



American ideals. Universal values.



# The Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Need for U.S. Leadership

Foreword by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker

February 2016

**ON HUMAN RIGHTS**, the United States must be a beacon. Activists fighting for freedom around the globe continue to look to us for inspiration and count on us for support. Upholding human rights is not only a moral obligation; it's a vital national interest. America is strongest when our policies and actions match our values.

Human Rights First is an independent advocacy and action organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals. We believe American leadership is essential in the struggle for human rights so we press the U.S. government and private companies to respect human rights and the rule of law. When they don't, we step in to demand reform, accountability, and justice. Around the world, we work where we can best harness American influence to secure core freedoms.

We know that it is not enough to expose and protest injustice, so we create the political environment and policy solutions necessary to ensure consistent respect for human rights. Whether we are protecting refugees, combating torture, or defending persecuted minorities, we focus not on making a point, but on making a difference. For over 30 years, we've built bipartisan coalitions and teamed up with frontline activists and lawyers to tackle issues that demand American leadership.

*Human Rights First is a nonprofit, nonpartisan international human rights organization based in New York and Washington D.C. To maintain our independence, we accept no government funding.*

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**COVER PHOTO:** Thousands of Syrian's cross into Yumurtalik, Turkey, fleeing the advance of ISIS into Kobani, Syria. © John Stanmeyer/National Geographic Creative/Corbis

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## Foreword by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker

*The Syrian refugee crisis is at a pivotal moment. More than 11 million people are displaced within Syria, a country that has been ravaged by escalating violence, aerial bombings, and terror. Many civilians have been stranded in besieged areas of the country, cut off from international assistance.*

*Large numbers of Syrian refugees are now living in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, placing tremendous strains on those countries and their critical infrastructures—water, electricity, sanitation, health care and education. Stressing that the pressure of hosting so many refugees is impacting Jordan’s infrastructures and economy, King Abdullah II recently warned that his country was at a “boiling point” and that “the dam is going to burst.” The lack of sufficient international support, through aid and resettlement, is exacerbating these strains.*

*Last year more than 1 million refugees and migrants—about half of them Syrians—fled by sea to Europe, and NATO has now launched a mission to counter the smuggling operations that transport people to Europe’s shores.*

*This is a global crisis. It is a crisis that very much involves U.S. interests, and it is a problem that can only be successfully addressed if the United States leads. As detailed in Human Rights First’s report *The Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Need for U.S. Leadership*, the United States must lead a major global initiative to address the refugee crisis. The United States must significantly increase its own humanitarian assistance, development investment, and resettlement commitments in order to enlist other states to do more, and to effectively advance its foreign policy interests.*

*A bold initiative—one that includes significant increases in resettlement and aid—will advance U.S. national security by alleviating the strains on refugee-hosting states and safeguarding the stability of a region that is home to key U.S. allies. While the United States is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance, American leadership cannot be defined simply by how large a check we write. We must also lead by example, and our allies in the Middle East and Europe need to see that we are truly sharing in the responsibility of hosting refugees.*

*We must also address the backlogs and bottlenecks that impede processing for refugees undergoing the resettlement process, and for Iraqis and Afghans who have put their lives on the line to work alongside the U.S. military. Severe backlogs undermine the reputation of these U.S. programs and the country’s ability to meet its commitments to its allies and to refugee-hosting states, as well as its commitments to protect vulnerable refugees. Refugees are more rigorously vetted than any travelers coming to the United States. Addressing backlogs would not undermine security; in fact it would strengthen the effectiveness of U.S. processing.*

*U.S. leadership of this global effort will not only benefit U.S. interests, it will also advance American ideals. In times of global crisis, our country cannot afford to abandon its ideals. This country’s values are inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty. In the words of Emma Lazarus, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” Providing refuge*

*to the most vulnerable in need of protection is what has built our nation and made it a beacon of hope in a dark world. This is not a partisan issue, it is an American issue.*

*I have served under both Democratic and Republican administrations, and I understand the power of our long tradition of bipartisan support for protecting vulnerable people who flee persecution and tyranny, and yearn for the freedom that is central to who we are as a nation. America's leadership in protecting and resettling refugees has benefited the world—and enriched this country.*

*Faced with the largest refugee and displacement crisis since World War II, it is time for America to stand up for its values and to lead again.*

*—Ryan C. Crocker,*

*former U.S. Ambassador to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kuwait*

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## Executive Summary

***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.***

**Bipartisan group of former U.S. National Security Advisors, CIA Directors, Secretaries of State, DHS Secretaries, and Retired Military Leaders, December 2015**

Poised to enter its sixth year in March 2016, the conflict in Syria has displaced more than 11 million people. About 4.7 million have fled the country, the vast majority to neighboring states. About 100,000 refugees and migrants—half of them Syrians—fled to Europe by sea in January and February 2016 alone. More than 3,800 perished at sea in 2015. This is a humanitarian disaster. The failure to effectively address the humanitarian crisis has spiraled into a threat to the stability of the region surrounding Syria, the cohesion of the European Union, and the national security of the United States. On February 11, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter announced U.S. backing of a NATO mission to stop the smuggling operations that transport people to Europe's shores, or to "stem this tide" as Secretary of State John F. Kerry said a few days later. With the outcome of the limited two-week "cessation of hostilities" in Syria in doubt, the conflicts within the country—and therefore the refugee crisis—offer no promise of abating.

According to the United Nations, there are more than 60 million people displaced in the world today—the highest numbers since World War II—and Syrians account for the greatest number of

these uprooted people. In 2014 and 2015, the international community failed to fully meet appeals for humanitarian aid and resettlement for Syrian refugees. Without sufficient support, the strain on the frontline refugee-hosting countries—including Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey—increased sharply. Across the region, governments and relief agencies cut food assistance, access to medical care and other essentials, deepening the suffering of refugees, who are generally prohibited from working legally in these states.

In the absence of adequate responsibility-sharing by other countries, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey imposed restrictions that denied entry to Syrian refugees and made it more difficult for those who had succeeded in fleeing to neighboring countries to remain in the region. As the Syrian government's Russian-backed attacks on Aleppo intensified in February 2016, tens of thousands of Syrians fled to the Turkish border, only to be barred from entering. At the same time, roughly 20,000 Syrian refugees have been stranded in a remote desert area at Jordan's border, which has been largely closed to refugees during the last two years. Beginning in January 2015, Lebanon implemented border restrictions that generally bar Syrians and initiated onerous registration requirements for remaining in the country that most refugees cannot meet. Not only do such border restrictions violate international law, they leave some Syrians trapped in a war-ravaged country. Prohibitions on entry, stay, and work also push refugees to seek protection outside the region.

As conditions in—and access to—frontline countries has sharply declined, many Syrians have embarked on dangerous journeys to Europe.

More than one million refugees and migrants—about half of them Syrian—traveled by sea to Europe during 2015. While the continent is hosting far fewer Syrian refugees than the frontline states, the numbers are nonetheless significant, and the arrivals of refugees and migrants—along with the lack of responsibility-sharing, absence of orderly registration and security screening procedures, and the effort of right-wing extremists to exploit the issue—is creating conflict both within and between European countries.

After World War II, the United States helped establish an international system grounded in the shared conviction that people fleeing persecution should never again be turned back to face horror or death. And since then, the country has often been a leader on refugee-protection, and has been *the* global leader on refugee resettlement. In response to the Syrian refugee crisis, however, it has failed to lead. While the United States has been the largest donor to humanitarian appeals, a February 2016 “fair share” analysis by Oxfam concluded that it had contributed only 76 percent of its fair share to humanitarian appeals for the Syria crisis and only 7 percent of its fair share of resettlement places to Syrian refugees.

In September 2015, Secretary of State Kerry announced that the United States would resettle “at least 10,000” Syrian refugees during the 2016 fiscal year, a modest pledge given the scale of the crisis and the capacity of the United States. Then, in late 2015, following the terrorist attacks in Paris, the resettlement of Syrian refugees became the target of intense political debate. Some politicians and members of Congress pushed for a halt to resettlement of Syrian refugees, saying they questioned whether security vetting was adequate, and some even proposed shutting out all Muslims. Human Rights First researchers traveling in the region learned that this rhetoric was reverberating on the frontlines, sending the

wrong message to U.S. allies in the region and to refugees themselves, some of whom gave up hope of waiting for resettlement and instead decided to head to Europe.

A bipartisan group of former U.S. government officials, including ones with national security and humanitarian expertise, called on the United States in a September 2015 letter to resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees, over and above the worldwide refugee ceiling of 70,000. Such a commitment would, they said, “send a powerful signal to governments in Europe and the Middle East about their obligations to do more.” Christian and Jewish faith leaders have also called on the United States to resettle Syrian refugees, as has the Bipartisan U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, stating that, “The United States must continue to live up to our nation’s core values.”

By leading an effort to resolve this crisis, the U.S. government would not only live up to its ideals; it would also advance its own interests. Ryan Crocker, former U.S. Ambassador to Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, has explained that, “A U.S. initiative to resettle Syrian refugees in the United States affirmatively advances U.S. national security interests. Increased resettlement and aid helps protect the stability of a region that is home to U.S. allies.” In a December 2015 letter to Congress, a bipartisan group of former national security advisors, CIA directors, secretaries of state, and Department of Homeland Security secretaries likewise pointed out that “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.” They also pointed out that refugees “are vetted more intensively than any other category of traveler” and cautioned that barring Syrian refugees “feeds the narrative of ISIS that there is a war between Islam and the West.” They urged the U.S. government to reject

“this worldview by continuing to offer refuge to the world’s most vulnerable people, regardless of their religion or nationality.” A copy of their letter is attached as an appendix to this report.

In January and February 2016, Human Rights First conducted research on the conditions facing refugees in the region surrounding Syria and the progress of U.S. resettlement processing. Researchers gathered information through interviews and meetings in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt. Our findings, detailed in this report, include:

- **Syrian refugees are increasingly at risk, and suffer sharply deteriorating conditions, across the region.** States have closed their borders, blocking civilians from escaping Syria, and imposed restrictions that make it difficult for many refugees living in the region to remain, prohibit most from working legally, and leave them in constant fear of detention and deportation back to Syria. These measures have also triggered a rise in child labor and early marriage of teenage daughters. In Jordan, half the refugee families have children as primary or joint primary bread-winners according to UNICEF. Under these conditions, many refugees cannot survive, much less rebuild their lives.
- **The lack of effective regional protection, exacerbated by the lack of assistance and insufficient orderly resettlement or visa routes for refugees, is driving many Syrians to embark on dangerous trips to Europe.** Roughly half the refugees in Jordan were thinking of taking the dangerous trip to Europe given the lack of permission to work and insufficient assistance, according to a survey by CARE International. In Turkey primarily, and also in Jordan and Lebanon, we heard reports that refugees who had been struggling to survive for years in exile lost hope in waiting

longer for potential resettlement and decided to instead take the dangerous trip to Europe.

- **The failure to adequately address the refugee crisis is harming U.S. national security interests, threatening the stability of frontline states bordering Syria and contributing to disunity in Europe.** In Jordan, Lebanon, and parts of Turkey, the large number of refugees is straining critical infrastructures—water, sanitation, medical care, education and housing, as well as economic and job markets. This is a threat to regional stability that the international community has failed to alleviate through sufficient assistance, development investment and resettlement initiatives.
- **Turkey’s January 2016 announcement that it will allow Syrian refugees to work, if effectively implemented, will be an important step towards improving protection for Syrian refugees that should be replicated by other states.**

U.S. resettlement processing centers and government agencies are working hard to try to meet U.S. goals for admitting Syrian refugees, and the number of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officers interviewing Syrian refugees is increasing. Still, a range of factors related to the processing of U.S. resettlement and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) cases are undermining American leadership and the ability of the United States to advance its humanitarian, human rights, and foreign policy objectives. Our findings on U.S. resettlement processing, detailed in this report, include:

- **U.S. pledges to resettle Syrian refugees have fallen far short of the necessary leadership,** given the scale of the crisis, the overall resettlement needs—which exceed 460,000—and the impact of the crisis on U.S. allies, regional stability, and U.S. national security interests. With its pledge to resettle

10,000 Syrian refugees this fiscal year, the United States has agreed to take in only about 2 percent of the Syrian refugees in need of resettlement, which amounts to less than 0.2 percent of the overall Syrian refugee population of 4.7 million. This lackluster response has been particularly detrimental given the traditional U.S. role as the global resettlement leader.

