

December 1, 2015

Dear Senator/Representative,

We write to express our opposition to proposals that would effectively halt the resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the United States following the terrorist attacks in Paris. We believe that America can and should continue to provide refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution without compromising the security and safety of our nation. To do otherwise would be contrary to our nation's traditions of openness and inclusivity, and would undermine our core objective of combating terrorism.

The process that refugees undergo in order to be deemed eligible for resettlement in the United States is robust and thorough. They are vetted more intensively than any other category of traveler, and this vetting is conducted while they are still overseas. Those seeking resettlement are screened by national and international intelligence agencies; their fingerprints and other biometric data are checked against terrorist and criminal databases; and they are interviewed several times over the course of the vetting process, which takes 18-24 months and often longer.

Given the stringent measures in place, we are especially concerned by proposals that would derail or further delay the resettlement of Iraqis who risked their lives to work with the U.S. military and other U.S. organizations. These refugees were given priority access to U.S. resettlement under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act. The United States has a moral obligation to protect them.

We must remain vigilant to keep our nation safe from terrorists, whether foreign or homegrown, and from violence in all its forms. At the same time, we must remain true to our values. These are not mutually exclusive goals. In fact, resettlement initiatives help advance U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of our allies and partners that are struggling to host large numbers of refugees.

Refugees are victims, not perpetrators, of terrorism. Categorically refusing to take them only feeds the narrative of ISIS that there is a war between Islam and the West, that Muslims are not welcome in the United States and Europe, and that the ISIS caliphate is their true home. We must make clear that the United States rejects this worldview by continuing to offer refuge to the world's most vulnerable people, regardless of their religion or nationality.

Sincerely,

(Names in alphabetical order)

**Madeleine K. Albright**  
Former Secretary of State

**Henry A. Kissinger**  
Former Secretary of State  
Former National Security Advisor

**Samuel R. Berger**  
Former National Security Advisor

**General Richard B. Myers, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)**  
Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

**Zbigniew Brzezinski**  
Former National Security Advisor

**Janet A. Napolitano**  
Former Secretary of Homeland Security

**General George W. Casey, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.)**  
Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Army

**Leon E. Panetta**  
Former Secretary of Defense  
Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency

**Michael Chertoff**  
Former Secretary of Homeland Security

**William S. Cohen**  
Former Secretary of Defense

**Stephen J. Hadley**  
Former National Security Advisor

**Chuck Hagel**  
Former Secretary of Defense

**General Michael V. Hayden, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)**  
Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency

**General James L. Jones, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret.)**  
Former National Security Advisor  
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander  
Former Commandant of the Marine Corps

**General David H. Petraeus, U.S. Army (Ret.)**  
Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency  
Former Commander, U.S. Central Command

**William J. Perry**  
Former Secretary of Defense

**Brent Scowcroft**  
Former National Security Advisor

**George P. Shultz**  
Former Secretary of State

**Admiral James G. Stavridis, U.S. Navy (Ret.)**  
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander  
Former Commander, U.S. Southern Command

**General John W. Vessey, Jr., U.S. Army (Ret.)**  
Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff