SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

In the past five years, at least four million Syrians have fled their country as a consequence of the civil war and the rise of ISIS. Pope Francis and the Catholic bishops have called on the U.S. government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to countries that have been at the forefront of this humanitarian effort.

BACKGROUND: CONDITIONS IN SYRIA (Source: U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR)

- More than 50% of the entire population of Syria has been displaced
- Currently, there are 4,088,099 registered Syrian refugees in countries neighboring Syria, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and in several countries in North Africa.
- 76% of these refugees are women and children
- Refugees are not allowed to work legally in these countries
- Women who head households are especially vulnerable
- Cash allowance provided by UNHCR to help with housing, food, and medical care is insufficient and in many cases reduced to $7 per month per person
- Syrians face increasing challenges to find safety and protection in neighboring countries.
- Many are taking increasingly extreme measures in order to cope, such as reducing their food intake or sending family members – including children – out to beg.
- Across the region, some 700,000 Syrian refugee children were out of school for the school year just passed. Very soon, many refugees who live in sub-standard shelters will face another winter in exile.
- More than 2,500 refugees have died this year in the Mediterranean attempting to make a perilous journey by boat to try to reach a future in Europe

REFUGEES IN THE U.S.

- Since 1968, the U.S. has recognized its international responsibility to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are protected and not returned to face persecution or torture in their countries of origin.
- As a leader of democracy in the world, we have a humanitarian duty to provide those escaping persecution the opportunity to seek protection and safe haven – as do the countries of Europe and others.
- The principle of protecting refugees is a core part of the United States identity as a nation committed to freedom.
- The legacy of our welcome to refugees is that our economy, social fabric, communities and nation as a whole are stronger.
- Each fiscal year, the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This determination is based on a consultative process among Congress, the President and various federal agencies.
- In recent years, the U.S. has accepted between 50,000 to 75,000 refugees per year. Before admission to the U.S., each refugee undergoes an extensive interviewing, screening and security clearance process (see separate flyer outlining the step-by-step process of security screening and admissions of refugees).
**The Catholic Response**

- **Catholic social teaching**
  - Calls us to support the right to life (including food & shelter), economic rights (including education and employment) and political and cultural rights (including religious freedom)
  - With rights come responsibilities to others, to our families and to the common good of all.

- **Pope Francis and Refugees**
  - Calls on world leaders to look at migration crises and the Syrian conflict and its human consequences with compassion and as “citizens of the world.”
  - Reflecting on the refugee crisis in Europe, points to the Gospel Call for us to be “neighbors” of the smallest and the abandoned, and to give them concrete hope.

- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB):**
  - Calls on the U.S. government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to host countries in the region that have tried to provide such support.
  - Urges “all Catholics in the United States and others of goodwill to express openness and welcome to these refugees, who are escaping desperate situations in order to survive.” (President of USCCB (Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, KY)
  - Recommends providing 100,000 annual resettlement slots for those fleeing the Syrian conflict, and designate the annual refugee admissions number for the United States at 200,000.

**Ways You Can Help**

- **Pray** for migrants and refugees, for their plight, and for peace.
- **Write** a letter to President Obama, urging him to expand U.S. resettlement efforts of Syrian refugees who are fleeing and to seek a negotiated end to the conflict that protect human rights and religious freedom.
- **Urge Congress to support resettlement**
  - Ask your Senators and Representatives to urge the administration to show leadership in response to the global refugee crisis by increasing resettlement numbers to 100,000 and an additional 100,000 Syrian refugees
  - Call your Members of Congress: 202-224-3121 and when possible, meet with them in their home offices Sept 21-25, Oct 12-16, Nov 9-13 & beyond

- **Sign the petition** BY SEPTEMBER 30 urging the President to pledge an increase in Syrian refugee U.S. admissions: [https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/authorize-and-resettle-syrian-refugees-us](https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/authorize-and-resettle-syrian-refugees-us)

- **Call the White House:** 202-456-1111: “The U.S. must show leadership in responding to the global refugee crisis, including in Syria. I urge President Obama to increase refugee resettlement from 70,000 to 100,000 this coming year, as well as an additional 100,000 Syrian refugees.”

- **Donate** to Catholic Relief Services efforts in neighboring countries and Europe to support refugees fleeing the Syrian crisis