costa Rica during Covid-19”. In her paper, Fiore Bran Aragon highlighted and analysed the socio-economic and cultural integration of Nicaraguan forced migrant women in Costa Rica in the context of COVID- 19. Her paper seeks to understand how integration processes are shaped by government policies, public discourse, and xenophobic practices. In this context of social polarization, some groups of forced migrants, whom she call ‘autoconvocados’ (self- organized) have used their previous experiences as community organizers to create self-organized initiatives for integration, focusing on integration among newcomers, and between migrants and locals. However, she argues that these initiatives have developed ‘solidarity practices’ that focus on human rights and the contributions of migrants to their host communities, thereby creating spaces for exchange and ‘interdependence’ between migrants, locals, and institutions.

**Nazh Tore** presented her paper on “Missing Migrant Children in Europe”. Her paper examined the huge impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and societies, challenging humanity to adapt to new lifestyles, working conditions and social relationships. She also argues that the restrictive measures to limit the spread of the pandemic have heightened the risks to which certain children are exposed. According to her paper, data from a research association known as Lost in

Europe, 18,292 children in migration went missing in the region between the years 2018 and 2020. The data was collected by Lost in Europe in 30 European countries. Her paper explicitly examines the plight and vulnerability of missing migrant children who continue to face precarious experiences as result of war etc. She highlighted that there are mainly three different, but interrelated factors contributing to the special needs of children on the move: their dependence, their vulnerability and their developmental needs (i.e., their requirements for healthy growth and development at different ages). Particularly in their early years, children are dependent upon their parents or other adults to provide the basic necessities for their survival.

**Manjima A & Tanay Thakur** presented the paper titled, “Racial profiling of immigrants: Do some bodies matter more?”. Their paper sheds light on the hypocrisy of the current international order, where racism and xenophobia underline the glossed notions of multilateralism, collective security, and shared prosperity. They argue that the concept of racism encompasses a wide variety of social phenomena, ranging from systemic inequality, institutional discrimination, internalized stereotypes, and racial attitudes. They further argue that the promises of unbiased and accessible human rights by liberal democracies and multilateral institutions, as well as key documents like UNHCR or GCM, racism continues to be an unjust reality that confronts immigrants across the world. Their paper attempts to uncover the racialization of migration discourse in the policy practices of governments, international institutions, and at the grass root levels in the host countries, for instance, among the frontline public sector workers. As a result, this curtails the access of migrants and refugees to social welfare and healthcare entitlements and makes them vulnerable to violence and human trafficking. They concluded with an analysis of possible measures that can be undertaken to ensure inclusivity within the international order and root out the evil of racism.

The fourth speaker was **Monica Vereza** whose paper was

on “Biden Dismantling Trump’s Migration Policy”. In her paper, she examined Joe Biden’s campaign pledges during his run for the presidency, who radically pledged to shift the narrative away from the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant stance and toward the one that was more positive and humane. She claims that Joe Biden pledged to reverse all of Trump’s restricting and anti-immigrant acts and policies. Her research paper compares and contrasts the Biden and Trump administrations in terms of migration policy.

The final speaker was **Saba Fatima** whose paper was on “Syrian Refugee Women and COVID-19: Life is a Crisis within a Crisis”. She examined the plight of Syrian Refugee women and the precarious impacts of COVID-19 on their lives and livelihoods. She further argues that COVID-19 has exacerbated extreme poverty and violence against women. The pandemic has weakened an already precarious source of income for refugees and the informal labour market, according to Omar Kadkoy, Policy Analyst at the Turkish Economic

Policy Research Foundation. Her study concludes that women who have experienced a crisis or been displaced face a triple barrier of COVID-19, displacement, and gender-related problems. However, policies and enough finance have not yet been secured for Syrian refugee women’s economic empowerment.

The session ended with a concluding remark and a thankful statement from **Dr. Monika Bisht**, the chair of the session on Forced Migration and Human Rights with **Andrew Mendy** as the rapporteur of the session.

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**Andrew Mendy** holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science from the University of the Gambia. He is a research scholar at Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism. His research interests include Global Politics, Postcolonial Africa Literature, and Migration Studies.

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**Theme: Sudan People on the Move**



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Paediatric Consultant Diaspora  
Engagement Expert

Theme: Sudan: Impact  
of the War on  
Children and  
Young People



**7th June, 2023**

3 PM (CEST), 6:30 PM (IST), 9AM (Toronto)

## CLIMATE AND HUMAN MIGRATION: PAST EXPERIENCES, FUTURE CHALLENGES

Goat days is a novel written by Author Benyamin, born in Kerala (India). The book was originally written in Malayalam under the name 'Aadujeevitham', translated into English by Joseph Koyipally. The book is published in 2012 by Penguin Books and comprises of 43 chapters and 164 pages. It is translated into many other languages which include Arabic, Nepali, Thai, and Odiya. The Malayalam edition of the novel won the Kerala Literary Academy Award In 2009[1]. The Novel appeared in the Man Asian Literary award and was shortlisted for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2014[2]. After the translation of this book from Malayalam to English, the novel made a helping hand to enable the voices of marginalised labour migrants audible across the globe. The novel discovers the diasporic elements of the protagonist's journey. It acts as an eye-opener for people who desire to migrate to foreign lands in search of better monetary conditions.

