



# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA SYRIAN REFUGEE ACTIVIST TOOLKIT



#RefugeesWelcome

AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL



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Dear activist,

Thank you for your commitment to the human rights of refugees. **We need you to raise your voice now more than ever.**

Over 11.6 million Syrians have been displaced by the brutal civil war and by acts of terror—over 4 million of them are refugees in desperate need of resettlement. 95% of Syrian refugees are in just five countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt—most in refugee camps and all needing permanent homes.

The United States—a nation built by immigrants and refugees and bound by international humanitarian obligations—must do more to help these refugees, who are some of the world’s most vulnerable people.

But instead, US politicians and pundits are using recent attacks by extremist groups in Beirut, Paris, Baghdad and Sana’a to increase their calls to deny access to Syrian and Muslim refugees, some have even proposed “rounding up” Syrian refugees who are already in America or reconsidering the idea of internment camps. The anti-refugee and anti-Muslim rhetoric is shameful—and **we must speak out against such hatred and intolerance.**

**This is not the America I believe in.** And it’s a violation of the basic human rights of refugees. We can never disregard the human rights of those seeking sanctuary from the very same violence that we condemn.

**We need your support to ensure America welcomes refugees.** In this toolkit, you will find the materials you need to:

- Help pass a city council resolution welcoming refugees
- Write letters to the press on refugee’s rights
- Contact your elected representatives to demand support of refugees
- Answer questions and have conversations about the need to protect and resettle refugees in light of the recent attacks in Paris and Beirut

**We need you to be the voice in your community for the human rights of refugees**—this toolkit is for every town, city, school, locality. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and to get started. Join us, today, and **stand with 4 million refugees who need you most.**

In solidarity,

Geoffrey Mock

Amnesty International USA Syria Country Specialist

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# BUILDING A CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

1. Before launching the campaign, contact the Amnesty International USA Syrian Country Specialist Geoffrey Mock at [geoffrey.mock@duke.edu](mailto:geoffrey.mock@duke.edu). He will send you a packet of material for use in the campaign, including a
2. Learn what refugee organizations are in your community. These are the groups that would be doing the actual work of transitioning refugees into your community. The list can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/pkc7blp>
3. With the support of the refugee organization, write a resolution and contact a member of your community's city council or governing board to ask them to introduce a resolution supporting Syrian resettlement
4. Build grass roots support for the resolution by reaching out to churches, mosques, Arab-American associations, your local bar association and other groups active on refugee and human rights issues.
5. Write an op-ed and start an letter to editor or social media campaign
6. Attend the council session in large numbers to show support for the
7. When it passes, write letters thanking the council members and continue publicity to showcase the council's action.
8. Follow up with the refugee association so that when Syrians are resettled to your community, you might help with the transition. Currently the process of resettlement takes on the average two years! We're hoping processes will be developed to speed that.

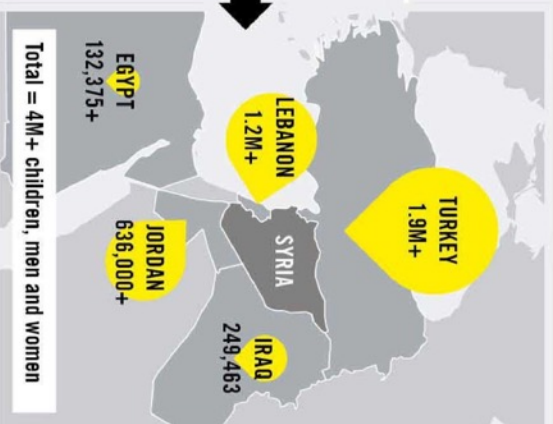
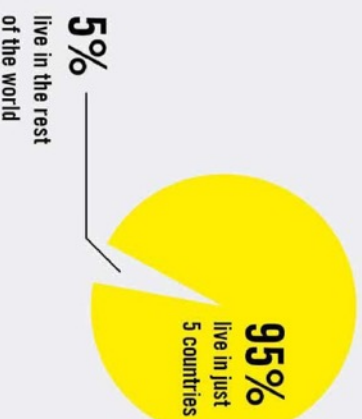




## 1. THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA



## 2. WHERE ARE SYRIA'S 4M REFUGEES NOW?



## 3. HOW CAN THE WORLD HELP?

**Resettlement = giving vulnerable refugees a life-changing opportunity to start new lives abroad.**

(The international community agreed this solution after World War II, to share responsibility for refugees and help out countries hosting huge numbers.)

