



**MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

Hearing: The Syrian Refugee Crisis

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS and HUMAN RIGHTS**

UNITED STATES SENATE

JANUARY 07, 2014

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Cruz and members of the Subcommittee: We are honored to submit this statement for the record on behalf of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) regarding today's hearing on the Syrian refugee crisis. We commend the leadership of the members of the Committee for holding today's hearing, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis."

MPAC is a faith based American institution working for the integration of Muslims into American pluralism. To that end, we actively strive to affect policy reforms that uphold core American values and preserve constitutionally protected freedoms of all Americans. We have done extensive work on the Syrian revolution, the refugee crisis and the humanitarian implications as a result of the ongoing conflict. There are real and substantive issues with the Syrian refugee crisis, the worst since the 1994 Rwandan crisis. As such, we urge Congress to follow your leadership and take increased measures to learn and understand the Syrian refugee crisis and ensure the ideals of the responsibility to protect the lives of innocent people as they seek refuge from a deadly conflict.



We thank you for holding this critical hearing on the Syrian refugee crisis. The hearing will address the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing the violent conflict in their home country.

Approximately 2.3 million Syrian refugees have fled the country since the outbreak of the war, and the number of refugees is projected to reach 3.5 million by the end of the year. Of the refugees, three-quarters are women and children, including 1.1 million children.

The U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees has stated this is the worst refugee crisis since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. This timely and important hearing will explore prospects for the United States accepting Syrian refugees. UNHCR is seeking to resettle approximately 40,000 vulnerable refugees this year. Typically, the U.S. accepts about half of resettled refugees. This hearing will also explore additional steps Congress and the Administration should take to address the Syrian refugee crisis.

The international community, led by the United States needs to step up and protect the civilians, who are needlessly suffering under the harsh conditions of al-Assad's brutal regime.

The Syrian refugee crisis must be addressed with a focus on humanitarian needs.

The question we must now ask ourselves is: How does the U.S. address current needs facing Syrian refugees while implementing a sustainable humanitarian response? The U.S. may be moving slowly on intervening in Syria because of the implications any action might cause. However, as the death toll has indicated, time is not on our side. The plight of the Syrian people must continue to be a priority for the U.S.



While the United States continues to be the biggest donor in humanitarian relief efforts in regards to the Syrian conflict, addressing the needs of Syrian refugees needs to be a priority for the U.S. and international community.

The U.S. has a generous track record when it comes to refugee resettlement. According to Rep. Adam Schiff (D- CA), “about six months ago [I] organized a letter to the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to grant humanitarian parole to about 6,000 Syrians who are trying to be reunited with their families here in the United States.” The representative still has yet to hear a response. More needs to be done.

Conclusion

History has shown us the past efforts led by the highest levels of government have been pivotal in implementing a refugee resettlement program. We are at a moment in history when innocent lives are depending on the principles of our nation – human dignity, mercy and justice. Further, Congress must allocate and prioritize federal funding for increasing the number of Syrian refugees to the U.S.

MPAC is heartened by the Subcommittee’s leadership in holding this hearing and we are grateful for the opportunity to present our thoughts on the Syrian refugee crisis.

Thank you again for this opportunity to express the views of the Muslim Public Affairs Council.

We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue and discussion about this important issue.