■ **The United States government obtains significant amounts of information about, and rigorously vets, Syrian refugees resettled to the United States, who come primarily from Jordan and Turkey where they have been struggling to survive for years.** This vetting is the most rigorous of any travelers to the United States. It entails multiple interviews and involves numerous U.S. and international intelligence and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Defense, and Interpol, which have extensive databases on foreign fighters, suspected terrorists, and stolen, false, and blank passports from Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere. This vetting includes access to information provided by many other countries, including those in the region surrounding Syria.

■ **U.S. resettlement processing continues to be hampered by some bottlenecks, backlogs, and staffing gaps,** which undermine the United States' ability to meet its humanitarian, protection, and foreign policy goals. Despite significant U.S. efforts to step up resettlement processing, these backlogs and staffing gaps make it difficult for the United States to meet even its modest commitment to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees. As of January 31, one-third of the way through the fiscal year, the United States had resettled only 841 out of the 10,000 Syrian refugees it pledged to

resettle by September 30, 2016. Processing deficiencies include:

- Backlogs due to insufficient DHS staff to review several thousand cases on hold in which no decision has yet been made
- Backlogs due to insufficient DHS and security vetting agency staff and prioritization to conduct follow-up inquiries on both refugee cases and cases of Special Immigrant Visa applicants who worked for the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Lack of space at the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon which has long impeded U.S. resettlement from Lebanon
- Cuts in UNHCR funding that may limit its capacity to identify, review, and refer cases and lack of other avenues for referring refugee cases for resettlement
- Insufficient capacity to expedite protection and resettlement for refugees facing imminent risks of harm, including LGBT refugees

■ **Iraqi refugees and many Iraqis who worked with the United States military or other U.S. entities are also stranded in the region.** As of January 2016, more than 50,000 Iraqis, including many who worked for the U.S. military and government, are caught in a backlog. Many have been waiting years to be brought to safety in the United States.

While the resolution of the conflicts within Syria must occur before significant numbers of Syrian refugees can safely return home (and even then there will be many Syrian refugees who cannot safely return depending on the security, political and human rights realities on the ground as well as the nature of their past persecution), there is much that the United States and the international community should do to help Syria's refugees. Secretary of State John F. Kerry pledged \$925

million in aid at the February 4, 2016 donor conference in London, the United States should pledge increased resettlement at a high level meeting in Geneva on March 30, 2016 and the United States will host a conference on the global refugee crisis in September 2016. However, as outlined in the full set of recommendations later in this report, the United States must lead a comprehensive global effort to successfully address the crisis.

In order to effectively lead, to press other states to do more, and to advance its foreign policy interests, the United States must significantly increase its own humanitarian assistance, development investment, and resettlement commitments. Specifically, the United States should:

1. **Work with other donor states to fully meet humanitarian appeals and significantly increase U.S. humanitarian aid and development investments in frontline refugee hosting states.** In particular, with Congress' support, the administration should substantially increase both U.S. humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees and displaced persons and U.S. development aid. The United States and other donors should expand and replicate initiatives that increase opportunities for refugees to work and access education, while also supporting refugee-hosting communities.
2. **Champion the protection of the rights of refugees, including their right to work, access education, and cross borders in order to escape persecution.** The U.S. president and secretary of state should redouble efforts to press states to allow refugees to cross borders to access international protection. The United States should also ensure that NATO actions, as well as any proposed "safe zone," "no fly zone," or similar endeavors, do not violate the human

rights of refugees and migrants, including the right to flee persecution and seek asylum, and do not end up exposing civilians to dangers. UNHCR has cautioned that NATO's mission—to "close off a key access route" to "stem this tide," according to Secretary Kerry—should not "undermine the institution of asylum for people in need of international protection." Efforts to block people from crossing borders to secure protection often instead push them—and the smugglers who profit off migration barriers and human misery—to find other, sometimes riskier, routes.

3. **Substantially increase the U.S. resettlement commitment.** For fiscal year 2017, the U.S. government should, in addition to resettling refugees from other countries, aim to resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees, a commitment more commensurate with both the American tradition of leadership and U.S. national security interests. This commitment would be miniscule compared to that of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and would amount to just over 2 percent of the overall Syrian population hosted by these and other states in the region and only about 21 percent of the overall resettlement need, estimated to exceed 460,000. This commitment would still fall far short of the U.S. "fair share" level of 163,392. Still, it would help push other countries to increase resettlement, visa, and other humanitarian admission places for Syrian refugees.
4. **Address staffing gaps to reduce backlogs and bottlenecks in resettlement and SIV processing.** DHS should immediately increase staffing and resources to resolve the several thousand Syrian resettlement cases waiting their turn for review in "no decision" hold. Over the next year, DHS should also increase the size of its refugee corps to meet U.S. admissions goals, and assure cases are not delayed waiting for DHS interviews. In addition,

to prevent extended processing delays, the President should direct DHS and U.S. security vetting agencies to increase staffing and resources for SIV and resettlement cases. Congress should encourage and support increases in staff and resources. These backlogs undermine the reputation of these programs and the country's ability to meet its commitments to U.S. allies, other refugee-hosting countries, and vulnerable refugees, including those facing grave risks due to their work with the United States. Addressing backlogs would *not* undermine security; rather it would strengthen the effectiveness of U.S. processing. It is certainly not in the security interest of the United States to have delays in security vetting, which would potentially put off the identification of a person who might actually pose a security threat.

**5. Appoint a high-level assistant to the president charged with refugee protection.**

The world faces the largest refugee and displacement crisis since World War II. The president should appoint a high level official to ensure strong U.S. leadership of efforts—across U.S. agencies—to address the global refugee crisis, advance the protection of refugees at home and abroad, and coordinate effective and timely U.S. resettlement and SIV processing. This senior official should also map out a plan for effective transition of leadership on these matters to the next administration.

In the United States, the Syrian refugee crisis has—at least for the moment—fallen off the front pages. Yet its impact on people and the stability of key U.S. allies and refugee-hosting countries increases with each passing day, and year. It's long past time for the United States to lead.

This report illuminates the challenges posed by the refugee crisis and explains how the United States, in conjunction with its allies, should tackle them.

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## The Numbers

***Our world is facing a refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War ... 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.***

**Pope Francis, September 2015 speech to the U.S. Congress**

More than 11 million people have been displaced as a result of the Syrian conflict. About 6.6 million are displaced within Syria, and 13.5 million are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance within Syria. Another 4.7 million have fled to other countries. More than 2.6 million Syrian refugees have been registered in Turkey, which is hosting the highest number of Syrian refugees. More than 1.1 million are registered in Lebanon, which has prohibited the registration of any more refugees since May 2015. One out of four people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. About 635,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Jordan, though the Jordanian government has stated that as many as 1.4 million Syrian refugees are living in the country.<sup>1</sup> For Jordan, even using the more conservative estimate of registered refugees, this means that at least one out of every ten people in the country is now a Syrian refugee. Egypt hosts an estimated 120,000 Syrian refugees, and Iraq about 245,000. These countries also host refugees from other countries, including Iraqis, Sudanese, and Palestinians.

More than one million refugees and migrants have crossed the Mediterranean in an attempt to reach Europe in 2015, about 49 percent of whom were Syrians. UNHCR reports that since 2014, 7,452 people have died while crossing the sea in attempts to reach Europe. Refugees and migrants

have continued to take these dangerous trips to Europe, with more than 13,500 people arriving weekly during January and February 2016. During the first six weeks of 2016, more than 80,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe by boat, more than in the first four months of 2015. UNHCR reported that nearly 68 percent of January arrivals in Greece were women and children, a shift from last year, and 56 percent were Syrians.<sup>2</sup>

During 2015, humanitarian appeals for the Syria crisis were woefully underfunded. UNHCR reports that just under 50 percent of the appeals it made for refugees in the region went unfunded in 2015. UNHCR's Syria Regional Response Plan for 2014 was also underfunded, with 37 percent of the need unmet. World Food Programme (WFP) appeals were also drastically underfunded in 2015. By the middle of 2015, financial shortages had forced the WFP to reduce its assistance to 1.6 million Syrian refugees in five countries.<sup>3</sup>

A major donor conference for the Syria crisis, held in London on February 4, 2016, led to over ten billion dollars in humanitarian and development "pledges" of assistance for the crisis.<sup>4</sup> U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pledged \$925 million in humanitarian and development assistance from the United States.<sup>5</sup> While this was an initial announcement of U.S. assistance, and is expected to be supplemented, the U.S. "fair share" estimate by Oxfam for 2016 is estimated to be \$2.16 billion.

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## Refugees Increasingly at Risk Across the Region

As the sixth year of the Syria conflict approaches in March 2016, Syrian refugees across the region are increasingly vulnerable and at risk. Refugees who brought savings with them from Syria have

long since depleted those savings as they struggle to survive in exile. With humanitarian appeals chronically underfunded, many of refugees' basic needs have been left unaddressed year after year. The cuts in food assistance in 2015 had—as one aid worker in Jordan told us—a "domino effect" on refugee families, impacting not only their ability to eat but their ability to pay rent. More families are facing the risk of evictions. Some felt they had no choice but to withdraw children from school so that the children could work to help support their families. Based on poverty lines adopted by the hosting countries, as of December 2015, 87 percent and 93 percent of refugees were living in poverty in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively.

In Jordan, we heard—from both aid workers and refugees—reports of increasing child labor, early marriage, and fears of detention and deportation to Syria. The Jordanian government's severe cuts in medical care for refugees left many Syrian refugees without critical medical assistance. In Jordan, poverty among refugees increased by several percentage points between 2013 and 2015. Not only are about 86 percent of refugees in urban areas in Jordan living below the poverty line, but 80 percent have resorted to "emergency coping mechanisms," such as sending their children to work, returning to dangerous areas of Syria, or marrying off daughters early. In Jordan, a majority of working children in host communities work six to seven days a week, with a third working more than eight hours a day.<sup>6</sup>

In Lebanon, recent surveys found that 70 percent of refugee households are below the poverty line of \$3.84 per person per day, a significant increase from 2014 when 50 percent were below the poverty line. Refugees in Lebanon told Human Rights First researchers that they were struggling to survive. In 2015, an estimated 55 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon were living in informal settlements, unfinished buildings, over-crowded

apartments or other substandard housing, a 15 percent increase from the year before. Severely vulnerable households doubled from 26 percent to 52 percent in one year. Aid workers reported that families in Lebanon were eating much less, children were working, and young girls in their early teens were increasingly being married off because their parents could no longer afford to feed all in the family. In Lebanon, many aid workers noted that the number of Syrian refugee “street children” appeared to have increased significantly. These street children engage in work including begging and street vending.<sup>7</sup>

In Turkey, aid workers and refugees reported increasing instances of child labor and early marriage. Most of the Syrian children in Turkey are in urban areas, and about 75 percent are not attending schools. With the large influx of refugees, wages and fees have reportedly dropped to one-fifth of their previous levels, causing working conditions for the most vulnerable, including Syrians, to deteriorate.<sup>8</sup> As outlined below, refugee experts in Turkey also reported increases in the use of detention.

