

# Read This and You'll Never Complain About America Again

The United States is richly blessed. We rank near the top of global charts when it comes to safety, natural resources, wealth, access to education, life expectancy, job opportunity, personal freedom and the right to pursue our dreams. We have so much to be grateful for on this Thanksgiving holiday.

Yes, we have our “First-world problems”—and we’ve griped a lot during the recent presidential campaign about the cost of health care, the sluggish economy and the lack of high-paying jobs. But as we sit down on Thursday to eat our stuffed turkeys in our comfortable homes or apartments, I suggest we adjust our perspective by taking a look at how the rest of the world struggles to survive.

Are you grateful for what you have? If you make \$34,000 a year, you fall into the category of the wealthiest one percent of people on earth. That’s right. Most people live far below that margin. In fact, in many parts of the world, the average person lives on \$ a day.

Are you thankful for your freedoms? Are you thankful for peace in your streets? In many countries today, lives have been shattered by war, political oppression, terrorism and famine. Consider these seven global hot spots:

**1. North Korea:** There are 34,000 statues of the late North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung scattered around the nation, and all citizens are required to have his portrait hanging in their house. It is the most isolated, secretive and oppressive country in the world—a place where you can be tortured in a prison camp for watching a DVD in your home.

Most of North Korea’s 25 million residents suffer from malnutrition because food is rationed. Children are forced to

work. And no one is allowed to speak to anyone outside the country. Miles and miles of fences are built along the border to keep people inside the country. Defectors—if found—are executed or sent to prison camps.

**2. Nigeria:** A horrific humanitarian crisis has unfolded in Nigeria's northern region, where Boko Haram terrorists have killed 20,000 people. The United Nations has warned that 80,000 children may starve over the next year in Nigeria because violent Muslim militants have trapped families in areas where food is scarce. About 2.5 million people have been displaced by this violence. Boko Haram's campaign of terror includes burning churches, slaughtering the residents of entire villages and sexually assaulting children.

**3. Syria:** The numbers are staggering: 250,000 people have been killed in the civil war in Syria, and 11.6 million have been forced to flee their homes. Four million of these have been able to flee to other countries, but they face suspicion, poverty and harsh winters. At least six million Syrians have been forced from their homes inside the country.

Recent bombings by the Syrian government and by outside forces have made it nearly impossible for aid groups to bring food, shelter or medical care to those who have watched their nation unravel. Many of the refugees living in camps in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon or Jordan live in tents, storage sheds or even chicken coops.

**4. Yemen:** Some observers call this country the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet, but few people know what is happening in Yemen because the government keeps journalists out and forces its starving people to stay in. Since the war started in 2015, more than 10,000 people have been killed.

Rival armies, backed by Saudi Arabia on one side and Iran on the other, have bombed cities and left three million people displaced. Recent reports show that up to 14 million people in

Yemen are at risk of starvation.

**5. Afghanistan.** British and American troops began to pull out of Afghanistan during the Obama administration, and our attention shifted to other global problems. But as soon as Western soldiers left, Taliban warriors filled the void. Today, the number of civilian casualties in the Afghan war has exceeded the numbers from 2001, when the conflict began after 9/11.

Observers say today that the Taliban's campaign of terror continues. In many parts of the country, medical care is nonexistent, basic services are disrupted and Afghans are fleeing their country to find safety. Afghans now are the second largest group of refugees seeking safety in Europe.

**6. Central African Republic:** Most Americans probably couldn't identify the Central African Republic on a map. Yet this country of 4.9 million has been in crisis since 2013, when a Muslim group known as the Seleka toppled the government. Since then, the nation has been in a civil war that has resulted in thousands of civilian deaths. More than a half-million people have been displaced by the violence. To make matters worse, soldiers on both sides of the conflict have used rape as a weapon to punish women who are accused of choosing the wrong sides of the war.

**7. Venezuela:** The Marxist government of Hugo Chavez was supposed to bring wealth to rich and poor alike. But Chavez died in 2013, and today Venezuelans stand in line for hours to buy rice, bread or aspirin with currency that is worth less than the paper it is printed on.

The locals joke about "the Maduro diet," a reference to the hunger created by President Nicolás Maduro's policies. But it's not funny, because this once-prosperous nation now faces the threat of widespread starvation. Maduro had hoped Venezuela's huge oil fields would guarantee prosperity, but

the fall in the price of oil worsened the economic crisis. Now the country has the worst inflation rate, as well as the highest murder rate, in the world.

I'm not sharing these facts to make you feel guilty for being safe, well-fed or financially blessed. But before you complain about how bad things are in America, step back and look at your situation from a wider perspective. Be thankful. And let gratefulness adjust your attitude. {eoa}