## *SOURCE 1 - Hearing before the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee*

The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Its Impact on the Security of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

*By* [*Mark Krikorian*](http://cis.org/taxonomy/term/79) *November 2015*

The starting point of any policy debate is that the government of the United States has no responsibility to anyone but the citizens of the United States. As individuals delegated by the citizenry to deal with the business of the state, the president and members of Congress must necessarily put the interests of the American people before the interests of foreigners.

This means the United States government has no responsibility to refugees; they have no claim on it and no right to demand anything of it. We should base our decision-making on two principles: 1) Such policies must not pose a threat to the American people, and 2) the funds taken from the people through taxes for this purpose must be used to the maximum humanitarian effect.

**1. Security**

**Screening cannot be done adequately**

Officials have assured us that refugees are "are subject to more intensive security than any other type of traveler to the U.S. to protect against threats to our national security."[1](http://cis.org/testimony/Krikorian-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Impact-Security-US-Refugee-Admissions-Program#1) There is no reason to doubt this. The people in the departments of State and Homeland Security, and at the intelligence agencies they work with, are doing their best to protect our people from harm.

But this misses the point. The problem with trying to screen candidates for resettlement from Syria – or any other failed state, such as Somalia, Libya, Yemen, or Afghanistan – is not a lack of resources or commitment.

The problem is that it cannot be done.

Our vetting process is heavily oriented toward electronic checks of databases with biographical information and photos and fingerprints. But little information of that kind which could potentially disqualify a candidate for resettlement is available to us. DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson said last month that "one of the challenges that we'll have is that we're not going to know a whole lot about the individual refugees that come forward."[2](http://cis.org/testimony/Krikorian-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Impact-Security-US-Refugee-Admissions-Program#2)

We sometimes imagine information must be available for everybody abroad as it is here – birth certificates, death records, driver's licenses, school records, credit card charges, and all the other tracks we leave behind us as we navigate life in a modern, information-based society.

But such tracks are rare or nonexistent in much of the world even in the best of times. And in chaotic conditions like those of Syria – or Somali or Yemen or Libya or Afghanistan – what little existed of the information trail has gone up in smoke. As FBI Assistant Director Michael Steinbach told another committee of this House, "The concern in Syria is that we don't have systems in places on the ground to collect information to vet. ... You're talking about a country that is a failed state, that does not have any infrastructure, so to speak. So all of the datasets – the police, the intel services – that normally you would go to to seek information doesn't exist."

**2. Efficacy**

In addition to the security threats that refugee resettlement poses, any effort to extend humanitarian assistance to refugees must consider how effective it will be.

Bringing refugees into our country makes us feel good about ourselves. Newspapers run heart-warming stories of overcoming adversity; churches embrace the objects of their charity; politicians wax nostalgic about their grandparents.

But the goal of refugee assistance is not to make us feel good. It is to assist as many people as possible with the resources available. And resettling a relative handful of them here to help us bask in our own righteousness means we are sacrificing the much larger number who could have been helped with the same resources.

The difference in cost is enormous. The Center for Immigration Studies has calculated that it costs 12 times as much to resettle a refugee in the United States as it does to care for the same refugee in the neighboring countries of first asylum, namely Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.[11](http://cis.org/testimony/Krikorian-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Impact-Security-US-Refugee-Admissions-Program#11) The five-year cost to American taxpayers of resettling a single Middle Eastern refugee in the United States is conservatively estimated to be more than $64,000, compared with U.N. figures that indicate it costs about $5,300 to provide for that same refugee for five years in his native region.

In other words, each refugee we bring to the United States means that 11 others are not being helped with that money. Faced with 12 drowning people, only a monster would send them a luxurious one-man boat rather than 12 life jackets. And yet, with the best of intentions, that is exactly what we are doing when we choose one lucky winner to resettle here.

**3. Conclusion**

Congress has before it a variety of measures to address the Syrian refugee issue, including a temporary pause, a broader change in the refugee rules, and defunding proposals. As you consider how to proceed, I would urge you to keep in mind these two points:

1. The only way to reduce the security risk of resettling
2. Syrian refugees (or those from Somalia and other failed states) is to reduce the number we resettle.
3. The government's obligation to make the most effective use of whatever tax monies we decide to devote to refugee protection compels a shift in emphasis away from resettlement and toward protection in the region.