In Egypt, as the economy has worsened in the wake of terrorist attacks aimed at the country’s tourism industry, the plight of refugees in the country has also worsened. Many communities already face high unemployment rates and insufficient access to quality services. The number of jobs available has declined, as the economy has deteriorated, impacting both Egyptians and refugees living in Egypt. In a recent socio-economic assessment conducted by UNHCR, Caritas, and the Egyptian Red Crescent, 60 percent of the assessed registered Syrian population fell under “severe vulnerability” levels, while an additional 27.7 percent fell under “high vulnerability.”<sup>9</sup>

In Jordan and Lebanon, negative attitudes towards refugees appear to have escalated over the last year or two. One aid worker described the environment in Lebanon as “hostile,” a view echoed by refugees interviewed by Human Rights First. The number of Syrians deported is regularly reported on the Lebanese news. Aid workers in Jordan also reported more negative sentiments from Jordanians, who see their medical care and schools impacted by Syrian refugees. Aid workers and refugees report that Syrian refugee children are sometimes bullied or beaten in schools in Jordan. In Egypt, with the deterioration of the country’s economy, refugees are increasingly viewed as threats to Egyptian jobs. To some in Egypt, Syrian refugees are viewed as security threats, while African refugees have long been the targets of racist and xenophobic harassment and violence. In Turkey, which we visited after the January 12, 2016 suicide bombing in Istanbul, there does not appear to be the same degree of negative sentiment towards Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees in Turkey amount to about 3 percent of the country’s population, although they are much more heavily concentrated in particular areas. In addition, the social and political climate in Turkey, as well as official government attitudes, have favored generally welcoming attitudes toward Syrian refugees. In contrast, they constitute one out of every four people in Lebanon, and 9 percent to over 20 percent of the population in Jordan (depending on whether the calculation is based on the number of registered Syrian refugees, or the government’s estimate).

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## Lack of Basic Rights Protection for Refugees in the Region

*I have thought for a long time that a strategy that relies only on aid—which in any case is only reaching a minority of those who need it—is a mistake.*

### Syrian refugee interviewed by Human Rights First in Jordan

Across the region, Human Rights First researchers heard—again and again—that refugee-hosting states in the region have denied refugees the ability to work legally, that refugee children face tremendous barriers to education, and that refugees are facing increasing risks of exploitation, detention, and deportation in the face of increasingly harsh government policies and registration requirements. Without protection of their basic rights—including protection from return to persecution, protection from violence in the country of refuge, the ability to work legally, effective access to education, and freedom from arbitrary detention—refugees cannot safely remain and rebuild their lives in the region.

### Self-Reliance and Permission to Work

Across the region, the lack of legal permission for refugees to work prevents them from supporting their families, undermines self-reliance, and places parents and children at risk of exploitation. Human Rights First researchers heard numerous reports that refugee families feared that a working adult would risk detention or deportation back to Syria if caught working. As a result many families made the difficult decision to send a child out to work so that the family could survive. In Jordan, half of families have children as primary or joint primary bread-winners, according to UNICEF. Those adults who do work are often vulnerable to exploitation, with employers sometimes refusing

to pay refugees (who cannot complain as they are working illegally), vastly underpaying refugees, or hiring refugees to work in conditions that are unsafe.<sup>10</sup>

As the conflict approaches its sixth year, the persistent lack of work permission has left many families feeling that they have little choice but to travel onward to other countries where they will be able to support their families. A recent survey conducted by Care International in Jordan indicated that roughly half of refugees there were thinking of attempting the dangerous journey to Europe because they lacked a "future with dignity" without the ability to work or sufficient assistance. In Egypt, aid workers and refugees reported that the lack of work authorization leads refugees to believe they have no future in Egypt, prompting some to take the risky trip across the Mediterranean to Europe.

On January 15, 2016, the Turkish government announced that it would allow Syrian refugees to apply for work authorization. The measure is sweeping and contains relatively few limitations, some of the most significant of which are that it only applies after a refugee has been registered in Turkey for six months, and limits the number of Syrians in any given workplace to 10 percent—even in those areas of Turkey where Syrian refugees represent a high proportion of the local population. During our visit in January 2016, aid workers and refugee advocates in Turkey were cautiously optimistic about the development, which had not yet been implemented. Most refugees we spoke to expressed gratitude and relief at the prospect of legal work authorization, although the availability of jobs that will pay enough for refugees to support their families remains a significant challenge. On January 11, the British government announced that Jordan had agreed to allow Syrian refugees to apply for 4,000 work permits, 2,000 in the garment industry and 2,000 for agricultural jobs. In connection with

the February 2016 London Donor Conference on Syria, the European Union announced that it would review restrictive rules that have made it difficult for Jordanian exporters to take advantage of duty-free, quota-free access to E.U. markets, and nudge E.U. firms to invest in Jordan to create over one million jobs in the region.<sup>11</sup>

### **Detention, Registration and Freedom of Movement**

In Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Lebanon, Human Rights First researchers heard increasing reports of detention and refugees' fears of detention. In many cases, refugees have been—and many more fear they will be—detained if caught working illegally, or begging, and potentially returned back to Syria. In Lebanon and Egypt, where onerous registration renewal requirements have been imposed, refugees have also been detained for not complying with these new government requirements. In Lebanon, aid workers reported increases in raids, evictions, searches and seizures, leading some Syrian refugees to be thrown into detention. As a result, many Syrian refugees—especially men—feel that they are subject to arrest and detention. As one aid worker noted, refugees have no money, no food, no school, and now because they are viewed as “illegal,” many are scared to leave their homes because they fear detention or deportation.

In Turkey, refugee advocates and aid workers expressed concerns about the government's increasing use of detention. In November 2015, the Turkish government and the European Union negotiated a controversial deal under which Turkey agreed to prevent irregular migration to Europe in return for nearly three billion USD in assistance for Syrians in Turkey, promises of visa-free travel for Turkish citizens, and a renewal of discussions about potential E.U. membership for Turkey. As of February 2016, the funds had not been delivered to Turkey. On November 27, 2015,

Amnesty International in Turkey reported that 50 Syrian refugees were being held at an EU-financed detention center following their participation in a peaceful protest against their ban from entering Greece, and that some refugees had been beaten in detention. The organization's Turkey researcher stated that “[r]efugees in Turkey are increasingly facing arbitrary detention and forced return to Syria as the government punishes those it perceives as jeopardizing its lucrative E.U. deal.” Refugee advocates told Human Rights First that by June 2016 the Turkish government plans to have 10,000 detention beds open for migrants and asylum seekers, in anticipation of large numbers being returned to Turkey by the E.U. starting in June 2016, under the portion of the E.U.-Turkey migration deal under which Turkey has agreed to readmit migrants and asylum seekers deported from the E.U.

### **Education**

Across the region, aid workers and refugees report significant barriers to education for refugee children, teens, and young adults. In Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey some steps have been taken to open schools to younger children, and donors have invested in education for refugee children. In Jordan, for instance, many schools operate a second shift for Syrian children, with Jordanians going to school in the morning, and Syrian children attending in the afternoons. In Egypt, Syrian refugee children are permitted to attend the already overcrowded public schools. In Turkey, the government in 2014 took measures to remove legal barriers to school registration for Syrian refugee children, who are allowed to attend Turkish public schools or may instead attend privately-run “temporary education centers” for Syrian children that are now accredited by the Turkish government.

But a range of impediments keep many Syrian and other refugee children out of schools. A vast majority of school-aged Syrian children reside outside refugee camps in towns and cities. Although measures implemented in 2014 to facilitate school registration have improved enrollment, in Turkey, still only 25 percent of Syrian refugee children living in urban areas attended school in the 2014-2015 academic year. Many Syrian children who do enroll face difficulties in Turkish schools due to the fact that school is conducted in Turkish and that schools lack programs to teach students Turkish as a second language. A further problem in national public schools across the region is the lack of experience of those school systems in teaching children who have suffered war-time trauma. In addition, and across the region, there are not adequate remedial programs to teach Syrian children who, as a result of the conflict, have now been out of school for four years or more. As discussed above, many refugee children are working across the region, and as a result do not attend school. In turn, children who have been out of school for some time face particular difficulties in reintegrating in school in their country of exile and are particularly vulnerable to being driven into the workforce.

In Jordan, the government provides primary and secondary education free of charge for Syrian refugee children, but the many associated expenses—books, fees, transportation costs—make attendance at school impossible for many refugee children. In addition, in several countries in the region, aid workers and refugees have reported that refugee children face harassment or violence at schools, or in transit to and from school. School attendance for refugee children has actually declined in Jordan. In 2013, about 30,000 Syrian refugee children were out of school. This number rose steeply in 2015, with 90,000 Syrian children out of school in Jordan.<sup>12</sup>

Refugees have very little access to higher education. We spoke with a number of refugees whose higher educations and clearly planned career goals had been interrupted by the events that led them to flee Syria, and who were watching in despair as their futures disappeared. A lack of access to higher education in countries of first asylum is a disincentive for youth to complete secondary schooling, particularly in countries where refugees are also barred from legal employment. Some positive steps offer opportunities for replication, expansion and additional efforts. In Turkey, for instance, an initiative that offered 70 university scholarships for Syrian refugees prompted 5,000 applications. In Egypt, the government has allowed Syrian students to pay local tuition rates for university, but many are unable to transfer credits from Syrian universities as those schools are not considered accredited by Egyptian colleges.

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## Escape Routes Closed

***I fled Assad's and Russia's bombardment. Please tell them to open the doors so we can move to safety. We have no safety here.***

**Elderly Syrian woman, blocked from crossing to Turkey, February 2016<sup>13</sup>**

In the absence of adequate responsibility-sharing by other countries, front-line refugee hosting states have imposed an array of restrictions, escalating in 2015, that block entry to many refugees trying to flee Syria. Turkey's recent refusal to allow thousands fleeing the Aleppo attacks to escape across its border is one vivid example, but Syrians have been denied the right to flee their country on a daily basis at Syria's other borders as well. Not only do border restrictions that improperly bar refugees violate international law, but they leave Syrians with no

## New Lebanese Registration Requirements Impact Employment, Education, Detentions, and Protection

In January 2015, the Lebanese government issued regulations that require Syrians to pay \$200 USD—per person—for an annual residence permit and sign a pledge not to work, or alternatively to find a Lebanese sponsor. Not only are the registration and renewal processes prohibitively expensive for refugees, but they are also so complicated, and require so much documentation, that most refugees cannot actually renew their registration. In some cases, families who cannot afford the costs, decide to have only the father renew his registration. In May 2015, UNHCR stop registering new refugees upon the demand of the Lebanese government. As a result thousands of Syrian refugees in Lebanon have not been registered, though UNHCR has recorded their information, including fingerprints and iris scans.

Without appropriate documentation, refugees in Lebanon cannot secure legal and physical protection. These new requirements limit the ability of refugees to register marriages and their children's births (and could ultimately prevent children from securing Syrian citizenship, leaving them stateless), leave them vulnerable to exploitation, and increasingly subject them to detention and deportation back to Syria. A January 2016 Human Rights Watch report concluded that registration regulations left most refugees without legal status, often prohibiting their access to livelihoods, healthcare, education, and shelter as well as leading to a deterioration of refugees' legal and economic status, increasing the burden on the host community.<sup>14</sup>

way out of a country ravaged by barrel bombs, conflict, and terror. These moves also make clear to many Syrians that they cannot secure effective protection in the region.

The countries that border Syria have legitimate security concerns, but they can address these concerns through individualized exclusion assessments conducted in accordance with international law. Blanket or random denials of entry violate the Refugee Convention and international law prohibitions against return. Drafted in the wake of World War II and in the context of the many border restrictions that denied refuge to those fleeing Nazi persecution, the Convention and its Protocol prohibit states from *refoulement*, or returning people to places where their lives or freedom would be at risk. Even

states that are not party to the Refugee Convention and Protocol must comply with this prohibition as it constitutes a tenet of customary international law.