## 4. WHO QUALIFIES?

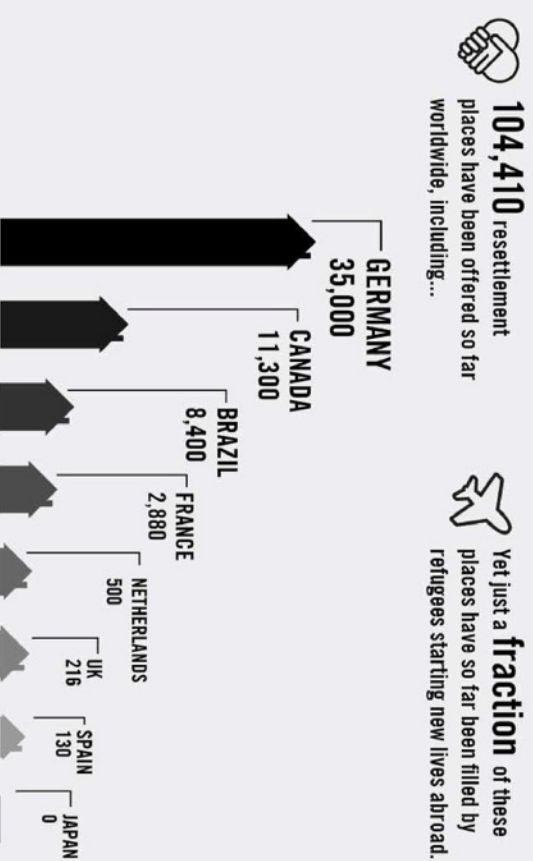
The most vulnerable refugees, including...



## 5. HOW MANY NEED THIS LIFELINE?



## 6. WHAT HAS THE WORLD DONE TO HELP SO FAR?



# SECURITY SCREENING OF REFUGEES ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES: A DETAILED, RIGOROUS PROCESS

Resettlement is considered a durable solution for refugees who cannot return to their countries of origin or integrate into the current country that is hosting them. Resettlement to a country like the U.S. presents a life-saving alternative for a very small number of refugees around the world - less than one half of one percent. Refugees seeking resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) must pass through a number of steps aimed at ensuring that they do not pose a security risk.

## —STEP 1

**Refugee Status:** A refugee is someone who has fled from his or her home country and cannot return because he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Certain individuals of special humanitarian concern to the U.S. who are within their countries of nationality may also be considered as refugees eligible for admission to the U.S.

## —STEP 2

**Referral to the United States:** A refugee who meets the criteria for resettlement in the U.S. is referred to the USRAP by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a U.S. embassy, or a trained non-governmental organization. Some refugees, including family members of refugees already in the U.S. and refugees who belong to specific groups identified by the Department of State, may be eligible for direct access to the USRAP and do not need a referral.

## —STEP 3

**Resettlement Support Center:** A Resettlement Support Center (RSC), contracted by the U.S. Department of State, compiles the refugee's personal data and background information for the security clearance process and to present to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for an in-person interview.

## —STEP 4

**Security Clearance Process:** With information collected by the RSC, a number of security checks are conducted. The State Department runs the names of all refugees referred to the United States for resettlement through a standard CLASS (Consular Lookout and Support System) name check. In addition, enhanced interagency security checks were phased in beginning in 2008 and applied to all refugee applicants by 2010.

## —STEP 5

**Security Clearance Process:** Certain refugees undergo an additional security review called a Security Advisory Opinion (SAO). These cases require a positive SAO clearance from a number of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in order to continue the resettlement process. When required, this step runs concurrently with Step 4.



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#### —STEP 6

**Security Clearance Process:** Refugees who meet the minimum age requirement have their fingerprints and photograph taken by a trained U.S. government employee, usually on the same day as their DHS interview. The fingerprints are then checked against various U.S. government databases and information on any matches is reviewed by DHS.

