

## ***Instead of Refugee Resettlement, The U.S. Needs a Policy That Provides Safety to the Most Refugees and Best Protects American Wages, Taxes, and Security***

**1. The most effective way to aid refugees is to provide safety to people who are targeted for persecution by their government, or whose government will not protect them from persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.**

Refugee policy is not about helping people move to another country where they can earn more money to seek a better life for themselves and their family. Rather, it is often a matter of life and death. The urgency of the refugee challenge is created by the danger that causes people to flee their homes in fear because they are targeted by their own government, or their government allows them to be persecuted. The proper response is to provide refugees a safe place to live until the danger recedes, *and they can return home.*

**2. The U.S. refugee resettlement effort is not about providing safety to people who are in imminent danger.**

Resettling refugees in the United States involves moving people who are already in safe places (primarily refugee camps with food, shelter and medical care) to the United States. This is why refugee resettlement is part of the immigration system. It brings tens of thousands of new permanent residents to the United States every year. The United States takes in about 70 percent of all permanently resettled refugees.<sup>1</sup> Yet, only about one percent of the world's refugees are permanently resettled each year.<sup>2</sup>

**3. While some of those calling for refugee resettlement undoubtedly are sincerely motivated to help people in peril, bringing refugees to the the United States is big business.**

Voluntary Agencies, commonly referred to as “volags,” are nine organizations with affiliates across the country that contract with the U.S. government to permanently resettle refugees in the United States, and to provide them with services on a continuing basis.<sup>3</sup> Each year, the federal government grants tens of millions of dollars in taxpayers funds to support resettlement efforts by volags. These efforts include job placement services and English-language education, but also help in signing up for government assistance programs, which is an added cost to the taxpayer. Moreover, while the term “voluntary agency” may sound like those who work for them do so

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. State Department, Report to the Congress, “Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2016,” p. 3 (<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/247982.pdf>); Jessica Vaughn, “Help Refugees, but Stop Feeding the Refugee-Resettlement Industry,” Center for Immigration Studies, October 2015, <http://cis.org/opedsandArticles/Vaughan-Help-Refugees-but-Stop-Feeding-the-Refugee-Resettlement-Industry>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Resettlement: A New Beginning in a Third Country,” <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Voluntary Agencies,” <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies>, accessed December 12, 2015.

without pay, the reality is that these organizations are staffed by professionals, and headed by executives who have large salaries. The federal government gives a specified amount of money to volags for every refugee they assist. Since that amount is generally less than volags spend on assisting individual refugees, the more refugees the United States admits, the more public money accrues to private agencies. In 2014, over 90 percent of funds the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services received was from American taxpayers.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, 75 percent of the funding the National Association of Evangelicals received for refugee resettlement came from the government.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. For every Middle Eastern refugee resettled in the United States, 12 refugees could be helped in that region.**

A study of the net government costs of settling one refugee in the United States for five years conservatively estimated that the same money could provide five years of safety for 12 Middle Eastern refugees in their home region.<sup>6</sup> Much of the costs of providing for refugees in the United States comes from their access to welfare and entitlement programs. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) has pointed out that Heath and Human Services data show 90 percent of recent refugees from the Middle East receive food stamps, and about 70 percent receive cash assistance and government-funded healthcare.<sup>7</sup>

#### **5. There is a desperate need for expanded safe refugee camp capacity.**

Inside Syria, 7.6 million Syrians have been displaced from their homes. Another 4.3 million are refugees who have left for temporary camps outside Syria.<sup>8</sup> The most urgent need is funding to provide for the safety, food, and health care needs of refugees in camps. If the United States wants to help as many refugees as possible, it would not spend money on expanding refugee resettlement but on funding efforts to help refugees abroad. Camp administrators have said that

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<sup>4</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services, 2014 Annual Report, p. 10 (<http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/2014-MRS-Annual-Report.pdf>); Refugee Resettlement Watch, "In 2014, your tax dollars paid 97% of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration Fund budget," <https://refugeeresettlementwatch.wordpress.com/2015/07/25/in-2014-your-tax-dollars-paid-97-of-the-us-conference-of-catholic-bishops-migration-fund-budget/>, accessed December 12, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> IRS Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax," World Relief Corp of National Association of Evangelicals, 2013, <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2014/236/393/2014-236393344-0b28de69-9.pdf>, accessed December 15, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Steven A. Camarota, "The High Cost of Resettling Middle Eastern Refugees," *Backgrounder*, Center for Immigration Studies, p. 1 ([http://cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/camarota-refugees-15\\_0.pdf](http://cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/camarota-refugees-15_0.pdf)).

<sup>7</sup> Senator Jeff Session, "Chairman Sessions: Cancel 'Blank Check' For Refugee Resettlement In Government Funding Bill," Letter to the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, November 16, 2015, Press Release, <http://www.sessions.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2015/11/chairman-sessions-cancel-blank-check-for-refugee-resettlement-in-government-funding-bill>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Syria: 'Behind the broken windows... lives have also been shattered', August 18, 2015, <http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/syria-behind-broken-windows-lives-have-also-been-shattered>, accessed December 5, 2015; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syrian Regional Refugee Response: Registered Syrian Refugees," <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>, accessed December 7, 2015.

the lack of funding for camps in the region has caused Syrians, and other from that region, to leave the camps and make the journey to Europe.<sup>9</sup>

**6. The resettlement of 10,000 or 65,000 or 100,000 refugees in the United States is an extravagant and insignificant gesture in proportion to the overall challenge.**

Worldwide, more than 19 million people are refugees who have fled their home countries. Another 59.5 million are “displaced,” having been forced by violence out of their homes into other parts of their countries.<sup>10</sup> Political grandstanding only serves to sow divisiveness among the American people, and it does nothing to alleviate the refugee crisis. Admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees would help just 0.2 percent of total Syrian refugees, and only 0.05 percent of the world’s total refugee population.