Jordan restricted entry to a number of categories of refugees fleeing persecution and conflict during 2013 and 2014, as documented in a December 2013 Human Rights First report and a 2015 Refugee Council USA report, to which Human Rights First contributed. For example, Jordan turns away single men, refugees who had traveled back to Syria (a refugee might, for example, return to retrieve a family member who is unable to travel alone), Palestinians formerly resident in Syria, Syrians without identity documents and Syrian refugees fleeing from areas of Syria controlled by ISIL. In mid-2014, Jordan all but

closed its borders to Syrian refugees, leading to a build-up of several thousand refugees stranded in a remote desert “no-man’s land” along the Syrian border. As a result of these border policies, the average number of arrivals in Jordan dropped from 60,000 per month down to around 10,000 per month between January and September 2014, and down even further to only several hundred a month at the end of 2014. In December 2014, the government allowed hundreds of Syrian refugees, including women and children, who had been stranded in the “no man’s land” to enter the country, though there were concerns that many may have been returned to Syria without being registered as refugees. Beginning in September 2015, as Syrians fled Russian airstrikes and ISIL terror, the number of refugees stranded in the desert and blocked from entering Jordan rose sharply. The numbers reportedly tripled between November and December 2015. As of January 2016, over 16,000 Syrian refugees were stranded on a berm in this remote desert area. By February, the number had reportedly climbed to 20,000. Jordan continued to allow in only very small numbers. On February 16 to 17 for example, Jordan reported that it allowed 82 Syrian refugees to enter Jordan. The weather in this desert area, where there is no water, has been described as “harsh,” and the conditions as “horrendous” by aid workers who have visited the area. In two weeks alone in early 2016, 70 to 100 Syrian refugees reportedly died from winter storms, war wounds, malnutrition, and disease. One aid worker estimated that there could be 40,000 refugees stranded in the desert by the summer if the situation is not resolved. The Jordanian government has repeatedly challenged the international community to take the refugees stranded at the border.<sup>15</sup>

These refugees are overwhelmingly families, including elderly people and pregnant women, according to aid workers. The Jordanian

government has said that some of the individuals at the border present security risks as they have come from areas controlled by ISIL; the government has also repeatedly stressed the financial pressures of hosting refugees and its need for additional aid from the international community. In January 2016, the Jordanian Prime Minister said “[I]t is true that supporting the Syrian refugees is our duty but we are doing this on behalf of the world ... If the world supports us, then we can keep our borders open and, if not, then how can Jordan, in light of its troubled budget, be able to serve them [refugees]?”

As noted above, the Jordanian government could implement fair and effective procedures for screening out individuals who present security threats and are not entitled to international protection, providing access to UNHCR. Moreover, there is also space in refugee camps within Jordan to hold these refugees.

Turkey too has closed its borders to Syrians seeking refuge. Turkey had periodically closed its borders during 2013 and 2014, but largely allowed Syrian refugees to enter the country until the end of 2014. In January 2015, Turkey imposed rules requiring Syrians to have valid travel documents in order to enter the country, a requirement that barred many legitimate Syrian refugees. In March 2015, Turkey announced the closure of two remaining border crossing points. Most recently, in early January 2016, Turkey imposed a new visa requirement for Syrians arriving by land or air. As a result of these policies, thousands of refugees have been prevented from escaping Syria, and many have been left with little choice but to turn to smugglers to try to escape the violence raging in Syria.

As Syrian government attacks on Aleppo and its surrounding countryside, supported by Russian aerial bombing, escalated in February 2016, tens of thousands of Syrians fled to the Turkish border, only to be barred from crossing to Turkey. About

58,000 people fled to the border area within a two-week period in February. Another 110,000 internally displaced persons were already living in camps at Bab al-Salama on the Syrian side of the border crossing. On February 9, 2016 UNHCR called on Turkey to “open its border to all civilians in Syria fleeing danger in need of international protection.” On February 19, Amnesty International reported that Turkish authorities had denied entry to Syrian civilians in need of immediate medical care and that Turkish security forces had shot and injured civilians, including children who, out of desperation, attempted to cross the border with the help of smugglers.

Recent reports indicate that Turkish authorities are under pressure to stop refugees from heading to Europe and under growing pressure from the United States to secure the border more tightly because of the risk of militants travelling across borders.<sup>16</sup>

Prior to 2015, refugees who were prevented from crossing to safety in Jordan or (to a much lesser extent given the risks or impossibility of cross-country travel in Syria) Turkey could try to make their way to Lebanon. However, in January 2015 Lebanon imposed new border rules that have generally barred Syrians from escape to Lebanon. These rules include no exception for refugees and no exception for people fleeing persecution and war. This new policy is leading many refugees to be denied entry to Lebanon and turned back to Syria in violation of customary international law protections against *refoulement*. An extremely small number of refugees are allowed to enter Lebanon under a “humanitarian” entry category. The few examples include minors whose guardians are in Lebanon (and not the reverse), elderly or disabled people whose caregiver is in Lebanon, and individuals in need of life-saving medical care not available in their country. Over the last year, one aid worker estimated that only about 11 cases have met this “humanitarian”

exception. Not only is this process extremely limited, but there is no effective process at the border to assess whether individuals should be let in or not. For instance, as of January 2016, the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs, which is responsible for making these determinations but is not the agency in charge of border security, did not have staff at the border to make these evaluations.

The Lebanese border rules include an exception for “transit” visas, so some Syrians have been able to escape Syria if they can show they are merely transiting through Lebanon. Many Syrian refugees did transit through Lebanon to Turkey, with some then heading onward to Europe. However, many Syrians will now be prevented from leaving Syria to transit to Turkey via Lebanon due to the new Turkish visa requirements. After these visa restrictions went into effect in early January 2016, Lebanon deported several hundred Syrians, who were planning to travel by plane to Turkey, from the Beirut airport back to Syria. As a result, yet another escape route for Syrians has been blocked.

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## Lack of Effective Resettlement or Other Routes to Safety

Resettlement can be a life-saving solution for vulnerable refugees who are struggling to survive in front-line countries that host the overwhelming majority of refugees. Resettlement is also a tangible demonstration of responsibility-sharing by countries outside the region, providing critical support to front-line refugee hosting states as they struggle under the strain of hosting large number of refugees. In addition, it can also be a tool for protecting other refugees—particularly if effectively leveraged—by encouraging front-line

countries to continue to host the bulk of refugees and to allow additional refugees to cross into their countries to escape conflict and persecution.

In September 2013, UNHCR launched a formal appeal for resettlement and other humanitarian admission slots for Syrian refugees, and in February 2014, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees called on states to provide 130,000 places for Syrian resettlement or admissions. Throughout 2014 and 2015, the High Commissioner repeatedly called on countries to pledge more resettlement or other admission spots for Syrian refugees. In a March 30, 2015 “fair share” analysis, Oxfam found that pledges still fell 55,890 below the 130,000 goal. It also concluded that the number of pledges fell 121,890 below the actual resettlement needs of Syrian refugees. As of June 2015, UNHCR reported that it was still 27,000 short of its 130,000 Syrian pledge goal. As global attention increasingly focused on the escalating number of Syrian refugees and others taking the dangerous journey to Europe, pledges increased in late 2015. Canada, for instance, committed to take in about 25,000 Syrian refugees.

UNHCR has estimated that about 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population is extremely vulnerable and in need of resettlement, though given deteriorating conditions, UNHCR has explained that the 10 percent target should be considered an important milestone rather than a final goal.<sup>17</sup> As the registered Syrian refugee population has, as of February 2016, grown to 4.6 million (and by the end of February to 4.7 million), at least 460,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees are now in need of resettlement to third countries. In its 2016 Syria Crisis Fair Share Analysis, released on February 1, 2016, Oxfam calculated that only 128,612 resettlement or other humanitarian admission spots had been pledged by the world’s richest governments—still 331,388 below the overall need level of 460,000. UNHCR has

reported that some countries have extended other types of visas to Syrians. For instance, Brazil had issued 8,177 humanitarian visas to Syrians affected by the crisis as of February 2016.

The United States, long the global leader in resettlement, admitted only 105 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2014 through resettlement and only 1,682 in fiscal year 2015. As of January 2016, 645 Syrian refugees had departed so far from Jordan to the United States since October 1, 2015 (the beginning of fiscal year 2016). During calendar year 2016, UNHCR plans to submit roughly 20,000 Syrian refugees to the United States for resettlement consideration, with the substantial majority of these cases coming from Jordan and Turkey. Given lengthy U.S. resettlement processing times, however the bulk of those Syrian refugees who are ultimately approved for resettlement will most likely not depart for the United States until subsequent U.S. fiscal years.

In Lebanon, the government has taken the position that it cannot be a country of permanent asylum. As a result, UNHCR has concluded that the only durable solution for refugees in Lebanon, other than voluntarily return to their home country (which Syrians cannot do safely now), is to be resettled to a third country.<sup>18</sup> However, as of January 2016, only 10,390 have actually departed from Lebanon to resettlement countries—amounting to only 1 percent of the nearly 1.1 million refugees registered in Lebanon. For 2015, UNHCR had only 6,000 resettlement spots pledged for resettlement of refugees in Lebanon. While the numbers have increased recently—with Canada for example resettling 8,200 Syrian refugees from Lebanon between December 2015 and early February 2016, the overall departure level still falls far short of demonstrating a meaningful level of responsibility sharing by the international community.

The United States suspended its resettlement efforts out of Lebanon during 2014 and 2015 due

to the lack of space at the U.S. Embassy for DHS resettlement interviewers. This lack of space for DHS interviewing officers has hampered the U.S.' ability to resettle refugees living in Beirut, including vulnerable refugees with U.S. ties. As discussed in more detail later in this report, resettlement interviews at the embassy are slated to resume during February 2016, but their size and frequency will be limited.

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## DHS Obtains Extensive Information on, and Rigorously Vets, Syrian Refugees

***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 ...***

***Bipartisan group of former U.S. National Security Advisors, CIA Directors, Secretaries of State, DHS Secretaries, and Retired Military Leaders, December 2015***

An extensive array of data is provided to, and obtained by, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security prior to its decision to resettle a Syrian refugee to the United States. This information comes from multiple sources including UNHCR, multiple interviews over a period of years with the refugees, biometric data, documentary materials relating to the specific individuals, and a range of U.S. and international intelligence and law

enforcement agencies. Across the region, various data has been collected from Syrian refugees at the time of their registration, as well as during various other interactions with UNHCR and host country governments. Aid workers and resettlement experts repeatedly confirmed that the Syrian refugees resettled to the United States have been living in Jordan, Turkey or other countries for several years already before being referred for consideration for U.S. resettlement.

In Lebanon and Jordan, for example, UNHCR has gathered information from refugees when they are registered, as well as during subsequent interactions. UNHCR has also collected biodata, specifically fingerprints and iris scans, from all registered refugees. UNHCR in Beirut confirmed that, while the Lebanese government has directed it to halt registration of refugees last year, it continues to record information about these refugees, and gathers biodata including iris scans, although these refugees are currently not eligible for third-country resettlement due to their lack of UNHCR registration. In Turkey, the government conducts registration of Syrian refugees and gathers their fingerprints. The Turkish government also identifies cases of vulnerable Syrian refugees to be considered for resettlement. The Turkish government refers these cases—mostly Syrian refugee families facing dire medical issues at this point, though as the Turkish government builds its capacity to conduct these kinds of assessments, other categories of vulnerability are anticipated—to the UNHCR to assess for potential referral to the United States and other resettlement states.

### UNHCR Interviews

UNHCR conducts interviews with Syrian refugees before concluding that their cases are appropriate for referral for resettlement. UNHCR refers for resettlement consideration refugees that it considers the most vulnerable. These include survivors of torture and violence, refugees with severe medical needs or disabilities, women at

risk, children at risk, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and refugees facing legal and physical protection risks. The overwhelming majority of those resettled are families with children. Only 2 percent of Syrian refugees resettled to the United States are single men, and these men are often survivors of torture or refugees at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identities.

