

REFUGEE PROGRAM AT RISK

Talking Points by Refugee Council USA and HIAS

- Syrian refugees are fleeing exactly the kind of terror which unfolded on the streets of Paris. They have been confronted by violence just like this for almost five years. They do not bring terror with them. Rather, they are fleeing it.
- The United States handpicks the refugees who resettle here, and they go through multiple layers of security checks, making them the most thoroughly vetted group of people who come to the United States. Security screenings are rigorous and involve the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies.
- This is not an either/or situation. The United States can continue to welcome refugees while continuing to ensure our own security. We must do both.
- States cannot unilaterally block resettlement. Governors do not have the legal authority to determine who lives in their states. Syrian refugees are legally admitted to the United States and therefore have the right to move freely throughout the country. Suggesting otherwise is an attack on fundamental rights that we as Americans hold true and is against everything that we stand for.
- We urge public officials to avoid knee-jerk reactions that politicize the events in Paris, to reject misplaced blame that creates an atmosphere of fear, and to stand in solidarity with Syrian refugees, who are themselves the victims of ISIS.
- The United States resettles refugees of all faiths. Keeping Syrian refugees out of this country based on their religion sends the wrong message to the rest of the world about who we are as Americans. We are a welcoming country with a religiously diverse society and our resettlement program should continue to reflect this. To not do so only feeds into ISIS' propaganda and makes us all less safe.
- We call on Members of Congress and Senators to oppose legislation that would halt, restrict, or slow the refugee resettlement process, and to welcome refugees to the United States.
- Many major Jewish communal organizations have spoken out in support of refugees, including HIAS, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee, Union of Reform Judaism, Orthodox Union, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the National Council of Jewish Women.
- The Jewish community has a deep relationship to refugee issues. Time and time again, Jews were refugees escaping persecution. Today, when lawmakers attempt to shut the door on refugees due to perceived security issues, we remember back to the late 1930's when Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust were turned away from the United States because of fears that they would be a security threat to this country. We also remember the 1980's when Soviet Jews were held suspect because of their connection to a Communist regime. Jewish refugees were not a security threat then, and neither are contemporary refugees a security threat to the United States now.