#### —STEP 7

**In-person Interview:** All refugee applicants are interviewed by an officer from DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). A trained officer will conduct a detailed, face-to-face interview with each refugee applicant being considered for resettlement. Based on the information in the refugee's case file and on the interview, the DHS officer will determine if the individual qualifies as a refugee and is admissible under U.S. law.

#### —STEP 8

**DHS Approval:** If the USCIS officer finds that the individual qualifies as a refugee and meets other U.S. admission criteria, the officer will conditionally approve the refugee's application for resettlement and submit it to the U.S. Department of State for final processing. Conditional approvals become final once the results of all security checks (Steps 4, 5, and 6) have been received and cleared.

#### —STEP 9

**Medical Screening:** All refugee applicants approved for resettlement in the U.S. are required to undergo a medical screening conducted by the International Organization for Migration or a physician designated by the U.S. Embassy.

#### —STEP 10

**Matching Refugees with a Sponsor Agency:** Every refugee is assigned to a Resettlement Agency in the U.S., such as the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). The resettlement agency will place refugees with a local partner agency or field office that will assist them upon their arrival in the U.S.

#### —STEP 11

**Cultural Orientation:** In addition, refugees approved for resettlement are offered cultural orientation while waiting for final processing, to prepare them for their journey to the U.S. and initial resettlement.

#### —STEP 12

**Admission to the United States:** Upon arrival at one of five U.S. airports designated as ports of entry for refugee admissions, a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will review the refugee's documentation and conduct additional security checks to ensure that the arriving refugee is the same person who was screened and approved for admission to the U.S.



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# SAMPLE COUNCIL RESOLUTION

## Resolution in Support of Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in Durham

WHEREAS the United Nations having declared Syria to be the greatest refugee crisis since World War II, with more than half of the Syrian population having fled their homes since the beginning of the conflict in 2011;

WHEREAS the United Nations has stated that the more than 4 million registered Syrian refugees living in five neighboring countries will not be able to return home any time soon and has called for resettling more than 400,000 refugees;

WHEREAS those 400,000 refugees scheduled for resettlement include those most at risk – including children without parents, single parents, victims of torture or violence, women at risk and people with family reunification needs;

WHEREAS Syrians now face increasing challenges to find safety and protection in these neighboring countries, which, faced with overwhelming refugee numbers, insufficient international support and security concerns, have taken measures this year to stem the flow of refugees;

WHEREAS to date the United States, which traditionally takes the lead in resettling UN registered refugees, has taken in only 1,500 Syrian refugees since 2011;

WHEREAS the pledge by President Obama to take in an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees is insufficient to meaningfully contribute to the United Nations reaching its resettlement goal;

WHEREAS the refugees in the program are all registered with the United Nations and cannot return to Syria because of a well-founded fear of persecution and will be reviewed by a proven vetting system in the United States;

WHEREAS the principle of protecting refugees is a core part of this country's identity as a nation committed to freedom and;

WHEREAS Church World Service and World Relief Durham, the leading refugee organizations in Durham, as well as numerous community organizations and religious institutions both Christian and Muslim have declared their support for resettling UN-registered Syrian refugees in Durham;

WHEREAS World Relief Durham and Church World Service has resettled more than 2,600 refugees in the Triangle area since 2008 from more than 20 countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Myanmar, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo;

**Resolved, The Durham City Council declares its support for resettlement of UN-registered Syrian refugees in Durham and calls upon other North Carolina communities to join them in supporting a stronger national effort on Syrian resettlement.**





## SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

The people of Syria are being torn apart by war and ruthlessly hounded because of who they are or what they believe. Many Syrians who have survived their government's barrel bombs or attacks by ISIS have died trying to find security. It's the world's greatest refugee challenge since World War II and the biggest humanitarian crisis of our time, but we're still waiting for U.S. leadership.

Around 220,000 people have been killed. 12.8 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria. More than 50% of Syria's population is currently displaced, and the UN has registered more than 4 million Syrians in refugee camps. The UN has received just 40% of what it asked for to fund Syrians' humanitarian needs. Funding shortages mean that the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in Lebanon receive just **\$13.50 per month**—less than half a dollar a day for food assistance.