### **U.S. Resettlement Support Center Pre-Screening**

U.S. Resettlement Support Centers (RSC), funded and contracted by the State Department's Bureau of Population Refugees and Migration, receive and review the data provided by UNHCR about each refugee's cases. U.S. resettlement processing officers conduct in-depth interviews that take three to five hours. Human Rights First interviewed one Syrian refugee mother who was interviewed by a U.S. support center officer for five hours, recounting the details of the trauma she and her family suffered in Syria as well as extensive additional information. U.S. resettlement support officers collect biographical information as well as information about the reasons for the refugee's flight from Syria and other information relevant to eligibility, or ineligibility, for refugee resettlement.

Biographic checks against the State Department's Consular Lookout and Support System (CLASS)—which includes watch-list information—are initiated at the time of prescreening by the State Department's Resettlement Support Center staff. CLASS contains information from a variety of intelligence and law enforcement sources, including TECS (formerly the Treasury Enforcement Communication System), the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Interpol. As outlined below, Interpol has extensive intelligence and law enforcement databases, which include information

from 50 countries as well as specific databases relating to suspected terrorists, foreign fighters and stolen, lost and blank passports. Following this initial pre-screening, the United States continuously vets applicants throughout the application process, up to and even beyond their arrival for resettlement.<sup>19</sup>

### **Documentary Materials Gathered and Vetted**

The United States government gathers extensive documentation from Syrian refugees during this process, including birth certificates, school certificates and passports. In fact, Syrian refugees are more highly documented than other refugee populations according to U.S. resettlement workers. As confirmed in a recent Congressional hearing, DHS has the ability to test for false passports through a well-developed component of its screening process.<sup>20</sup> Interpol has an extensive database of information relating to lost, stolen, and “blank” passports from 170 countries—including from both Syria and Iraq.<sup>21</sup>

### **Pre-Vetting—Enhanced Review of Syrian Cases**

Each Syrian refugee case is pre-vetted in Washington D.C. by DHS-USCIS headquarters, before a DHS-USCIS officer conducts an interview with the refugee. All cases that meet certain criteria are referred to the DHS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate for additional review and research, including open-source and classified national security research. According to DHS, the pre-vetting generates case-specific context and information to inform lines of questioning used by DHS-USCIS officers during refugee interviews. DHS has reported that this directorate engages with law enforcement and intelligence community members for assistance with identity verification as well as the acquisition of additional information.<sup>22</sup>

### DHS Refugee Interviews

Trained DHS-USCIS refugee corps officers travel to U.S. resettlement locations—such as Amman and Istanbul—to conduct extensive refugee interviews with each refugee. Refugee officers receive specialized training that includes comprehensive instruction on fraud detection and prevention, security protocols, interviewing techniques, credibility analysis and current conditions in the country at issue. Before deploying overseas, officers receive pre-departure training which focuses on the specific population they will interview. This includes detailed updates on any security issues or fraud trends. USCIS officers adjudicating Syrian claims also receive an additional one-week training on country-specific issues that includes briefings from experts from the intelligence community. Upon deployment, these officers conduct detailed inquiries to gather information relating to the individual’s credibility, the persecution the refugee has faced, and whether any activities or actions of the refugee would make him or her inadmissible to the United States on security, criminal, terrorism or other grounds. During an interview lasting three, four, and sometimes five hours, the officer assesses the credibility of the applicant and evaluates whether the applicant’s testimony is consistent with known country conditions. All refugee status determinations made by interviewing officers undergo supervisory review before a final decision is made. According to DHS, certain categories of cases—including certain national security-related cases—must in addition be submitted for further review by DHS-USCIS headquarters in Washington prior to the issuance of a decision. There, headquarters staff may liaise with law enforcement and intelligence agencies and consult with outside experts before finalizing the decision.<sup>23</sup>

### Security Clearance Process

The Department of Homeland Security conducts and coordinates extensive vetting, including with domestic and international intelligence and law enforcement agencies. These include checks conducted by the National Counterterrorism Center, FBI Terrorist Screening Center, Department of Defense Biometric Screening and the State Department’s Consular Lookout and Support System. The clearance process checks against watch list information as well as broader domestic and international intelligence community holdings from Interpol. (Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon are all Interpol members.) Interpol’s Foreign Terrorist Fighter database—which is supported by a working group that includes Turkey and the United States—includes detailed identity particulars and profiles of individuals travelling to or from Syria and Iraq, comprised of information provided by more than 50 countries. Interpol’s Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database includes details of nearly 54 million stolen, lost, blank, and other documents from 170 countries—including from Syria and Iraq.<sup>24</sup> As of September 2015, Interpol’s database of suspected terrorists included more than 10,000 names. The U.S. National Central Bureau (NCB) for Interpol is run by DHS and DOJ, which manage U.S. access to the organization’s extensive criminal and terrorism databases, as well as its lost and stolen passport database.<sup>25</sup> In addition to Interpol, the United States maintains direct intelligence relationships with countries like Jordan, where refugees have been living for years. For example, the United States and Jordan have been reported to be collaborating in countering extremism through “Operation Inherent Resolve,” which includes intelligence sharing. Much of the information the United States government receives from foreign partners is classified.<sup>26</sup>

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## Understaffing and Backlogs Continue to Hamper the Already Slow U.S. Resettlement Process

The United States committed to resettle 85,000 refugees from around the world during fiscal year 2016, including “at least” 10,000 Syrian refugees. As of January 31, four full months in to the fiscal year, the United States has resettled only 841 Syrian refugees during the 2016 fiscal year, which will end on September 30, 2016.

Across the region, it is clear that U.S. resettlement processing centers and U.S. agencies (including the State Department’s PRM and DHS-USCIS) are working hard to try to meet the U.S. commitment to resettle Syrian refugees, and the number of DHS officers traveling to the region to interview Syrian refugees has increased. The U.S. Resettlement Support Centers (the International Catholic Migration Commission and the International Organization for Migration, organizations with extensive experience) have scaled up their processing and are devising strategies for addressing the logistical challenges associated with larger DHS interview visits. UNHCR is also working hard to refer cases to the U.S. resettlement program, as well as to other countries with less slow resettlement or admissions processes. As of mid-January 2016, DHS-USCIS reported that the U.S. resettlement program had received about 26,500 referrals of Syrian refugee applicants for consideration, mostly from Jordan and Turkey as well as some from Egypt. In Jordan, it is anticipated that UNHCR will submit 11,000 Syrian refugees for U.S. resettlement consideration in calendar year 2016. In Turkey, UNHCR will refer over 8,000 Syrian refugees for U.S. consideration in 2016, as

well as another 1,000 from Lebanon. Of course, given U.S. processing times, the bulk of these cases are not likely to be actually resettled to the United States until subsequent years, and not all will ultimately be approved for U.S. resettlement.

Despite these significant efforts, a number of factors—primarily relating to understaffing—are unnecessarily delaying parts of the process, which, even without lengthy delays, typically takes 18 to 24 months to complete. The factors hampering resettlement, which are outlined below, include the backlogs in review of “hold” cases, the need for additional security vetting staff to timely conduct inquiries on both resettlement and SIV cases and the lack of space for resettlement interviewers at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. In addition to impacting Syrian resettlement and the processing of SIV applicants who worked with the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan, these backlogs also delay resettlement processing for Iraqis who have priority access to resettlement due to their work with the U.S. military, contractors and other U.S. entities. There is already a tremendous backlog of over 50,000 Iraqi resettlement cases, including Iraqis who worked with the U.S. military. Many have been waiting years already, often stranded in dangerous or difficult situations.

### Backlogs in Review of Hold Cases

After DHS officers conduct their lengthy interviews with Syrian refugees, a majority of these cases go into a limbo where they remain stuck in a backlog, with no decision made, often for extended periods of time, waiting their turn for time from a DHS officer to conduct additional review of the case. About 4,000 to 5,000 Syrian refugees were estimated to be in this “no decision” limbo as of January 2016. Cases may be referred into this hold category for various reasons, including to sort through legal or factual issues relating to issues such as detention by the Syrian government. In addition, many peaceful pro-

democracy advocates have been jailed and tortured by the regime, and never engaged in activity aimed at supporting ISIL or other terrorist groups, yet their cases can be delayed for many months or longer as they wait in the backlog. Some resettlement cases may raise potential issues of inadmissibility under DHS's interpretation of the immigration laws, when, for instance, ISIL or another armed group in command of areas within Syria has demanded that innocent civilians pay them "taxes" or other fees. Many of these cases involve broad factual scenarios that affect large numbers of innocent and vulnerable Syrians who have faced persecution in Syria and actually do not present any risk whatsoever. These cases are swept into this review as part of a purposefully overly broad sweep; as a result many will ultimately be resolved positively as they do not actually present any risk.

If additional DHS staff were dedicated to reviewing these cases in a prompt (and thorough) manner, the backlogs could be eliminated or significantly reduced. Careful assessment might also reveal whether categories of individuals who present no threat are unnecessarily added in to this backlog. Effectively addressing this backlog would also assist in meeting U.S. resettlement goals and improving the efficiency of the process. Additional DHS-USCIS resources and increased oversight would help to address some of the delays in resolving holds under the Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program ("CARRP"), a program which is discussed below.

As a result of the backlogs of cases waiting for review by DHS officers, the departure of refugees to the United States are now below anticipated goals. The impact of unnecessary delays on refugees awaiting resettlement—as well as on the effectiveness and reputation of the U.S. resettlement system—is devastating. A recent New York Times magazine article noted that,

"[a]mong Syrian refugees, 'on hold' is the most dreaded category, and that it is extremely difficult to get clear answers about why a hold has been applied or when it will be lifted."<sup>27</sup> The article recounted the story of a Syrian refugee couple whose application for U.S. resettlement became stuck on hold. The father said that if the family did not get a call from the U.S. resettlement program by the spring 2016, they would leave for Europe—even though they had family that they desperately wanted to join in the United States. While he and his wife did not want to take their two toddlers on this dangerous trip, they were unable to support themselves any longer and felt that they would have no choice. Human Rights First interviewed a Syrian family in Turkey who are facing an identical dilemma for the same reasons.

#### **Resettlement and SIV Delays Due to Lack of Adequate Staffing for Timely Security Vetting**

While some steps in the U.S. security vetting process can take some time to complete, the security vetting process is also impacted by delays that are caused by lack of sufficient staffing to conduct inquiries and follow up relating to security vetting. For instance, if a refugee has a name similar to that of a known terrorist, careful follow up review would need to be conducted. A review of data would often make clear that the refugee was a not in fact that individual. But intelligence and other security vetting agencies often lack enough staff, or do not allocate enough staff, to conduct prompt security vetting follow-up for both refugee and Special Immigrant Visa applicants.

However, if DHS and the relevant security vetting agencies hire or allocate additional staff, with strong expertise and training on the Middle East, and are directed to make completion of these cases a priority, this processing can move ahead in a more timely manner. As pointed out by former Ambassador Ryan Crocker—who contended with the backlogs delaying resettlement of Iraqis

whose lives were at risk because of their work with the United States when he served as ambassador to Iraq under President George W. Bush—President Obama can address these backlogs “without weakening security by simply directing security agencies to devote more time and staff to the task.”<sup>28</sup> It is certainly not in the security interests of the United States to have delays in security vetting, which would potentially delay identification of any individuals who might present a security threat to the United States or its allies in the region. Moreover, as numerous national security experts have confirmed, an effective resettlement initiative actually advances U.S. national security interests by supporting the stability of the region around Syria and U.S. allies.<sup>29</sup>

DHS also needs additional staff resources and oversight support to address backlogged cases that have been put on Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program (“CARRP”) hold and are waiting their turn for review and resolution. The U.S. government is using the secret CARRP process on resettlement cases, including Syrian refugee cases, as described in a recent media article.<sup>30</sup> According to a DHS-USCIS memorandum cited in that piece, if any potential national security issue is raised during the vetting process, including from security checks, the case is referred for “a focused national security CARRP review.” In a 2013 report on the CARRP program and its impact on applicants for U.S. citizenship and status, the ACLU wrote that the CARRP categories “cast extremely wide nets, rely on discriminatory profiling, and yield imprecise, inaccurate and often absurd results that disproportionately impact [Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian] applicants.” For Syrian refugees, the broad CARRP categories are believed to cover many who do not actually present security threats—including, for example, pro-democracy advocates arrested by the regime

and civilians forced to pay “taxes” to armed groups. Given the need to identify any real security threats, and the importance of moving ahead on cases where there is no threat, additional DHS staffing, resources, and oversight could help address some of this backlog.

