



Welcome the stranger.  
Protect the refugee.

## A Guide to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

### ❖ What is the crisis?

There are 60 million people in the world who have been displaced by conflict or persecution, comprising a global refugee population larger than at any time since World War II. Eleven million are Syrians who have fled their homes because of war: 7 million are displaced within Syria and over 4 million are refugees.

Over 90% of Syrian refugees are in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, which have been very good host countries, but they simply do not have the funding to provide for such an overwhelming number of people. This has resulted in a lack of job opportunities and limited access to medical care and education. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees has only received 37% of the funding it requested to meet the needs in these areas. The World Food Programme had to cut food assistance to one third of its recipients due to a lack of funding.

### ❖ What does Europe have to do with it?

Given the desperate situation of many of the refugees currently hosted in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, many have been forced to flee for a second time – to Europe. Many people have risked their lives in extremely perilous journeys, often through exploitative smuggling networks – across the Mediterranean and into Greece or Italy. Over 2,500 people have died this summer on such a journey. Those who survive then continue across Europe toward countries that will welcome them, most notably, Germany and Sweden. Sadly, some countries, such as Hungary, have tightened their borders to keep refugees from entering.

### ❖ What is our own government doing to address the crisis?

The United States has a proud history of offering refuge to those in need of safety and protection. In recent years, the United States has consistently committed to resettling a total of 70,000 of the most vulnerable refugees from around the world, and HIAS is one of the resettlement agencies working to integrate refugees into communities around the country. Due to long delays, excessive bureaucracy and extensive security checks, it can take years for an individual refugee to complete the entire process and come to the United States. Consequently, to date, the U.S. has only resettled 1,500 Syrian refugees.

While the United States has provided humanitarian aid to the region and has committed to resettling 10,000 Syrian refugees next year, this is not a time for “business as usual.” This is a major humanitarian crisis, and HIAS believes that the U.S. government can and should do more to help.

### ❖ What is HIAS doing to address this crisis?

HIAS is leading a robust advocacy effort. The most significant impact that we can have right now is to ensure that the U.S. government steps up to alleviate the crisis, and we are mobilizing the Jewish community to demand that the U.S. government take a leadership role in helping to bring this crisis to resolution.

It is critical that the crisis be addressed thoughtfully in stages. So HIAS is also considering our most effective role in Europe in the intermediate term. The current chaos throughout Europe grows in part out of the fact that refugees are trying desperately to find safe haven in select European countries. Once the dust has settled and refugees have “landed” in safety, HIAS will assess their needs and is prepared to bring our expertise – legal services, trauma counseling, and the identification of refugees in need of resettlement – to those most in need.

### ❖ Why is this a Jewish issue?

We are told to care for the stranger 36 times throughout the Torah – to love the stranger, to welcome the stranger, to protect the stranger. This is not just a commandment but also a central Jewish value. Our forefather Abraham and foremother Sarah opened their tent wide and welcomed guests to take refuge in their home, providing them with food and drink and a place to rest.

As a people, this is also our story. From the biblical Israelites to the Jews of the Soviet Union, time and time again, we have had to flee our homelands in search of safety due to violence and persecution. Based on our values and rooted in our own history, we have a responsibility to respond to today’s refugees.



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## What Can I Do To Help?

- ❖ **ADVOCATE.** This High Holiday season, ask President Obama and Congress to take bold action on the Syrian refugee crisis.
- ❖ Go to [support.hias.org/syrianrefugees](http://support.hias.org/syrianrefugees) to sign a petition calling on the President to resettle an additional 100,000 Syrian refugees into the United States, to provide considerable aid to the severely underfunded humanitarian efforts abroad, and to make the resolution of the Syrian crisis a top foreign policy priority.
- ❖ **VOLUNTEER.** This High Holiday season, commit to welcoming refugees into your community.
  - ❖ Volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers in your own city. Visit <http://www.hias.org/volunteer> and complete the form, and HIAS will contact you with more information.
- ❖ **LEARN.** This High Holiday season, dedicate yourself to learning more about the global refugee crisis in general and the Syrian refugee crisis in particular.
  - ❖ Stay informed on the latest developments in the global refugee crisis by visiting [www.hias.org](http://www.hias.org) to learn more and sign up to receive HIAS' action alerts and updates.