



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 25, 2015

## Plight of Christian Refugees Ignored During Refugee Crisis Discussions

The ongoing crisis involving more than four million refugees who have fled the Syrian Civil War since 2011, which has only worsened with time, has had many repercussions. While most Syrian refugees initially fled to neighboring Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, starting in 2015, large numbers of them crossed into European Union member states. By early August 2015, the number of UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) applications for all of Europe reached 313,000. The largest numbers of these were recorded in Germany, with over 89,000 and Sweden, with over 62,000.



On September 20, Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the “Obama administration will increase the number of refugees the United States is willing to accept in 2017 to 100,000, a significant increase over the current annual worldwide cap of 70,000.

However, knowing that terrorists — the most well-known of whom are ISIS, largely responsible for the turmoil that has prompted the mass exodus — can easily embed themselves among the refugees to infiltrate Western nations, many voices in Europe and the United States have resisted accepting large numbers of them. ISIS, itself, has openly admitted that it is embedding terrorists among the refugees.

In addition to the fact that the wholesale acceptance of thousands of Syrian refugees presents a formidable national security problem, 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 administration because Christians in the Middle East have been the victims of widespread terrorism and violence and are especially deserving of refugee status.

The discussion over how many, if any, Syrian refugees should be admitted to the United States inevitably takes on religious aspects. Since the Syrian population is about 87 percent Muslim and 10 percent Christian, one would naturally expect similar percentages to be found among refugees from that nation. Neighboring Iraq, which is also the source of many refugees, is currently about 95 percent Muslim and just one percent Christian. However, more than half of Iraqi Christians have fled to neighboring countries since the 2013 U.S.-led invasion that deposed Saddam Hussein, whose tolerance of Christians was exemplified by the fact that his deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, was a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church. However, post-Saddam Iraq is a much less hospitable place for Christians. Thousands of Christian refugees fled from ISIS terrorists in Northern Iraq in 2014 and went into exile in the autonomous Kurdistan Region.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the rise of ISIS in both Iraq and Syria, Christians in those



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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.

While it is difficult to get a completely accurate figure concerning the religious makeup of the refugees, Senator Ted Cruz, on November 19 on the Fox News Channel's *Happening Now* program, said:

What's astonishing, among the Syrian refugees who've come to America, do you know that only three percent have been Christians? Why does the president get so angry at those of us who want to help provide a safe haven for Christians being persecuted, but he's not angry at ISIS terrorists. He won't even call them radical Islamic terrorists, instead, he defends them. I think that's really backwards.

Cruz made his remarks while talking about legislation he introduced that, in his words, "would have barred refugees from coming to America from countries where ISIS or al Qaeda controls significant amounts of territory. It would have focused on Syria, and Iraq, and Libya, and Somalia, and Yemen. And that is because we cannot determine who is a terrorist and who is not."

During that discussion, Cruz addressed two points that raised questions about the Obama administration's policies. One point is that while the administration advocates admitting large number of refugees from Muslim-majority countries that are home to Islamic terrorists, it has developed no effective way to weed out the terrorists from among the majority — who are probably innocent refugees fleeing turmoil. The other point is that Christian refugees, who have suffered as much as their Muslim neighbors fleeing Syria and elsewhere, are represented disproportionately low among the refugee population — less than one-third of their presence among Syria's overall population, for example.

While speaking in South Carolina on November 15. Cruz proposed having the United States give priority to Christian refugees from the Middle East, saying:

There is no meaningful risk of Christians committing acts of terror. If there were a group of radical Christians pledging to murder anyone who had a different religious view than they, we would have a different national security situation.

But it is precisely the Obama administration's unwillingness to recognize that or ask those questions that makes them so unable to fight this enemy. Because they pretend as if there is no religious aspect to this.

At least one other contender for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination made a similar proposal. Speaking on CNN the same day Cruz made his comments, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush said 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."

Speaking at the G20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, on November 16, President Obama sharply criticized such proposals by the candidates and 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."



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“The overwhelming majority of victims of terrorism ... are Muslims,” Obama added later. “ISIL [ISIS] does not represent Islam, it is not representative in any way of the attitudes of the overwhelming majority of Muslims.”

While Obama was essentially correct in the above statement, it is because the overwhelming majority of population in Middle Eastern nations are Muslims. And while it is also true that ISIS is not representative of the attitudes of the overwhelming majority of Muslims, that does not impact the problem of separating ISIS members or supporters from peaceful Muslim refugees when admitted refugees from Syria, Libya, or other states with a powerful terrorist presence. It also does not solve the problem of supplying humanitarian aid to Christian refugees fleeing terrorist-induced conflict, although very few of them are terrorists.

In an article for the *Washington Times* published on November 24, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) spoke of the plight of Christians in the Middle East as “the next holocaust.” He drew comparisons between the plight of Christian refugees attempting to find sanctuary in the United States and the Jewish passengers fleeing the Nazi holocaust in 1939 aboard the S.S. *Saint Louis*, who were turned away by U.S. immigration authorities. He wrote: “We may be about to commit the same cruelty again, on a much larger scale, this time to Christians who have been marked for genocide in the Middle East.”

In response to Obama’s declaration that “we don’t have religious tests (for) our compassion,” Rohrabacher noted: “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.”

Consequently, notes the congressman:

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 United States must now deal with the same problem that European Union nations have been facing for months — determining what our response to the refugee crisis should be. In an article reposted by *The New American* on September 6, former U.S. Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) wrote about [“The Real Refugee Problem — and How to Solve It.”](#) He said, in part:

Certainly we all feel for the displaced people, especially the children, but let’s not forget that this is a man-made crisis and it is a government-made crisis.

The reason so many are fleeing places like Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq is that US and European interventionist foreign policy has left these countries destabilized with no hopes of economic recovery. This mass migration from the Middle East and beyond is a direct result of the neocon[servative] foreign policy of regime change, invasion, and pushing “democracy” at the barrel of a gun.

What recourse would an American Christian have who wants to help his fellow Christians displaced by terrorism in the Middle East? The answer likely consists of three steps:

First, he should support a non-interventionist U.S. foreign policy to prevent a reoccurrence of this tragic course of events.



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Second, he should support Rep. Rohrabacher's bill that requires the State Department to designate Christians (and Yazidis) as targets for genocide.

Third, he should engage in compassionate Christian charity by donating to one or more of the many Christian organizations that are working in the Middle East to provide relief services to Christians and refugees of all faiths who are suffering from the ongoing wars and acts of terrorism in their homelands.

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