Ninety-five percent of the over 4 million Syrian refugees are in just five countries: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

- Lebanon hosts approximately 1.2 million refugees from Syria -- one in five people in the country.
- Jordan hosts about 650,000 refugees from Syria -- 10% of the population.
- Turkey hosts 1.9 million refugees from Syria, more than any other country worldwide.
- Iraq hosts nearly 250,000 refugees from Syria, even though 3 million Iraqis are themselves internally displaced from Iraq's conflicts.

Egypt hosts 132,375 refugees from Syria.

By contrast, the world's richer countries, including the United States, have only opened their doors for a tiny fraction of Syria's refugees.

Since July 31, 2014, the United States has processed around 1,500 Syrians for resettlement. Without U.S. leadership, the international community will never meet the UN's goal of resettling 400,000 Syrians promptly. President Obama's recent commitment to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States is commendable. Secretary Kerry's follow-up comments to increase the total numbers of refugees accepted worldwide also deserves support. But for Syrian refugees, these numbers are unfortunately far from enough.

**The refugees cannot go home.** In the refugee camps, many are barely surviving on as little as 50 cents a day. Syria's children are becoming a lost generation – traumatized and out of school, working to support their families. The burden on the host countries is growing and without resettlement can become a destabilizing force.

The United States must be a strong voice for Syrian resettlement. The U.S. must open its doors to more refugees fleeing this humanitarian crisis by increasing the numbers of refugees it accepts and increasing funding for refugee resettlement and humanitarian needs.

### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Amnesty International USA urges the U.S. Congress to go beyond President Obama's announcement that the U.S. will resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees next year.
- An increased resettlement of 10,000 Syrian refugees is far from enough to address the needs of the most vulnerable 400,000 Syrian refugees who are in need of resettlement.

The US Congress should provide the appropriations necessary to ensure that resettled refugees have the assistance they need in their new US homes. Some estimates have put President Obama's request for resettling 10,000 more Syrians at roughly \$160 million.

# SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Political leaders seeking to shut down Syrian resettlement in the United States have it wrong. The evidence is overwhelming that resettlement is necessary to prevent the spread of the Syrian conflict and to give hope to the thousands of brave Syrians who have resisted not just a brutal Assad regime but also ISIS and other violent Islamist groups. Shutting resettlement down will make the refugee crisis worse and more dangerous.

The UN is identifying 400,000 Syrians, just 10 percent of the nearly 4 million Syrians registered as the refugees in five Middle Eastern countries. The asylum seekers who have fled to Europe are not eligible for resettlement in the US.

The UN has a strong vetting process and will identify families for resettlement. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable refugees, including torture survivors, people with serious medical conditions, children and teenagers on their own and women and children at risk. All of these individuals will be identified by the UN even before they go through the U.S. process led by the Department of Homeland Security.

But if we shut down the UN resettlement process, we guarantee that more people will flee out of desperation, more will die taking dangerous sea and land routes to safety, and the process of handling them once they arrive will be fraught with security holes. It seems like a no-brainer to support the former.

No vetting process can make guarantees, but the population identified by the UN and vetted by both organizations has worked successfully in alleviating crises in dozens of other countries, including Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and the Central African Republic. There's no reason to believe Syria will be any different. Ignoring it, however, will make it worse.



# SAMPLE LETTER TO THE LEGISLATOR

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of the Amnesty International members in this community, I wish to write to encourage you to speak in support of Syrian resettlement in our community. Amnesty International and refugee specialists working in our community agree that Syrian resettlement is essential to stopping the spread of the Syrian conflict and to give hope to the many brave but desperate Syrians who have faced both a brutal Assad

We believe that Syrian resettlement will:

- Meet the United States' obligations under international law to protect people at risk
- Offer support to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees
- Relieve the political and economic pressures on the host countries supporting the four million Syrian refugees