### **Lack of Accommodation for DHS Refugee Interviewers at U.S. Embassy in Lebanon**

While the United States is restarting resettlement in Lebanon in February 2016, that resettlement effort will be minimal. For calendar year 2016 (which includes a portion of the 2017 U.S. fiscal year), the United States will take only about 2,500 refugee referrals for consideration in Lebanon. These numbers fall far short of the kind of U.S. leadership that can help encourage other states to increase their resettlement initiatives, and in turn, support the fragile stability of tiny Lebanon which is struggling under the weight of hosting over one million Syrian refugees, amounting to one out of every four people in the country now.

The United States had suspended its resettlement efforts out of Lebanon during 2014 and 2015, as noted above. In December 2015, a U.S. Embassy public affairs officer stated that “[d]ue to resource and space constraints, the United States has not been able to conduct refugee admission interviews at U.S. Embassy Beirut since August 2014.” DHS requires its officers who travel to Beirut to live and stay in the U.S. Embassy compound. The lack of space made available for U.S. resettlement interviewers has greatly hampered U.S. ability to resettle refugees living in Beirut. In Lebanon, Human Rights First met an Iraqi refugee who had worked for the U.S. government in Iraq for over 5 years. Yet he and his family have been struggling to survive in Lebanon for years, and he was told that there was no resettlement to the United States from Lebanon.

U.S. resettlement interviews are slated to begin again in February 2016. However, the number of resettlement interviews will be limited, with only four fairly short “circuit rides” visiting in the remainder of this fiscal year, one in February, one in May, one in July, and another in September. The circuit rides are anticipated to include only about 4 interviewing officers due to the Embassy’s lack of space for the officers. All in all, U.S. officers will likely handle a little over 200 cases on each visit, interviewing 500 people (as each case may include multiple family members), for a total of about 2,000 refugee interviews. Not all will be accepted to the United States, and some will be put on hold—added to the substantial backlog of no decision cases on hold while they wait for review after their DHS interviews.

Most of UNHCR’s recent resettlement referrals to the United States in Lebanon have been of Iraqi refugees, as other resettlement countries are requesting Syrians and some very vulnerable Iraqi refugees are also in need of resettlement. As of January 2016, only 83 of the resettlement submissions made to the United States by UNHCR in Lebanon since October 2015 were for Syrian refugees and only 25 Syrian refugees had actually been resettled from Lebanon to the United States since October 2015.

The U.S. Embassy in Beirut is moving ahead to secure additional space, and this overdue effort should be a top priority for the Embassy so that the expansion moves ahead without further delay. In the meantime, more effort should be focused on interim steps to increase space for DHS resettlement officers within the Embassy compound. UNHCR will also need additional resettlement staffing to increase its referrals to the United States for resettlement consideration.

### **Capacity Gap in DHS Refugee Corp Staffing and Circuit Rides**

DHS refugee corps officers travel to Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and other resettlement processing locations to conduct interviews, in what are called “circuit rides” to the region. While DHS is making an effort to increase the size of its refugee officer circuit rides to the region, there are still gaps between visits in some locations that can leave refugees waiting for months or longer for a DHS interview. In Turkey, circuit rides are now nearly continuous. DHS should increase the number of refugee officers for each circuit ride on a longer term steady basis in order to provide more continuous coverage, particularly in locations where there are longer periods of time between circuit rides. DHS must also address the staffing level deficiencies and attrition challenges that face both the USCIS refugee corps and the Asylum Division. Given that the world is facing the largest refugee crisis since World War II, DHS and USCIS should take steps to increase the size of the refugee corps. Redeploying trained DHS-USCIS asylum officers to conduct overseas resettlement interviews will add to the already growing backlogs in the affirmative asylum process, backlogs that have grown due in part to the decision to subject Central American families to the expedited removal process.<sup>31</sup>

### **Gaps in Capacity for Resettlement Referrals**

In order for the United States to step up its resettlement of Syrian and other refugees, it needs to have cases referred to it for consideration by UNHCR and other trusted sources. UNHCR staff have been working hard to identify and refer cases for resettlement consideration to the United States and other countries. Yet, with many humanitarian appeals underfunded, UNHCR has been faced with significant funding short-falls, leading to cuts in staffing across the agency, including in areas related to resettlement referrals. UNHCR also has

to identify cases for referral to other countries, with resettlement and other programs that will move people more quickly. Moreover, while the United States will need more referrals from UNHCR to meet its targets, the backlogs, delays and the low departure numbers for U.S. processing may, if not remedied, ultimately discourage referrals to the United States, particularly as other countries' resettlement and humanitarian admissions efforts move ahead in a more timely manner.

The United States and other countries should step up contributions to UNHCR to increase its capacity to identify, assess, and refer cases for U.S. and other resettlement and humanitarian admission programs. The United States should also allow trained U.S. based non-governmental organizations, with expertise in U.S. resettlement processing and operational capacity in the region, to refer vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement directly to the U.S. resettlement program for consideration and assessment. In addition, UNHCR field offices should work with trained and trusted non-governmental organizations that can help identify, gather information on, and refer cases to UNHCR for its refugee status and resettlement assessment. This strategy would increase UNHCR's capacity by freeing up its time to focus on the more substantive aspects of the refugee and resettlement assessment.

The U.S. State Department just, as of February 2016, instituted a priority processing category for Syrian refugees with U.S. family ties. The creation of a priority (P2) category for Syrian refugees with approved family visa (I-130) petitions allows these cases to apply directly to U.S. resettlement processing support centers. These resettlement candidates will still be fully vetted by U.S. support centers, by USCIS-DHS officer interviews, and by the various U.S. and international security vetting agencies. They would simply skip the step of a

UNHCR referral in light of their family ties in the United States and the prior approval by DHS-USCIS of their U.S. family petition.

About 4,000 Syrians, with U.S. family and approved I-130 petitions, are currently living as refugees in the region. Many Syrians with approved I-130s are currently located in Syria, but as the countries surrounding Syria have largely closed their borders, Syrians with U.S. family would generally be unable to leave Syria in order to cross to another country as refugees to seek processing of their cases. The United States could—and should—negotiate permission for some of these Syrians to cross the border as needed for purposes of U.S. processing in those neighboring countries where the United States conducts processing. In addition, the United States should expand priority access to Syrian refugees (and their respective spouse and children) with relatives (at least spouses, children whether over or under 21 and whether married or unmarried, parents and siblings) in the United States who have any kind of lawful immigration status in the United States or have an application for such status pending.

### **Lack of Sufficient Capacity to Expedite Processing for Refugees Facing Imminent Risks**

Across the region, Human Rights First has spoken with, and heard additional reports of, Syrian refugees who face imminent risks of harm and were in need of immediate protection and expedited resettlement processing. In some cases, these refugees faced risks of physical harm due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. In other cases, refugees who had been engaged in peaceful political, human rights or humanitarian activities in Syria were threatened or targeted—in Turkey or in Lebanon—by individuals associated with militant or terrorist groups. Human Rights First was in contact with a young refugee in Lebanon, a survivor of torture in Syria, who was

shot at by Hezbollah supporters in Lebanon. Unable to find protection in Lebanon in this emergency, after receiving further threats from the same source he fled the country for Europe where he is now seeking asylum. The dangers facing individual refugees in Turkey who are perceived to be threats to ISIL have been documented in the press. For instance, in December 2015, a Syrian journalist, who had worked with a prominent anti-ISIL group was shot in Gaziantep, Turkey. He was slated to have left Turkey for France just that week on an asylum visa. In October 2015, two anti-ISIL activists were found beheaded in the southern city of Sanliurfa, in murders claimed by ISIL. All were members of Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, a group dedicated to documenting ISIL's human rights abuses, as well as violations by the Syrian government and rebel groups. Human Rights First spoke to another refugee in Turkey who is similarly situated, at urgent risk, and was not receiving assistance with protection in Turkey or resettlement outside it. UNHCR lacks sufficient staff, resources and strategies to provide refugees facing security risks with meaningful short term protection.

The United States has improved its capacity, in at least a small number of cases, to resettle at-risk refugees in a more timely manner, but this capacity is very limited and the "expedited" cases still do not move quickly as do the processes of a few other countries. As a result, UNHCR sends cases involving imminent risks to other countries that have real expedited processing capacity. While other countries do have these programs, it makes little sense to resettle a refugee with strong ties to—or in—the United States to a Scandinavian or European country.

### **No Shows and Pull outs**

An additional factor that could hamper U.S. resettlement of Syrians is the decision of some families—who have already been struggling to survive for years in Turkey and other countries in

the region—to pull out of the prolonged U.S. resettlement process, in some cases because they have given up hope while waiting and decided to take the dangerous trip to Europe. Aid workers and resettlement experts in the region report that some Syrian refugees who have been referred to the United States for resettlement consideration have pulled out of the process or taken steps that result in their cases being pulled out of the process. The U.S. process takes nearly two years and often much longer to complete. In some cases, refugees—who were already living in exile in Turkey or elsewhere for years—have lost hope in the process. In Turkey, an estimated 20 to 30 percent of cases in the U.S. resettlement pipeline have pulled out of the process or not shown up for interviews. While there are some similar reports in Jordan and Egypt, the numbers are much lower. As detailed earlier in this report, Syrian refugees are increasingly unable to survive in front-line refugee-hosting states. In other cases, one or more members of a family that was waiting for resettlement consideration have decided to risk the dangerous trip to Europe as they believe their family can't survive for another year or two. The complete lack of certainty as to how long the process may take in any particular case in the U.S. resettlement system, and the specter of disappearing into an adjudication delay of indefinite duration even after the interview, contribute to refugees' despairing of the process. Resettlement support staff are adopting proactive strategies for keeping refugees more closely informed about the progress of their resettlement cases and to minimize the potential for a DHS interview slot to be wasted.

### **Continuing Backlogs in Resettlement of U.S. Affiliated Iraqis**

Iraqi refugees and many Iraqis who worked with the United States military or other U.S. entities are also stranded in the region. Processing backlogs and challenges have also delayed the

resettlement of Iraqis including those who have direct access to U.S. resettlement consideration because they worked with the U.S. military, contractors, non-governmental organizations, and media, as well as Iraqi refugees with U.S. family ties. Over 50,000 Iraqis, many of whom have U.S. ties or have worked for the U.S. military and government, are waiting in a U.S. resettlement backlog. Many been waiting years to be brought to safety in the United States. The processing of these cases has been delayed by a number of backlogs, including the backlog of cases waiting for follow-up review by DHS or other security vetting staff. The American SAFE act, which passed the House of Representatives in December, would have, if enacted, further derailed the resettlement of these and other Iraqi refugees, as well as Syrian refugees.

