



American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

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#### In Memoriam

Hala Salaam Maksoud, PhD  
(1943-2002)

Alex Odeh  
(1944-1985)

Anthony Shadid  
(1968-2012)

September 25, 2015

#### VIA First Class Mail

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

**RE: Leadership Conference letter calling for bold action to address the Syrian refugee crisis**

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), I am writing to follow up on the letter that we sent to you on September 25, 2015 in coordination with the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. In the letter, ADC and a diverse coalition of national organizations called for your administration to take bold, exemplary action to address the ongoing refugee crisis that has evolved into one of the largest we have seen in recent history. As stated in the coalition letter, we believe that the United States has a moral imperative and a tradition to uphold with respect to the civilian victims of the world, and should set an example for our fellow nations by greatly increasing the overall number of refugees that we accept in the coming years.

In addition to the coalition's request, ADC specifically urges your administration to accept and resettle at least 200,000 total refugees in the next fiscal year, including at least 100,000 Syrian refugees. Although ADC appreciates your commitment to accept 85,000 total refugees in FY2016, including at least 10,000 Syrian refugees, this is not enough to truly address the Syrian Refugee crisis. Foremost, there are more than 4 million currently in need of a safe haven, and 10,000 fails to cover the 17,000 UNHCR Syrian Refugee applications currently pending with the United States. Therefore, ADC strongly urges your administration to accept and resettle at least 100,000 Syrian refugees in the next fiscal year.

The photo of the young Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi whose body washed to shore after his family's failed attempt to escape to Turkey illustrates just how helpless the Syrian refugees are. Syrian refugees forge ahead in attempts to cross the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean Sea on flimsy rubble boats that are prone to capsizing. Syrian refugees are paying smugglers to be placed in the back of trucks crammed in with over 50 people for weeks struggling to breath from Greece, Austria and Hungary to Western Europe. The smuggling route results in hundreds to thousands of Syrian refugees dying in route. They are willing to risk their lives because they have no other choice. As the world's greatest nation, the United States has the capacity, and the moral responsibility, to do more to help these desperate people.

Despite providing more than \$4 billion in humanitarian aid since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the United States has failed to lead in addressing the largest refugee crisis of our time. The United States has only admitted 1,600 Syrian refugees into the United States since 2011.



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In contrast, German chancellor Angela Merkel said Germany will accept at least 800,000 refugees in 2016 in order to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, and has urged fellow European Union countries to follow their example. Even the relatively small United Kingdom has made a commitment to accept 20,000 Syrian refugees, twice as many as your administration.

The United States has historically taken in the largest share of refugees eligible for resettlement. In the past, the United States has accepted well over 100,000 refugees in a single year, including 207,000 Vietnamese refugees after the Vietnam War in 1980. This year we should again strive to set an example for the rest of the world and accept at least 100,000 Syrian refugees.

The International Rescue Committee has called on your administration to accept at least 50 percent of the 130,000 Syrian refugees UNHCR is seeking to resettle: 65,000 by the end of 2016. Likewise, Oxfam America has asked for you to resettle 70,000 by the end of 2016. Further, 17 Democrats in the Senate and 72 in the House have urged you to accept 100,000 Syrian refugees in the new fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. A commitment such as this would help to ease the burden of countries in the region such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan which are housing 1.8 million, 1 million, and 600,000 Syrian refugees respectively.

Additionally, ADC urges you to publically refute the unconscionable attacks on the ethnic backgrounds of the Syrian refugees. It is highly troubling that some members of congress suggest that Syrian refugees are security threats simply because they may be Arab and/or Muslim. ADC is concerned that members of Congress who oppose accepting 100,000 Syrian refugees are doing so merely to win political points with their anti-Arab and Islamophobic supporters. As you know, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program subjects applicants to more thorough security vetting than any other traveler or immigrant to the United States. Further, as the country's largest Arab-American organization, ADC can assure you that members of the Arab diaspora have made excellent contributions to the United States, and Syrian refugees would be welcomed with great support from the Arab-American community.

As a civil rights organization committed to protecting the rights of persons of Arab descent in the U.S., ADC is strongly concerned for the well-being of members of the Arab diaspora, including Syrian refugees. In 2012, ADC filed a formal petition with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requesting that Temporary Protected Status (TPS) be granted to Syrian nationals in the US. Since approval of the petition, ADC has assisted many Syrian nationals in filing TPS applications as part of our pro bono legal practice.

The Syrian refugee crisis is a matter that demands urgent and coordinated action from the international community and requires decisive leadership from the United States. ADC calls on your administration to accept and resettle at least 100,000 Syrian refugees in the next fiscal year. ADC strongly encourages you to give this important matter the proper attention it deserves. You can contact me at 202-244-2990 or by email at [president@adc.org](mailto:president@adc.org).

Sincerely,

Samer E. Khalaf, Esq.  
ADC President