First, let me explain some of the numbers involved in the Syrian refugee crisis. Currently more than 50 percent of the pre-war Syrian population of 22.6 million have left home because of the conflict. More than 7 million of them are internally displaced people, that is living in makeshift conditions inside of Syrian borders. In addition, another four million are living in UN-supervised refugee camps in five neighboring

Because of the burden of these refugees on the host countries – one out of five people in Lebanon is currently a Syrian refugee – and the instability along the borders the conflict is creating, the UN has called for a humanitarian resettlement of about 10 percent of the refugees, around 400,000 Syrians. Let's be clear, this goal is essential to keeping the Syrian conflict from spreading beyond the borders and keeping the refugee camps sustainable. The preference is keeping the refugees close to home; the UN would not

Let's also be clear that there is no possibility of return for these refugees. Under international law, and the US obligations under the Convention Against Torture, we are prohibited from returning individuals to

Only those Syrians who are among the 4 million who have been registered with the UN as refugees and who are living in the UN camps will be eligible for resettlement. **Syrian refugees to be considered for resettlement in the U.S. will have already been vetted by the UN. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable refugees, including torture survivors, people with serious medical conditions, children**

This is all before the individuals go through a US vetting process led by the Department of Homeland Security. This two-level vetting process is careful, and currently takes up to two years.

(continued on the next page)





It should be acknowledged that Syria offers particular challenges, including a government that has been accused of war crimes and a situation in which refugees often had to leave home in a hurry, sometimes before they could gather official papers. But it is incorrect that the US can't appropriately vet them. In fact, while Amnesty International believes the 1,800 Syrian refugees who have been resettled in the US is

No vetting process can make guarantees, but the population identified by the UN and vetted by both organizations has worked successfully in alleviating crises in dozens of other countries, including Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and the Central African Republic, **all of which have faced similar terrorist threats and have unstable governments that present challenges for the vetting process, but we've done this successfully time and time again without incident.** There's no reason

We should also note that some political leaders are confusing this resettlement process with the chaotic migration of tens of thousands of refugees into Europe, often across dangerous sea and land routes. These are asylum seekers, not refugees registered with the UN. Only half of them are Syrians, according to UN estimates. And while Amnesty International insists that these asylum seekers be handled according to international law, they are irrelevant to the process of resettlement. **Only those registered as UN refugees in the Middle Eastern camps and identified for resettlement will be considered for US**

Unfortunately, some political leaders are using their fears about the latter to shut down the UN resettlement process. This makes no sense. Everyone on the ground agrees that vetting done through the UN resettlement process is far more effective, secure and preferable to the vetting done following a mass exodus of individuals in a chaotic crisis situation. But if we shut down the UN resettlement process, we simply guaranteeing that more people will flee out of desperation, more will die taking dangerous sea

A last word: Amnesty International has worked with hundreds of Syrian refugees and collected their stories. They are among the most brave individuals that we have encountered in our human rights work, caught between a brutal government and armed opposition group. Those horrors have followed many of the Syrians into their refugee status, where they continue to have to fight for their rights and safety. Last month, two Syrian activist journalists, Ibrahim Abd al-Qader and Fares Hamadi, who had survived harassment from the Assad regime, were killed in Urfa, Turkey, presumably by ISIS. Amnesty International has documented that ISIS is targeting Syrian political activists in an effort to silence all political speech and activity. These are the people we should be supporting; **these are the people who are essential to keeping hope the original vision of the Syrian uprising in 2011: a vision of a Syria built on respect**

Unless our leaders speak loudly on their behalf, they will be silenced. We urge you to take a stand in favor of Syrian resettlement and to start with our own community.

Please,

**[Insert Your Name Here]**



# Tell Congress: We Support Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in Our Community

Faced with the greatest humanitarian refugee crisis since World War II, the world to date has responded with shameful neglect. Four million registered Syrian refugees remain in UN camps, many of them surviving on 50 cents a day. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of refugees from Syria and around the world are desperately seeking refuge in Europe and elsewhere.

The Syrian refugees are not going home anytime soon, and the UN has declared the situation in their camps to be unsustainable. The only solution is resettlement of 10 percent of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. Without resettlement, the five host countries will face additional burdens that could potentially destabilize a region that is already on edge.

