

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2140

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## AN ACT

To prevent child marriage in refugee settlements  
administered by the United Nations, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2   *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2       This Act may be cited as the “Preventing Child Mar-  
3 riage in Displaced Populations Act”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5       Congress finds the following:

6           (1) According to UNICEF, 12 million girls  
7 marry before the age of 18 every year.

8           (2) Early marriage denies children, especially  
9 girls, their right to make vital decisions about their  
10 well-being, including relating to their health, family,  
11 and career. Child brides are less likely to finish their  
12 education, and are at higher risk for abuse, con-  
13 tracting HIV, and dying while pregnant or giving  
14 birth.

15           (3) Child marriage also imposes substantial eco-  
16 nomic costs to developing countries, impeding devel-  
17 opment and prosperity gains.

18           (4) Displaced populations are particularly vul-  
19 nerable to child marriage, in communities where pov-  
20 erty, instability, and displacement put pressure on  
21 families to marry children, particularly young girls,  
22 off at a young age.

23           (5) One United Nations (UN) study found that  
24 child marriage rates were 4 times higher among dis-  
25 placed Syrian refugees than among Syrians before

1 the crisis. This indicates that displacement, insta-  
2 bility, and poverty are driving child marriages.

3 (6) United Nations agencies, including  
4 UNICEF and UNHCR, have acknowledged the dan-  
5 gers of child marriage and taken steps to address its  
6 risk in the populations they serve.

7 (7) The UN Joint Program on Child Marriage  
8 supports this work by building the resilience of pop-  
9 ulations to indirectly prevent child marriage and by  
10 generating new data and evidence on the prevalence  
11 of child marriage in humanitarian and fragile set-  
12 tings. For example, in Uganda, the UN Joint Pro-  
13 gram on Child Marriage helped 27,000 adolescent  
14 girls strengthen critical skills through school clubs  
15 and Go Back to School campaigns, as well as life-  
16 skills and financial literacy training.

17 (8) After the UN Joint Program on Child Mar-  
18 riage identified Yemen as one of its focus countries,  
19 65,000 people, of whom 45,000 are adolescents,  
20 were reached with awareness raising activities on the  
21 harms of child marriage in 2018 alone. As a result,  
22 local council representatives, elders, and community  
23 leaders from six districts signed a pledge to support  
24 advocacy efforts to end child marriage.

1 **SEC. 3. PREVENTING CHILD MARRIAGE IN DISPLACED POP-**  
2 **ULATIONS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—The President shall direct the  
4 United States Permanent Representative to the United  
5 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United  
6 States at the United Nations to call for an adoption of  
7 an agreed-upon definition of “child marriage” across  
8 United Nations agencies.

9 (b) STRATEGY.—The President shall direct the  
10 United States Permanent Representative to the United  
11 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United  
12 States at the United Nations to call for the development  
13 of a comprehensive strategy to address child marriage in  
14 refugee settlements administered by the United Nations.  
15 Such strategy should include the following:

16 (1) A mandate to regularly collect and report  
17 data related to the number of known or suspected  
18 child marriages taking place inside each such settle-  
19 ment.

20 (2) Protocols for United Nations personnel re-  
21 garding prevention and monitoring of child mar-  
22 riages inside each such settlement.

23 (3) A description of United Nations programs  
24 administered at such settlements that include—

1 (A) physical, mental, and emotional reha-  
2 bilitation and support to children who have ex-  
3 tricated themselves from child marriage; and

4 (B) alternatives to child marriage, such as  
5 education initiatives.

6 (4) Protocols regarding how United Nations  
7 personnel should—

8 (A) report adults participating in illegal  
9 child marriages in each such settlement; and

10 (B) monitor the prosecution of such adults  
11 by the authorities of the country in which the  
12 settlement at issue is located.

13 (c) RESEARCH.—The President shall direct the  
14 United States Permanent Representative to the United  
15 Nations to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United  
16 States at the United Nations to advocate for the United  
17 Nations and its appropriate agencies to include, as appro-  
18 priate, in all of its research into child marriage the rela-  
19 tionship between child marriage and violence against girls,  
20 including young children and infants.

21 (d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

22 (1) CHILD MARRIAGE.—The term “child mar-  
23 riage” means a formal marriage or informal union  
24 involving at least one person younger than age 18.

1           (2) ILLEGAL CHILD MARRIAGE.—The term “il-  
2       legal child marriage” means a child marriage that is  
3       illegal under the laws of the country in which the  
4       child marriage occurs.

Passed the House of Representatives June 10, 2019.

Attest:

*Clerk.*



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