**End Notes**

1 [http://www.cis.org/rush/hearing-syrian-refugees-reassurance-and-storytel...](http://www.cis.org/rush/hearing-syrian-refugees-reassurance-and-storytelling)

2 [http://www.defenseone.com/management/2015/10/chattanoogas-wake-dhs-wants...](http://www.defenseone.com/management/2015/10/chattanoogas-wake-dhs-wants-revive-terrorism-alert-system/122748/)

3 [http://cis.org/cadman/why-syrian-refugee-vetting-will-be-indisputably-fa...](http://cis.org/cadman/why-syrian-refugee-vetting-will-be-indisputably-fallible)

4 "A separate world", *The Buffalo News*, September 23, 2002.

5 [http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/feb/24/islamist-terror-groups-t...](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/feb/24/islamist-terror-groups-target-minnesota-somali-ref/?page=all)

6 [http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/10/23/fbi-comey-isil-do...](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/10/23/fbi-comey-isil-domestic-probes/74455460/)

7 <http://cis.org/911-HowMilitantIslamicTerroristsEntered>

8 [http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/al-qaeda-kentucky-us-dozens-terrorists-cou...](http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/al-qaeda-kentucky-us-dozens-terrorists-country-refugees/story?id=20931131)

9 [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/idaho-jury-convicts-uzbek-refugee-...](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/idaho-jury-convicts-uzbek-refugee-terror-charges-article-1.2323902)

10 [http://news.yahoo.com/bosnians-reject-hatred-wake-terror-financing-case-...](http://news.yahoo.com/bosnians-reject-hatred-wake-terror-financing-case-060550317.html)

11 <http://cis.org/High-Cost-of-Resettling-Middle-Eastern-Refugees>

12 <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f9016576.html>

## *SOURCE 2 – article from Newsela and Institute for Policy Innovation*

PRO: Militants may sneak in with the refugees

President Barack Obama is once again faced with a problem of his own making. He has no one to blame but himself if some people no longer trust his assurances.

For seven years, the president has dismissed, demeaned and denounced those who have raised reasonable concerns about his policies.

When those concerns have turned out to be correct, as they often have, he ignores the evidence, insults his critics and asserts that everything is going well. Remember, for example, his assertion that Islamic State was being “contained." The attacks that followed that claim certainly proved that those who questioned him were right to be worried. Recall his promise of a post-partisan America in which Democrats and Republicans would be able to work together. Today, the country remains as divided as ever.

So when 31 governors turned their thumbs down on Obama’s decision to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees and distribute them among the states, they were sending a message: “We do not trust you and your administration to tell the truth or do the due diligence necessary to vet refugees.”

## Benefit Of The Doubt? No!

Let us be clear: Every governor knows this is a country of immigrants with a long and cherished tradition of helping refugees.

They also know that the vast majority of the Syrian refugees would be honest and law-abiding. Most are simply fleeing a violent civil war they had nothing to do with starting. Many are fleeing the Islamic State, which had taken over parts of their war-torn country. They would be thrilled to get a chance at a new start in America.

Even a vast majority is not 100 percent, however, and that presents a safety concern which is worth taking seriously. If even a few Islamic State fighters slipped in with the refugees, that could be a huge problem.

However, Obama, true to form, dismissed the concerns and ridiculed the critics. “Apparently they (the Republicans) are scared of widows and orphans coming into the United States of America,” the president said. He then claimed that the screening process would be the most careful and thorough process "conceivable.”

Is that so? Remember when Obama administration officials boasted about how well the HealthCare.gov website would work right before its problem-plagued rollout? So what about refugee screening technology? Why should we assume that would work any better?

Under normal conditions, elected officials and most of the public would take the president’s word. However, this president has misled the public so often that he has not earned the benefit of the doubt — and he is not getting it.

## Refugees Won't Be Properly Screened

The governors resisting the refugee resettlement simply do not trust Obama’s claim that all of the refugees will be checked out extremely carefully. Neither does the public. A Rasmussen poll showed some 60 percent of likely voters “oppose the settling of Syrian refugees in the state where they live.” Even many elected Democrats have their doubts.