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## Impact on Front-Line Refugee Hosting States and U.S. National Security Interests

***How can we be a contributor to regional stability if we are let down by the international community?***

**King Abdullah II of Jordan<sup>32</sup>**

The large numbers of Syrian refugees now living in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have placed tremendous strains on those countries and their critical infrastructures. UNHCR has concluded that Lebanon, which hosts more than 1.19 million Syrian refugees, has “the highest per capita proportion of refugees to population in the world,” placing “enormous pressure on the country and its people” and stretching the country’s infrastructure and economy. Between 2012 and 2014, the Lebanese economy contracted and the national

deficit grew to \$2.6 billion USD. The Syrian conflict cost Lebanon an estimated \$7.5 billion USD in cumulative economic losses between 2012 and 2014—including additional costs incurred for borrowing to support increasing demand for public services. It has been estimated that unemployment among Lebanese increased from 8.1 percent in 2010 to 13 percent in 2013-2014, pushing an additional 170,000 people into poverty.<sup>33</sup> UNHCR reports that the added pressure on infrastructure brought on by the number of refugees in Lebanon has “severely affected water and sanitation systems” throughout the country. Refugee families have reported walking miles to obtain clean drinking water, and using sewage water to clean, shower, and wash dishes and clothes.<sup>34</sup>

The infrastructures of Jordan—including water, electricity, sanitation, health care, and education—have also been heavily impacted by the number of Syrian refugees the country is hosting. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has written that “even before the influx of Syrian refugees, Jordan’s population was expected to double by 2024, while the water supply was projected to decrease by half.” The arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees doubled demand for water in some parts of the country, with communities hosting the largest numbers of refugees experiencing the heaviest burdens. In some northern parts of Jordan, where many Syrian refugees reside, average daily water supplies now stand at below 30 liters per person, though 80 liters are required to satisfy a family’s minimum needs. Solid waste management has also become more difficult, as Syrian refugees add an estimated 340 daily tons of waste to Jordan’s waste volume. Warning his country was at a “boiling point,” King Abdullah II of Jordan stated that the number of Syrian refugees “hurts us when it comes to the educational system, our healthcare.”<sup>35</sup> The number of Syrians

in need of medical assistance had strained the country's health care system, leading to shortages in hospital beds in Amman and prompting some Jordanians to seek care through private health providers. The Jordanian education system has also been affected by the addition of Syrian children, leading to shortened class times, overcrowded classrooms, and double-shifting, in which schools operate in two shifts that serve different groups of students at different times in the day.<sup>36</sup>

In Turkey, the number of refugees is also impacting some of the country's critical infrastructure—particularly in areas hosting higher proportions of Syrian refugees. In a December 2015 report, the World Bank Group stated that the addition of thousands of Syrian refugee children to Turkey's education system has prompted a 40 to 60 percent increase in enrollment, straining the country's schools and forcing Turkey to open temporary education centers to address the enrollment crisis. Housing markets have also suffered: though no market assessment currently exists, figures commonly cited in Turkey report that housing prices have nearly doubled in some areas, particularly along the Syrian border, and that the refugee crisis has led to decreased housing availability. Although Turkish facilities have expanded drastically to accommodate increased demand for healthcare among Syrian refugees, some Turks have nonetheless described long waits and overcrowding at health centers.<sup>37</sup> The Migration Policy Institute concluded in a mid-2015 report that “by early 2015, the cost [of the Turkish government providing camp-based services and economic assistance to urban Syrian refugees] had reached more than \$5 billion USD, of which the international community covered some 3 percent.”<sup>38</sup>

These countries have repeatedly asked for support from the international community, including through humanitarian and development

assistance, bilateral aid, and help from other countries to share in hosting some portion of Syrian refugees. In May 2015, President Erdogan of Turkey, urged other countries to do their “duty” to accept more Syrian and Iraqi refugees, noting that Turkey had spent large sums to host and care for Syrian and Iraqi nationals. In October 2015, Lebanese Finance Ministry Director-General Alain Bifani asked for interest-free international aid to assist Lebanon in combatting the Syrian refugee crisis. Stressing that the world should consider accepting refugees as a “global public good,” he noted that public infrastructure and hosting communities have been stretched “to the limit” under the tremendous burden of millions of Syrian refugees.<sup>39</sup> In January 2016, Jordanian government spokesman Mohammed Momani offered to fly some 17,000 refugees amassed on the Syrian-Jordanian border to any country willing to accept them.<sup>40</sup>

Representing an important step forward in terms of assistance, the February 4, 2016 donor conference in London led to over \$10 billion USD in pledges. These included significant pledges of development assistance and a move towards strategies that could provide employment and other opportunities for both Syrian refugees and host communities. However, as discussed above, despite some progress on pledges to actually resettle or admit Syrian refugees, the international community is still falling far short of meeting that need.

Experts on the region have explained that a significant Syrian refugee resettlement initiative would help support the stability of these front line refugee hosting states. As Ryan Crocker, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon, has explained:

A U.S. initiative to resettle Syrian refugees in the United States affirmatively advances U.S. national security interests. Increased resettlement and aid helps protect the stability

of a region that is home to U.S. allies, including Jordan, Lebanon, and NATO member Turkey, all of which are hosting large numbers of refugees. The infrastructure—water, sewage, medical care, and education—of these states is overwhelmed. A major resettlement and aid initiative can relieve that strain. But left unaddressed, the strain will feed instability and trigger more violence across the region, which will have negative consequences for U.S. national security.

A bipartisan group of former high level U.S. national security leaders—including former Secretaries of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff and Janet Napolitano, former National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, former CIA Directors General Michael Hayden, U.S. Air Force (Ret.) and General David Petraeus, U.S. Army (Ret.), and former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Henry Kissinger—has also confirmed the importance of resettlement in advancing U.S. national security. They explained that “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,” and also pointed out—in response to proposals that would have halted Syrian resettlement—that “[c]ategorically 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.” Michael Chertoff, DHS Secretary under the administration of George W. Bush, told the Wall Street Journal that “You don’t want to play into the narrative of the bad guy. That’s giving propaganda to the enemy.”<sup>41</sup>

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## Factors Contributing to Push Refugees to Europe

***In addition to serving as a concrete expression of responsibility sharing, humanitarian or additional pathways for admission can reduce the need for refugees to resort to irregular and dangerous onward movements.***

### **UNHCR Background Note for March 30, 2016 Meeting on Responsibility Sharing**

Many refugees will choose to seek protection in locations where they have family. As one resettlement aid worker noted, “overwhelmingly refugees want to go where they have family.” Aid workers across the region told Human Rights First researchers that, in their experience, many Syrian refugees had some family living in Europe, a comment borne out by the accounts of refugees we interviewed. These included a mother who intended to leave Turkey to join her sons in Germany and a Syrian woman in Jordan whose brothers were all refugees in Sweden. Some, though fewer, have family in the United States. When refugees live near family, both they and States hosting refugees benefit from that added layer of support.

Human Rights First’s research confirmed that the many serious protection deficiencies outlined in this report are also contributing to the movement towards Europe. Indeed, the lack of effective regional protection, exacerbated by the lack of sufficient assistance and orderly resettlement or visa routes for refugees, is driving many Syrians to embark on dangerous trips to Europe in search of protection. As noted above, roughly half of refugees in Jordan were thinking of taking the dangerous trip to Europe given their lack of permission to work and lack of sufficient

assistance, according to a CARE International survey.

As aid workers in Jordan told Human Rights First researchers, over the second half of 2015, more Syrian refugees began indicating that they wanted to leave the country. After years in exile, these refugees indicated that they didn't see a future for their children. They have lost hope that the conflict will end. Their savings are depleted. They don't have the resources to pay the fees and transportation costs to send their children to school. They do not want to be dependent on assistance, and in any event, the limited amounts of assistance have been sharply cut so do not cover even basic needs. They cannot work legally and they cannot survive under these circumstances. As some refugees who went to Europe told aid workers, they "had nothing to lose" and were "dying every day" in Jordan.

As UNHCR has noted, the second half of 2015 saw an increase in the movement of Syrian refugees both through and from Lebanon to Europe. Over 150,000 refugees reportedly transited to Europe through or from Lebanon, with the vast majority transiting only briefly through Lebanon. Indeed, given the prohibitions on entry and registration implemented in Lebanon in January and May 2015, Syrians fleeing their country would generally not be authorized to stay in Lebanon by the authorities. With respect to Lebanon, UNHCR has concluded that "[t]he deteriorating protection environment (such as inability to renew residency) and dwindling assistance for Syrians in Lebanon, coupled with a lack of livelihood opportunities, have led more Syrians in Lebanon to express their intention to move onward to third countries." In Turkey, as one aid worker told Human Rights First researchers, many Syrian refugees have said that they would stay if they had a job and education for their children. Multiple Syrian refugees expressed to us these same two priorities, emphasizing that what

they needed was education for their children and work that would allow them to provide a dignified life for their families.

In Turkey, but also in Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon, Human Rights First researchers heard reports that refugees who had already been struggling to survive for years in the region lost hope in waiting years longer for the limited potential of resettlement and instead embarked on the journey to Europe. Aid workers told Human Rights First that some refugees awaiting resettlement decided that they can't wait longer and instead made their way to Europe. As one aid worker in Lebanon said, in some cases the refugees "lost hope in the resettlement process" because it is so lengthy. One resettlement expert living in Lebanon told us about a young Syrian woman, who had family living in Europe, but after waiting for years for a potential resettlement opportunity to move ahead, she finally gave up waiting and took the dangerous trip to Europe to join family who could help her.

The delays in U.S. resettlement, along with the other factors outlined in this report, have also contributed to the decision of some refugees, who have already waited years for a route to resettlement, to abandon their waits and try to reach Europe. As outlined above, some refugees who are waiting for U.S. resettlement—including refugees who are already in the U.S. processing "pipeline"—have pulled out of the process or given up waiting, in some cases traveling on to Europe. Human Rights First received reports of these "no shows" or pull outs in connection with U.S. resettlement processing in Turkey primarily, but also in Jordan and Egypt. As one aid worker in Jordan explained, the U.S. resettlement process is "very, very long." U.S. resettlement processing officers are however working to increase their communication with refugees during the lengthy processing wait times in an effort to reduce the potential that refugees.

## Questions Concerning Christian Refugees

Some U.S. politicians have asked whether Christian refugees from Syria are being blocked from resettlement. Human Rights First researchers found no indication of any efforts to limit resettlement of Christian refugees from Syria. UNHCR staff and statistics repeatedly confirmed that resettlement rates for Christians are in line with the overall registered refugee population. Aid workers across the region confirmed that a slightly higher portion of Christian Syrians are believed to have fled to Lebanon, rather than to Turkey or Jordan, given Lebanon's geographic proximity to several important areas of Christian settlement within Syria and the existence of a significant Christian community in Lebanon. As detailed in this report, the United States has conducted only very limited resettlement in Lebanon, suspended resettlement from there for about a year, and has resettled only a handful of Syrian refugees from Lebanon so far.

Given long resettlement processing times and multiple hurdles, Syrian refugees, including any Syrian Christians, are often stuck in the backlog of Syrian cases. One media story profiled the multi-year resettlement wait experienced by an Armenian Christian family that fled Syria in 2012.<sup>42</sup> Many refugees, including Christians, may moreover find their resettlement cases delayed or denied due to ISIL demands that individuals pay "taxes" to ISIL. Payments to armed groups have been interpreted as "material support" to terrorist organizations under sweeping inadmissibility provisions of U.S. immigration law. While inadmissibility waivers can be granted in some cases, the entire waiver process has been plagued with delays for years.

Moreover, the U.S. has resettled a high proportion of Christian refugees from Iraq. These refugees, many of whom were referred to the United States for resettlement consideration by UNHCR, given the circumstances of their individual cases, fell within the parameters of broader resettlement initiatives that prioritized resettlement of vulnerable refugees as well as, through a U.S. initiative, Iraqis with U.S. ties.

As recommended in this report, the United States should expand resettlement out of Lebanon and prioritize efforts to assure that space at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut is allocated to resettlement. Various resettlement experts working in the region surrounding Syria confirmed that if the United States were to institute a special resettlement path for Christian refugees that host countries would likely block these efforts. The United States should however, as it did with Iraqi refugees, continue to prioritize resettlement of vulnerable Syrian refugees. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reiterated its support for continued resettlement of Syrian refugees in December 2015 and called on the United States to prioritize the resettlement of Syrian refugees based on their vulnerability.