The Syrian refugees have shown great bravery in horrific conditions. They have survived their government's barrel boys or the weapons of ISIS. More than 200,000 civilians have died trying to find security. By contrast, the world's richer countries have only opened their doors for a tiny fraction of Syria's refugees. Since July 31, 2014, the United States has processed just more than 1,000 Syrians for resettlement. President Obama's announced policy of accepting 10,000 Syrian refugees is not enough to meet the United Nation's goal.

Name (printed)	Signature	Town, State



Mail copies of your completed petitions directly to your Senators and Representative

# POST-PARIS AND BEIRUT ATTACKS TALKING POINTS ON VETTING REFUGEE

The other documents in this toolkit give a good view of AI's positions and some details about the resettlement process. But in the aftermath of the recent attacks, it's clear that concerns about security and

**Vetting of Syrian refugees present some special challenges, but the process has worked successfully already with Syrian refugees and in other countries that share some of the same challenges.**

- Syrian refugees to be considered for resettlement in the U.S. will have already been vetted by the UN. All of these individuals will be identified by the UN even before they go through the U.S. process led by the Department of Homeland Security. No vetting process can make guarantees, but the population identified by the UN and vetted by both organizations has worked successfully in alleviating crises in dozens of other countries, including Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and the Central African Republic.
- Furthermore, the US has already resettled more than 1,800 Syrian refugees without incident. Clearly it's

**There are two distinct but related refugee crises involving different challenges.**

- Of the 4 million Syrian registered as refugees and living in five neighboring countries, the UN has set a goal of resettling 400,000 Syrians. Only those registered as UN refugees in the Middle Eastern camps and identified for resettlement will be considered for US resettlement.
- The UN gives priority to the most vulnerable refugees, including torture survivors, people with serious medical conditions, children and teenagers on their own and women and children at risk. Claims that most of the resettled Syrians will be fighting-age males are incorrect.
- The tens of thousands of people who have fled to Europe seeking asylum are not part of the process. They are not eligible for resettlement and should not be part of the public discussion about resettlement. Claims that the chaos involved in these asylum-seekers migrating across European borders proves that vetting can't work is therefore incorrect.

**The UN resettlement process is essential to reducing the number of asylum seekers.**

It makes no sense to shut down a UN resettlement process that is orderly, careful and systematic when it guarantees driving more refugees into desperate straits, leading many more to seek to take the dangerous migration across the sea or land. More will die, and the process of handling them once they arrive [most likely in Europe] will be fraught with security holes. To reduce the numbers of asylum-seekers fleeing across the sea, we have to support the more orderly UN resettlement process.

**(continued on the next page)**





**The UN resettlement process is essential to alleviating the burden on the host countries.**

One out of five people in Lebanon is now a Syrian refugee. The UN's general goal and priority is keeping refugees close to home so they can return when possible. This is not possible in Syria anytime soon. The international community has failed to fulfill its commitment to supporting the UN humanitarian effort; as a result some refugees are surviving on less than 50 cents a day.

Resettlement is the only solution to keeping the camps sustainable, the UN says.

**The United States traditionally takes up to half of the recommended UN resettlement goals. We are treating the Syrian situation differently.** As of July 2016, the US had taken only 1,600 Syrian refugees since the start of the war. President Obama has pledged to take another 10,000 this fiscal year, but that number still ensures that the UN will not meet its target of 400,000 resettlements. The Refugee Council USA recommends that the US accept 100,000 refugees.

**The United States has legal responsibilities to ensure individuals are not returned to a situation where they face “a risk of irreparable harm.”** The US is party to the Convention Against Torture, which includes a principle of non-refoulement, which means we are prohibited from returning to the country they fled from if they are at risk of serious harm.

**ISIS is targeting known Syrian activists among the refugees.** Amnesty International has documented several incidents of ISIS targeting human rights defenders. We know of families of anti-Assad activists who are living in fear now of ISIS and the Assad regime and are on the waiting list for US resettlement, but live in deep fear that they will be killed before resettlement occurs.



**WE STAND WITH ALL THOSE  
SUFFERING WAR AND VIOLENCE**



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**#RefugeesWelc**