**8. Concentrating on providing safety in home regions advances the primary end-goal of all international refugee efforts, which is to help people move safely back to their homes as soon as possible.**

It is important to protect people near their home countries to make their repatriation as easy as possible. That is the goal and mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.<sup>11</sup> That should also be the approach taken by the government of the United States.

**8. Providing the most safety to the most refugees is also the most responsible action in protecting the economic well-being of America’s most vulnerable citizens; in protecting the taxpayers of local communities where refugees might be settled; and in reducing national security risks.**

Our U.S. refugee resettlement policies do not just provide safety to refugees; they provide lifetime work permits and lifetime access to taxpayer subsidies. The United States has over 15.5 million Americans who want a full-time job but can not find one. Of these, about eight million are less educated, not having any college experience.<sup>12</sup> Recent refugees to the United States lack

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<sup>9</sup> Steven Erlanger and Kimiko De Freytas-Tamura, “U.N. Funding Shortfalls and Cuts in Refugee Aid Fuel Exodus to Europe,” *The New York Times*, September 19, 2015 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/world/un-funding-shortfalls-and-cuts-in-refugee-aid-fuel-exodus-to-europe.html>).

<sup>10</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase,” June 18, 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>, accessed December 7, 2015. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Syrian Regional Refugee Response: Registered Syrian Refugees.”

<sup>11</sup> “Resettlement is not a right, and there is no obligation on States to accept refugees for resettlement. Resettlement under UNHCR’s auspices can only be achieved through collaboration with various partners, in particular resettlement States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Frequently Asked Questions About Resettlement,” <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.pdf>, accessed December 7, 2015. “UNHCR encourages voluntary repatriation as the best solution for refugees, if the return to the country of origin is safe and there are conditions for the reintegration of the refugees in their country of origin.” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR information website, “Frequently Asked Questions: Resettlement,” <http://info.unhcr.org/tr/faq.php?lang=1>, accessed December 7, 2015

<sup>12</sup> As of November 2015, there were 15.7 million Americans who were looking for fulltime work: Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The Employment Situation: November 2015,” Summary Table A, “Household data, seasonally adjusted,” <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>, accessed December 7, 2015. In the second quartet of 2015 there were 16.8 million people looking for full time work with 8.5 million of those job seekers lacking college

English language skills and have low education and literacy levels.<sup>13</sup> Sixty percent of Syrian refugees have never completed grade school.<sup>14</sup> Like less-educated Americans, many refugees earn incomes low enough to qualify them for all manner of welfare assistance to which they are immediately eligible. Not only do local and state communities bear this financial burden, but they must also subsidize Americans who are displaced from the labor market.

FBI director, James Comey, in testimony before Congress said that the lack of available information makes it impossible to properly vet Syrian refugees.<sup>15</sup> The Boston Marathon bombings and the recruitment by ISIS of Somali refugees in Minnesota demonstrate the challenges the United States faces in integrating refugees.<sup>16</sup> A 2009 internal report by the Department of Homeland Security found that 70 percent of asylum applications contained proven or probable fraud, which means many people are getting into the United State on false premises.<sup>17</sup> Concerns about terrorists infiltrating the refugee program, or refugees becoming radicalized once in the United States are legitimate, and Americans should not be hectored into remaining silent about these concerns.

**How best to resettle refugees to the United States should be a decision made by Americans and done in the best interest of America. Resettling 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States would do nothing to alleviate the problem, while diverting millions of dollars that could be put to much better use to benefit tens of thousands more people in temporary camps. The goal should be to help keep refugees safe and healthy until they can return to their homes when conditions improve. The Syrian crisis highlights the deficiency of our current efforts to most effectively assist refugees. A reevaluation of how best to help refugees *where they are*, and how to best serve America's interests is needed. A poorly administered refugee program will undermine support among the American people for the future resettlement of deserving persons.**

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experience: Steven A. Camarota, "The Employment Situation of Immigrants and Natives in the Second Quarter of 2015: Number of working-age not working remains enormous," *Backgrounder*, Center for Immigration Studies, September 2015, p. 10 (<http://cis.org/sites/cis.org/files/u6-q2-15.pdf>).

<sup>13</sup> Randy Capps and Kathleen Newland, et. al., "The Integration Outcomes of U.S. Refugees: Successes and Challenges," Migration Policy Institute, June 2015, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Svein Erik Stave and Solveig Hillesund, "Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market," International Labour Organization, FAFO, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Julian Hattem, "FBI chief: 'Gaps' remain in screening Syrian refugees," *The Hill*, October 8, 2015 (<http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/256399-gaps-persist-for-screening-syrian-refugees-officials-say>).

<sup>16</sup> "What Boston Means for Immigration Policy," *National Review*, April 24, 2013, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/346464/what-boston-means-immigration-policy-editors>, accessed December 7, 2013; "White House Backing Program To Curb ISIS Recruiting In Minnesota," CBS Minnesota, November 18, 2015, <http://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2015/11/18/white-house-backing-program-to-curb-isis-recruiting-in-minnesota/>, accessed December 7, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Statement of House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte to Immigration and Border Security Subcommittee, "Asylum Fraud: Abusing America's Compassion?," February 11, 2014, [http://judiciary.house.gov/index.cfm/hearings?Id=14D94F92-E26B-46A7-8FAA-F3F204588D17&Statement\\_id=EBD53617-9DA5-4A1B-BF22-BDE63951048D](http://judiciary.house.gov/index.cfm/hearings?Id=14D94F92-E26B-46A7-8FAA-F3F204588D17&Statement_id=EBD53617-9DA5-4A1B-BF22-BDE63951048D), accessed December 7, 2015.