In Turkey, for instance, Human Rights First researchers learned that in some cases families who had been waiting for resettlement to the United States had “lost hope.” Human Rights First spoke with a Syrian woman who had already been interviewed for resettlement to the United States and received a no decision letter. She was contemplating taking to the sea along with her children because she cannot survive any longer in Turkey. Resettlement workers learned in some cases that Syrian refugee fathers, unable to feed and support their families in Turkey, decided to try to reach Europe to find a more immediate solution to the need to feed and support their families. In addition, media and social media reports about the opposition by some U.S. politicians to Syrian resettlement—and proposals to ban Muslims—have reverberated across the region and left some Syrian refugees fearful of resettling to the United States or afraid that U.S. resettlement will be terminated. After hearing about renewed efforts in Washington in January 2016 to block resettlement of Syrians, one Syrian woman who was awaiting U.S. resettlement, explained that she and her husband feared the United States was shutting its borders to Syrian refugees and “[a]fter all the news, we have no hope to travel to America.”<sup>43</sup>

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## Resettlement of Women, LGBT, and other Vulnerable Refugee Populations

The populations referred for U.S. resettlement consideration include very vulnerable refugees, such as torture survivors, families headed by women, LGBT persons, and families facing grave medical threats. Due to the lack of adequate medical care for refugees and the steep cuts in medical care, refugees who face dire medical threats have been in particular need of resettlement. As noted above, aid workers involved in the resettlement process repeatedly confirmed to Human Rights First researchers that they were working to refer vulnerable refugees for resettlement consideration by U.S. authorities.

In some countries, Syrian and other refugees face imminent risks of violence or harm, even though they are no longer in their home countries. For example, some Syrian refugees who engaged in peaceful humanitarian or political activity in Syria have been attacked in Lebanon by armed actors supportive of the Assad regime. LGBT refugees face a range of risks in the region, including difficulties accessing UNHCR due to negative attitudes of local staff toward LGBT persons. LGBT refugees can also face violence, detention and torture in detention, including in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. In the region, Human Rights First researchers were told that UNHCR often does not refer LGBT cases to the United States for resettlement because the U.S. resettlement process takes too long and would leave these refugees at risk of harm for too long while they wait.

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## Recommendations for U.S. Leadership of a Global Initiative

*History has demonstrated that earlier [refugee] efforts strengthened not only the fabric of our society, but also our leadership role in the world.*

**Former National Security, International Humanitarian and Human Rights Appointees of both Democratic and Republican Administrations, September 2015**<sup>44</sup>

While efforts to resolve the Syria conflict continued in early 2016, peace and the potential for safety, security, and rights-respecting conditions in Syria continue to be as elusive as ever. Given the overriding humanitarian, human rights, foreign policy, and national security interests at stake, the United States should lead, working closely with European allies and other countries, a comprehensive response to the Syrian refugee crisis and the broader global displacement crisis. Both the president and Congress will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate strong U.S. leadership over the coming months. These opportunities include: a March 30 Syrian resettlement pledging conference in Geneva, the World Humanitarian Summit in May, the setting of fiscal year 2017 goals for U.S. resettlement, appropriations and budgeting for fiscal year 2017, and the U.S. and U.N. conferences on the global refugee crisis, and large movements of refugees and migrants respectively, both slated for September 2016 in New York. This leadership will require high-level engagement from the president, the secretary of state, and secretary of Homeland Security, and the support of Congress.

In order to effectively lead, to press other states to do more, and to advance U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, the United States must significantly increase its own humanitarian assistance, development investment, and resettlement commitments. U.S. political leaders should work together in a bipartisan manner, restoring this country's long bipartisan tradition of protecting those who flee persecution. The United States has demonstrated strong leadership in the past—launching a comprehensive global effort with other countries to help Vietnamese refugees—and is more than capable of leading by example again.

To effectively lead this global initiative, the United States should launch efforts to ensure that:

- 1. The United States and other donor states work together to fully meet humanitarian appeals, and significantly increase development investment in front-line refugee-hosting communities.**
  - The United States, which recently pledged \$925 million USD at the February 4, 2016 donor conference in London, should significantly increase its humanitarian assistance and development aid investments. Congress should support the necessary increases, including through any necessary increases in appropriations. The United States and other donors should emphasize that they expect front-line states to continue to allow refugees to cross their borders to access protection, to continue to host refugees, and to improve refugees' access to employment and other basic rights and services.
  - In addition, the United States should intensify efforts to encourage other donor countries to increase development investment. U.S. and other development investment should focus on (i)

strengthening the key infrastructures of front-line communities that are hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, including education, health care, and sanitation, and (ii) initiatives that will enable increasing numbers of Syrian and other refugees to work while also benefiting host communities.

- While not the subject of this report, the United States should continue to work with other states to press for humanitarian access to Syrian civilians trapped inside Syria in besieged areas and work to increase access to services as well as aid.

**2. Protection in the Region—and at borders—is significantly strengthened so that refugees do not face the constant threat of rejection at borders, detention, deportation, lack of work permission and barriers to education.**

- The president and secretary of state should redouble advocacy and champion the protection of the rights of refugees, including their rights to work, to access education and to cross borders in order to escape persecution and access effective international protection. Compliance with the refugee protection tenets developed in the wake of World War II, including international legal obligations to protect refugees fleeing persecution, is more important than ever, particularly at a time when thousands of families fleeing Russian bombs, Syrian government attacks, and ISIL terror have been blocked from escaping the violence raging within their country.
- Building on the recent announcement that Turkey will allow Syrian refugees to apply for work applications, the United States should work with other donor states to

advocate for, and support initiatives that expand, the ability of refugees to work and access education in front-line refugee hosting countries.

- The United States should also ensure that NATO actions do not violate the human rights of refugees and migrants, including right of refugees to flee persecution and seek asylum. UNHCR has cautioned that NATO's mission—which Secretary Kerry stated is to “close off a key access route” used by refugees and migrants in order to “stem this tide”—should not “undermine the institution of asylum for people in need of international protection.”
- If any “safe zone,” “no fly zone,” or similar proposals move ahead, the United States should strongly advocate that states surrounding Syria do not prevent refugees from crossing their borders in violation of customary international law prohibitions on *refoulement*. “Safe zones” in war-torn regions are notoriously unsafe for civilians.

**3. Globally, states provide at least 460,000 resettlement and other admission places for Syrian refugees and the United States increases its commitment.**

- The United States should increase its pledge for fiscal year 2017 to resettle 100,000 Syrian refugees, in addition to resettling refugees from other countries. Not only would such a commitment level be more responsive to the global need, but it would also advance U.S. national security, foreign policy, and humanitarian and human rights interests.
- The United States and other countries should increase support to UNHCR—through additional PRM funding—so the agency has greater capacity to identify and

refer cases for resettlement or other admission consideration.

**4. Address staffing gaps to reduce backlogs and bottlenecks in resettlement and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) processing, including:**

- **Increase Staff to Address DHS Backlog of Hold Cases Awaiting Review:** DHS should immediately increase staffing and resources to resolve the several thousand cases waiting their turn in no decision limbo for review by DHS officials. Additional staffing and oversight should also be provided to review cases waiting in the Controlled Application Review and Resolution Program (CARRP) hold backlog. The Obama administration and Congress should encourage and support this increase in staffing and resources, including through an appropriation of additional funding for DHS.
- **Increases DHS and Vetting Agencies' Staff and Resources to Address Backlogs in Resettlement and SIV Follow-up Inquiries:** The President should direct DHS and U.S. security vetting agencies to increase staffing and resources to conduct follow up vetting inquiries so the completion of security clearance vetting is not unnecessarily delayed—for either refugees or for SIV applicants—due to lack of sufficient staffing. Congress should encourage and support increases in staff and resources, including appropriation of additional funds for DHS and the security vetting agencies. These backlogs undermine the reputation of these programs and the country's ability to meet its commitments to U.S. allies and refugee-hosting countries, to the international community and to vulnerable refugees and people facing grave risks due to their work with the United States. Addressing

backlogs would strengthen the effectiveness and integrity of U.S. processing and would not undermine security. It is not in the security interest of the United States to have delays in security vetting, which would potentially delay identification of any individual who might actually present a security threat to this country or its allies in the region.

- **Increase referrals to U.S. resettlement processing of vulnerable and U.S. affiliated Syrian refugees:** The U.S. Resettlement Program should move ahead robustly with priority processing for Syrian refugees with approved I-130 family petitions, engage with countries where U.S. processing occurs to assure that those with U.S. family ties can cross borders to actually access U.S. processing, and expand priority access to Syrian refugees (and their respective spouse and children) with relatives (at least spouses, children whether over or under 21 and whether married or unmarried, parents and siblings) in the United States who have any kind of lawful immigration status in the United States or have an application for such status pending.
- In addition, the U.S. Resettlement Program should enlist and leverage trained and trusted non-governmental organizations to refer vulnerable refugee cases for U.S. processing, and encourage UNHCR to work closely with experienced non-governmental organizations that can assist in identifying and preparing cases. The State Department should also take steps to help expand UNHCR capacity to identify and refer cases for U.S. resettlement consideration. English as a second language classes should begin while

refugees are still in the region, during the long resettlement processing wait.

- **Increase U.S. resettlement processing at U.S. Embassy in Lebanon.** The U.S. Embassy in Lebanon should move ahead without delay on plans to expand capacity to host U.S. resettlement interviewers and processing. The president and secretary of state should make clear this expansion—and the accommodation of increased resettlement interviews in the meantime—is a top priority.
- DHS should increase the size of the USCIS refugee corps and build on recent initiatives to conduct larger, more continuous, circuit rides to the region to minimize processing gaps and meet U.S. targets.
- The Departments of State and Homeland Security should continue to improve capacity to expedite resettlement, while conducting necessary security vetting, for particular individuals facing imminent risks of harm.

**5. Create a high level assistant to the president charged with refugee protection:** The president should appoint a high level position at the White House to coordinate and ensure strong U.S. leadership of U.S. refugee protection efforts—across multiple U.S. agencies—to address the global refugee crisis, effective and timely U.S. resettlement and SIV processing, and the implementation of U.S. refugee protection commitments at home through the U.S. domestic asylum process and immigration system. Given the engagement of the U.S. military, including participation in NATO’s mission in the Aegean Sea, the United States will need strong mechanisms in place to assure refugee protection leadership globally and compliance with international legal standards. The senior official should have staff, including legal staff versed in international refugee conventions and U.S. human rights and refugee protection obligations. This official should also be charged with mapping out a plan for effective transition of leadership on these matters to the next U.S. administration. ■

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## Addendum

*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 combatting 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 on following page)*

**Madeleine K. Albright**

*Former Secretary of State General*

**Richard B. Myers, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)**

*Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff*

**Samuel R. “Sandy” Berger**

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

**Zbigniew K. Brzezinski**

*Former National Security Advisor*

**Leon E. Panetta**

*Former Secretary of Defense Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency*

**General George W. Casey, Jr.,  
U.S. Army (Ret.)**

*Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Army General*

**David H. Petraeus, U.S. Army (Ret.)**

*Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency Former Commander, U.S. Central Command*

**Michael Chertoff**

*Former Secretary of Homeland Security*

**William J. Perry**

*Former Secretary of Defense*

**Stephen J. Hadley**

*Former National Security Advisor*

**Brent Scowcroft**

*Former National Security Advisor*

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*Former Secretary of Defense*

**George P. Shultz**

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**General Michael V. Hayden,  
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*Former Director, Central Intelligence Agency*

**Admiral James G. Stavridis, U.S. Navy (Ret.)**

*Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander  
Former Commander, U.S. Southern Command*

**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 John W. Vessey, Jr.,  
U.S. Army (Ret.)**

*Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff*

**Henry A. Kissinger**

*Former Secretary of State  
Former National Security Advisor*

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