This same president keeps trying to move prisoners from Guantanamo in Cuba to the United States. He has repeatedly assured governors that the prisoners, who are all suspected militants, are not a threat. The president continues to make that claim even though more than 100 of those who have been released have rejoined militant groups.

To make matters worse, the administration has resorted to making ridiculous statements about the Syrian refugees.

For example, the State Department says that only 2 percent of Syrian refugees admitted to this country since 2011 are “military-age males.” So what? Anyone watching the news can see that young and middle-age adult males make up a good portion of those currently fleeing Syria.

Even if the State Department restricted the 10,000 refugees to “widows and orphans,” widows have brothers and orphans have uncles. Wouldn’t there be a need to let other family members in, if not now, then soon, in order to help provide for the resettled women and children? And, of course, some suicide bombers have been women.

Here is the point: Those who are frustrated with the refugee stalemate need to focus their wrath on the president, not the governors. Obama entered the White House determined to prove that big government can do big things well. Instead, he has increased Americans’ long-held skepticism of big government.

I, for one, hope the administration, Congress and governors can find a solution that upholds the country’s long tradition as a shelter for refugees. The lack of trust in this case is not targeted so much at the Syrian refugees, but at the White House.

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*This essay is available to Tribune News Service subscribers. Tribune did not subsidize the writing of this column; the opinions are those of the writer and do not necessarily represent the views of Tribune or Newsela.*

## *SOURCE 3 – article from Newsela and Americans for Democratic Action*

CON: Don't play into fears about militant attacks

The U.S. governors refusing to accept Syrian refugees are not just morally wrong. They are also helping Islamic State.

Islamic State, also known as ISIS, is a militant group. Its members are trying to spread their own brand of Islam throughout the Middle East. They have conquered territory in Syria and Iraq, where they are now battling both Western and Arab forces.

The group's dream is to establish an Islamic state shaped after their own beliefs. They are using violence and fear to advance those ends. They see themselves as being at war not only with Arab governments, but with the West.

The first thing we need to understand is that Islamic State is actually weak. It claims responsibility for any act of violence carried out by Muslims on Western soil so that it can appear stronger than it actually is.

Most attacks have actually been the acts of do-it-yourself militants unconnected to any group. But Islamic State does not want us to know that. The group's fighters want us to believe they are everywhere. They want us to be afraid.

## Setting Muslims Against The West

Islamic State fighters also want us to get angry and condemn Muslims everywhere. They want to make Muslims the enemy of the West. They believe if that happens, millions of peaceful Muslims living around the world will join them.

Their goal is quite simple. They aim to divide us. They would like nothing more than to have the Western world accept Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s idea for a Muslim database or ID patch. They want us to see the world in terms of us against them.

Islamic State also wants us to turn away Syrian and other Muslim refugees.

Since 2011 when civil war broke out in Syria, 11 million Syrians have fled their homes for safety. Many are fleeing Islamic State's reign of terror. More than 250,000 people have died in that war.

The fighting in Syria began as an attempt to remove Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, who many see as undemocratic and oppressive. Over time, Islamic State fighters have become increasingly involved in the war.

While Islamic State also would like to see Assad gone, its goal is not greater democracy. Instead, its fighters hope to seize power themselves, in order to impose their own brand of Islam. Many Syrians have fled territories now controlled by the group's fighters, who have introduced extremely harsh laws.

The current refugee crisis is the biggest since World War II, with Syrians now making up the world’s largest refugee population. Most are struggling to find new homes in Europe, and the United States needs to help.

## Don't Make It "Us Against Them"

The Obama administration has pledged to take in 10,000 new Syrian refugees. They are supposed to be distributed among the states.

The government's plan has met with resistance, however. So far, 31 governors have protested the admission of Syrian refugees. They have gone as far as to say that their states will refuse to take them in.

Their fear, that Islamic State fighters will sneak in among the refugees, is not justified. The U.S. refugee-screening process is extremely difficult to get through. Most refugees stay in camps for months to years while their personal stories are evaluated and checked.

About half of these refugees are children, while another quarter are elderly. Almost all of the adults are either mothers or couples coming with children.

By refusing to take in these war-torn refugees, these U.S. governors are not only going against our ideals as a nation. They are also helping Islamic State by dividing us even further. They are helping Islamic State by showing that our leaders want to turn away these desperate families, because it is "us against them."