The novel illustrates the life of Najeeb Muhammed, an Indian emigrant who dreams to work in the Middle East Nations to earn enough money to settle down his old debts and provide a better life for his family. The novel explores the harsh brutalities those migrants faced when they moved to another land for a better livelihood for their families. The protagonist Najeeb Muhammad, a hardworking youngster decided to go to the gulf country for better employment and monetary opportunities by mortgaging his house, his wife's jewelry, and borrowing money from his family. But everything got changed upside down when he landed in Riyadh. Najeeb and his friend Hakeem were abducted and forced to move towards a goat shed in a desert by a local slave called Arbab. From that moment Najeeb knows that his life is not leading to what he dreams of. Najeeb lived in an isolated place called '**masara**' where he survived with some goats and

camels surrounding the desert (P:45) Human company was forbidden for him and he could interact only with some goats around him. In a feeling of alienation, he slowly cultivated a strong familial bond with the goats. Thus, he continued his wretched condition of life by doing every kind of job in the middle of deprivation and agony in an unknown Arabian desert.

The story is divided into four parts - **Prison, Desert, Escape, and Refuge**. In the first part Prison, the novel begins with a short section from the end of his time in Saudi Arabia where he was voluntarily enrolled in a large country prison called Sumesi prison which he added it was the best place to survive under any circumstances. The facility for undocumented migrants is also not that bad, it appeared more like a disaster-relief camp for Najeeb. It is far better than his condition in the desert. Najeeb describes sumesi prison as a place where "the prisoners, lying down in whatever space they could manage, resembled dead bodies laid out after a natural disaster" (P:13), and elsewhere refers to his particular block as "a railway station where people arrived and departed" (P:25). The protagonist also enjoys a new kind of freedom in the prison where he realized that he is not the only victim of the migration, several people were struggling in different ways.

In the second part '**Desert**', the author tries to convey the intensity of oppression and suppression the protagonist faced while he was in the desert. The protagonist faces different forms of exploitation from the local Arab who abducted Najeeb and his friend Hakeem. The Arbab does not treat him like a human being nor does he provide the basic amenities necessary for a man to survive. Najeeb continued his animal-like life in the desert which is completely under the control

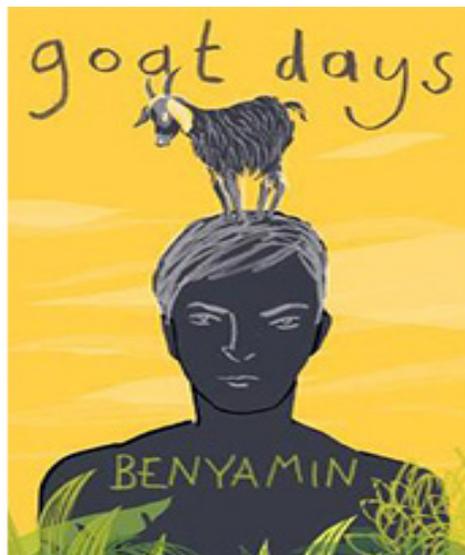


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of the local Arab. Thus, he feels that his life has become meaningless and is left without any choice or freedom.

In the third part ‘**Escape**’, the protagonist tried to abscond from the desert, but he gets caught several times by the Arab which makes the situation far worse. At last, he escaped from the alien land where he is not familiar with any people. He believed that his faith in his god, Allah helps him to survive these awful days in the desert. On their long journey through the desert, he lost his brother like friend Hakeem also. On his way, he ended up in front of the hotel which is owned by a Malayali named Kunjikka. With his help, he stayed there for a period of three months where his wounds healed and regained his health. From there after several days of planning, he decided to give himself up to the police. Thus, in this section, the novelist conveyed the helplessness the migrant faced while he is entrapped in the desert.

In the fourth part ‘**Refuge**’, the author introduces the readers to the system of immigration detention where the protagonist reaches the prison named Sumesi where he enjoys a kind of freedom that he never enjoyed in his days in the desert. For him, life in prison realizes that he is not the only one who has been a victim of the other side of migration which is dreadful and horrible. He says, “Everyone who ended up in the jail had a similar story like mine to tell—of pain, sorrow, suffering, tears, innocence, and helplessness”(P:19). Thus, the journey from the desert to prison becomes a journey from the burden of slavery to freedom.

**Goat days** clearly narrates the experiences of one such migrant worker to the Gulf from India who stood determined even in the state of lack and misery in an unknown desert. The author has clearly presented all the sorrows and misinterpretations that Najeeb endured during his span in Saudi Arabia. This is not just Najeeb’s story, it is the life story of millions of migrants traveling to gulf countries for the sake of better livelihood for their families. Thus, the author clearly examines the

causes of voluntary migration and its impacts on the national as well as international arena. It also provides an insight into the lives of many oppressed people who suffer in various countries other than their homeland for a better life. This novel will be helpful for further studies in the field of migration and diasporic studies. Being a migrant, his further novels also concentrate on the topics of migration which will be a driving force for other migrant workers to reveal their stories to the public.

#### **Reference:**

Benyamin/ Joseph Koyippally (2012), *The Goat Days*, India: Penguin Books, ISBN: 9780143416333, 164 pages

[1] <https://www.thehindu.com/books/benyamin/article4336130.ece?homepage=true>

[2]<http://edueruditio.blogspot.com/2018/05/days-introduction-benyamin-is-famous.html>

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