

PRESENTER:  
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**Central Question:** The US is often considered a safe haven where those who are escaping political persecution abroad can resettle and exercise political freedom. However, if the pathway to citizenship is in the hands of the state, in what ways might the failures of the citizenship process and immigration policy continue to silence the voices of the persecuted?

### Methods

- Interviews with women peacebuilders in exile
- Literature review
  - Analysis of Kurdish & Rohingya refugeehood/exile

### Legal Framework

- US constitution → citizens and non-citizens are protected
  - Plyler v. Doe – upheld equal protection clause of 14th amendment
    - In most cases, non-citizens cannot be denied fundamental (and some fundamental-adjacent) rights
- UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees
  - Article 33 → “No Contracting State shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened...”
  - Article 34 → contracting states “shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees”

### Limitations

- Study does not extensively explore concrete policy solutions to key failures of the citizenship process, which warrants further investigation

# The Passport Paradox

## *When Citizenship Becomes Oppression*

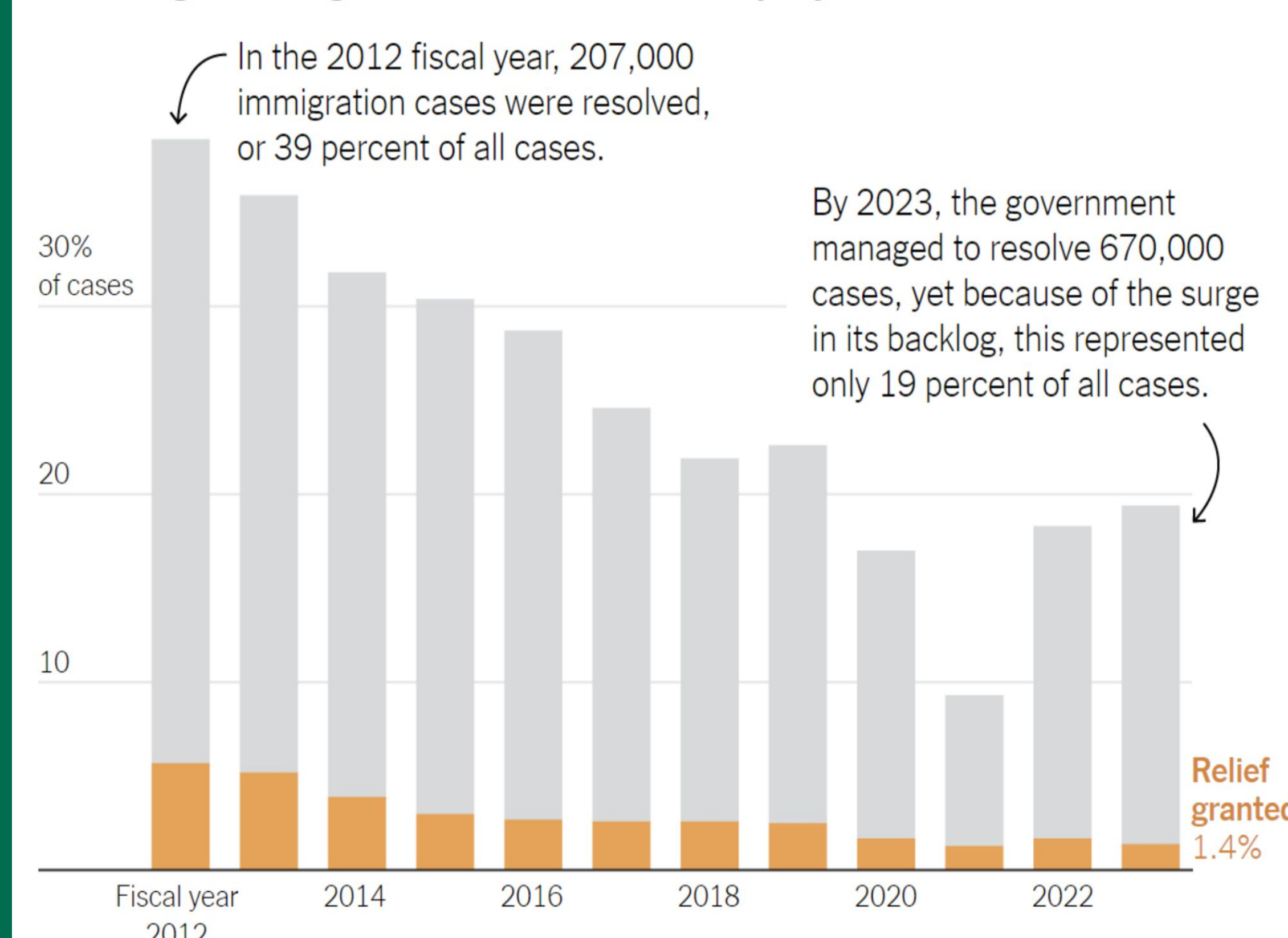
### Argument

The citizenship process is flawed in 3 crucial ways:

1. Unmet survival needs for resettled people
2. No clear, timely path to permanent residence/citizenship
3. Influenced by geopolitical negotiations between US and oppressive governments in home countries

These conditions, in part created by US policy, impact the extent to which victims of persecution can continue their activism and exercise political rights in the US

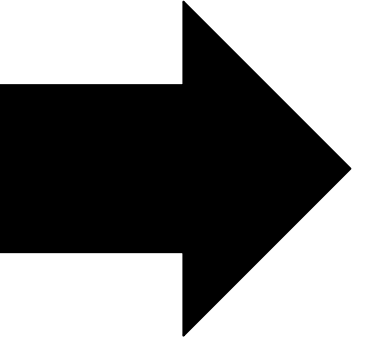
Percentage of immigration court cases resolved per year



### Conclusion

- In accordance with international law, Trump-led US government must ensure that resettled people escaping persecution are safe from deportation while on naturalization pathway
- This pathway needs to be restructured so that asylum status and permanent residence can be acquired within a reasonable time frame
- Meanwhile, these resettled people must have expanded access to basic needs (e.g. healthcare, childcare) to increase the efficacy of the assimilation process
- These changes allow victims of persecution to better exercise their right to political expression as outlined in the US constitution

Works  
Cited



### 1 – Unmet Survival Needs

- Income
  - Long wait time to acquire work permit, social security
  - Cannot engage full-time in activism work because not financially feasible
- Access to healthcare and childcare
  - Federal documents not accepted at certain hospitals
  - Quality healthcare for entire family is unaffordable
- Diaspora networks
  - In many places of resettlement, no diaspora network exists to assist with resettlement and continuing activism
  - Lack of social interaction for mental well-being
- International travel
  - Risk of being unable to return to US
  - Prevents activists from attending conferences and stifles their voices

### 2 – Immigration System Failures

- Asylum and green card approval
  - Often takes years to acquire each due to backlog
- Humanitarian Parole – insufficient, but also at risk of extinction
  - Legal immigration option for many victims of persecution; can be renewed, but does not provide pathway to permanent residency
  - Trump Administration revoked humanitarian parole from hundreds of thousands of legal Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan immigrants

### 3 - Diplomatically-Induced Political Repression

- Case study: Northeast Syria (“Syrian Kurdistan”)
  - 2019 US withdrawal from Syrian Kurdistan was green light for Turkish invasion of the region; over 300,000 civilians displaced
  - Accompanied by decrease in refugee admissions to the US; only 62 Syrian refugees admitted in 2018
  - Kurds, a minority ethnic group long persecuted by Turkey, find that Turkish government has influenced US policy