The 31 irresponsible governors are also sending a message to the U.S. public that fear, prejudice and even outright hate are acceptable. This ill-informed policy is not reflective of what is at the core of our national history. Every time U.S. leaders have followed similar paths in the past, their fears have been proven to be irrational. Every time similar things have happened, we as a nation have had to correct course.

Let us not forget what is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, quite possibly America’s most widely recognized symbol:

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Can you honestly read that and feel we should reject these victims of Islamic State? Let us not accept this fear only to be proven wrong by history yet again. Instead, let us reject leaders, whether governors or members of Congress, who want to fan baseless fear. Let us educate ourselves about the horrors these refugees are fleeing, and the significant hurdles they must clear to be admitted. More than anything, let us light the way for a safer world by leading with an example of humanity.

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## *SOURCE 4 – article from the* New Yorker

The Economics of Syrian Refugees

November, 2015

NOTE: underlined words are links to source documents.

In the wake of last Friday’s attacks on Paris, much has been written about Syrian refugees, and the (remote) possibility that ISIS-affiliated jihadis might slip into the United States among the ten thousand displaced people (many of them children) that the Obama Administration has committed to taking in during the next year. In contrast with discussions about immigration generally, there has been less comment about the economics of the issue. There are many arguments in favor of settling refugees here—not least what President Obama, responding to the announcement by some state governors that they would not accept Syrians fleeing their country’s civil war, called “our values”—but from a financial perspective, too, there is little doubt that the U.S. has the capacity to absorb many more Syrian refugees, and that the long-term impact of such a policy would be positive.

With up to seven million Syrians having been displaced by the civil war, many countries much smaller than the United States have already allowed in a lot more than ten thousand refugees. Since 2012 the European Union has received about 1.9 million requests for asylum, and even that number is dwarfed by the number of people who have sought refuge in countries adjacent to Syria. [According to the United Nations](http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php), Turkey has taken in an estimated 2.2 million, Lebanon 1.1 million, and Jordan six hundred and thirty thousand.

Based purely upon these figures, you might think that the economies of these countries would be sagging under the burden, but they aren’t. According to [a new report](http://www.oecd.org/economy/turkey-economic-forecast-summary.htm) from the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, the Turkish economy will expand by three per cent this year and by four per cent next year. Lebanon’s economy is also growing, at a rate of about two per cent this year, which will expand to more than three per cent next year, the World Bank [reckons](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2015/Jan-16/284247-world-bank-sees-lebanon-economy-improving-by-2017.ashx). Despite an influx of refugees that now amounts to more than ten per cent of its population, Jordan, too, is bearing up. Its gross domestic product will rise by about three per cent this year, the International Monetary Fund [says](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2015/INT080515A.htm).

These figures make the point that, even in countries facing huge influxes of refugees, the impact on the economy as a whole is usually not very large. The biggest challenges in accommodating refugees are social and political, rather than economic. To be sure, there is a cost to screening, housing, and feeding the entrants, but even in Turkey, which has received more Syrian refugees than any other country, this cost has proved manageable. In a [blog post](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/09/16-economic-impact-refugees-cali) in September, Massimiliano Calì and Samia Sekkarie, two economists at the World Bank, noted, “The Turkish government has spent nearly 5.37 billion euros since the refugees first began arriving, entirely funded through its own fiscal resources. While this is undoubtedly a lot of money, there is no indication that this spending has jeopardized the country’s fiscal sustainability.” If you think about it, that’s not surprising. Turkey’s [annual G.D.P.](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD) is about eight hundred billion dollars. At about one and a half billion dollars a year, the cost of resettling the Syrian refugees has been less than 0.2 per cent of the G.D.P. Turkey’s Economic growth is projected to increase from 3% in 2015 to above 4% in 2017, as political uncertainties are assumed to fade.

As many people have pointed out in recent days, Steve Jobs’s biological father was [a Syrian migrant](http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/columnist/baig/2015/11/16/steve-jobs-biological-father-syrian-migrant-some-note/75899450/) who met his mother while teaching and studying at the University of Wisconsin. If we did the right thing and helped to alleviate the current humanitarian crisis, there would be no guarantee that we’d get another Jobs. But we could be pretty sure that, eventually, the Syrian refugees would repay the favor, and then some.

*From the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*



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