



Talking Points from USCCB Migration & Refugee Services

RESPONSE ON SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE WAKE OF THE PARIS ATTACKS

- Deserving, carefully-vetted Syrian refugees being resettled to the United States are fleeing from the brutal violence of the Syrian conflict, including the brutality of ISIS, which was responsible for the Paris attacks.
- The United States handpicks these refugees who resettle here, and they go through multiple layers of interviews and 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.
- Control over immigration and refugee admissions to the United States is a federal responsibility. Governors and States do not have the legal authority to determine who is admitted to the United States or who lives in their states. After careful screening, Syrian refugees are legally admitted to the United States. Like others lawfully admitted persons, they share the right to freedom of movement within the United States.
- Governors play an important role in welcoming refugees who have a long history of revitalizing many U.S. communities. The U.S. refugee program has a long history as a nonpartisan, public, private partnership between the federal government, the state governments, and the local communities, including Catholic Charities and Social Services across the country. We encourage the Governors to continue playing their important, welcoming role.
- We urge public officials to avoid reactions that politicize the events in Paris, and to avoid misplaced blame that creates an atmosphere of fear. Instead, we urge public officials to stand in solidarity with Syrian refugees, who are themselves the victims of ISIS.
- The United States resettles refugees of all faiths. Keeping some 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.

- During his visit to the United States Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, implored all of us Americans to remember the Golden Rule and *help* refugees rather than view them as a problem.

“Our world is facing a refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War. This presents us with great challenges and many hard decisions. ... We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation. To respond in a way which is always humane, just and fraternal. We need to avoid a common temptation nowadays: to discard whatever proves troublesome. Let us remember the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Mt 7:12). (Speech to U.S. Congress, 9/24/15)