



Of 6,726 Syrian Refugees Admitted to U.S. in Fiscal 2016, Only 23 Were Christians

A total of 6,726 Syrian refugees have arrived in the United States since the beginning of fiscal year 2016, which began last October 1. However, of this number, 6,625 (98.4 percent) were Sunni Muslims, and a mere 23 (0.3 percent) were Christians. The figures for Christians included 15 whose denomination was not specified, five Catholics, two unspecified Orthodox, and one Greek Orthodox adherent. Another 49 refugees were described in government data simply as Muslim, with 17 specifically being identified as Shi'a Muslims, and 10 were listed as being Yazidis (an ethnically Kurdish religious sect).



The United States pledged last year to resettle 85,000 refugees from all over the world during fiscal year 2016, which runs from October 1 through September 30. That number will include at least 10,000 Syrian refugees. However, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on July 13 that by March 31, which was halfway through the fiscal year, only 1,285 Syrians had arrived. After that, the pace rapidly increased. By June 30, the number of Syrians had jumped to 5,211, and the total number of refugee admissions had reached 49,791.

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CNSNews, which reported this story on July 25, citing State Department Refugee Processing Center data, stated that as of that date, 1,515 Syrian refugees had been admitted since the beginning of July, and a total of 6,726 since FY 2016 began.

Similar figures were reported in a July 1 article posted by *Breitbart News*, which noted that of more than 2,300 refugees admitted by the United States in June, 99 percent were Sunni Muslim and just eight were identified as Christian. The report observed that the breakdown of refugees from Syria has drawn criticism because the percentage of Sunni Muslims among them is far greater than that of the Syrian population as a whole, which is about 75 percent Sunni.

That report quoted from a July 1 article by Robert Spencer, director of Jihad Watch, who stated: "This is social engineering, not humanitarian relief. Syria was 10 percent Christian before the war. The Christians have been targeted and persecuted by several jihad groups. The refugees, then, should be at least 10 percent Christian and probably more than that."

We made similar points in our article last November, "[Plight of Christian Refugees Ignored During Refugee Crisis Discussions](#)," noting:

Some conservative political leaders in the United States have pointed out that only three percent of the refugees coming to the United States from Syria are Christian, although Syria is 10 percent Christian. This figure is suspiciously indicative of discriminatory policies on the part of the current



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 25, 2016

administration because Christians in the Middle East have been the victims of widespread terrorism and violence and are especially deserving of refugee status.

In that article, we observed how the plight of Christians in Syria mirrored what happened in neighboring Iraq. Christians had freedom of religion and freedom from persecution under Saddam Hussein. However, since the 2013 U.S.-led invasion that deposed the Iraqi strongman, that was no longer the case, and the country became inhospitable for Christians, with more than half of them fleeing to neighboring countries. The exodus has continued in recent years as thousands of Christian refugees fled from ISIS terrorists in northern Iraq in 2014 and went into exile in the autonomous Kurdistan region. As we noted in our article:

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the rise of ISIS in both Iraq and Syria, Christians in those lands have been driven from their homes, threatened with death unless they convert to Islam, have had their homes, businesses, and churches burned down, and have even been killed, sometimes by being beheaded. Few of these terrorized Christians have been afforded the opportunity to seek refuge in the United States.

Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, who was a presidential candidate at the time, proposed on a CNN program last November 15 that U.S. assistance to Middle Eastern refugees should focus primarily on Christians fleeing the violence: “We should focus our efforts as it relates to refugees on the Christians that are being slaughtered.”

Such suggestions prompted a strong, adverse reaction from President Obama, however. When speaking at the G20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, the next day, Obama condemned those who want a “religious test” for admitting refugees from Syria, labeling the idea as un-American. “When I hear political leaders suggesting that there would be a religious test for which a person who is fleeing from a war-torn country is admitted, when some of those folks themselves come from families who benefited from protection when they were fleeing political persecution, that’s shameful, that’s not American,” Obama said. “That’s not who we are. We don’t have religious tests (for) our compassion.”

In response to Obama’s statement, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) replied: “To my political colleagues and all who wag their tongues in the public discourse: The religious test has already been imposed. It was imposed by radical Islamists — not, to be sure, by the entire Islamic world — but impose it these extreme religious misfits unmistakably did.”

Recognizing the unique plight of Christians and Yazidis in the Middle East, Rohrabacher continued:

I have introduced legislation that would require the State Department to designate Christians and Yazidis as targets for genocide, a step creating priority refugee status for them. Doing so imposes no religious test. It saves identifiable victims from religious persecution.

The Obama administration has other priorities, however. It has committed to admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of September and is certain to reach its goal. And if Christians are disproportionately excluded, that seems to be of little concern to this administration.

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