

# PRO/CON: Can U.S. governors say no to Syrian refugees?

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Syrian refugees wait at Marka Airport in Amman, Jordan, on Dec. 8, 2015, to complete their migration procedures to Canada, which has announced that it will take around 25,000 Syrians from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Photo: AP/Raad Adayleh

## PRO: Our governors want to protect the U.S.

There is a terrible war going on in Syria. Millions of people have been forced to leave the country since the war began in 2011. Many of these refugees are still hoping to find a new home.

Different groups are fighting in Syria. One is known as Islamic State, or ISIS. Islamic State has taken over parts of Syria. It wants to push its type of Islam on the country.

Islam is a religion, just like Christianity or Judaism. Its followers are known as Muslims. Most Muslims do not support Islamic State. In fact, many of the Syrian refugees left their country to get away from the extremist group.

U.S. forces are now fighting Islamic State. Many worry that Islamic State fighters could attack here in this country.

## **Islamic State Fighters Could Sneak In**

The U.S. government wants to help the Syrian refugees. President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. will take in 10,000 of them. They are supposed to go to many different states.

The president's plan has run into a problem, however. The governors of 31 states are not going along. They say they do not want Syrian refugees in the states they lead. They worry that Islamic State fighters could sneak in with the real refugees.

President Obama says there is no reason to worry. All the refugees will be checked very carefully, he says. They will not be allowed to live here until the government knows for sure they are not secret fighters.

The 31 governors and many other Americans do not believe Obama. They do not think the screening will be as careful as the president says.

Obama brought this problem on himself. People no longer trust what he says. He has said too many things that turned out not to be true. For example, he said Islamic State was being "contained." He told people the group was almost beaten. Then, they attacked again.

What if there are also problems with the refugee checking? What if the screening does not work as well as the president says it will?

Many people no longer believe Obama. They think the screening will not be that careful. They worry enemy fighters will slip in unnoticed.

## **There Is A Danger**

The governors know that almost all the Syrian refugees are honest and peaceful. Almost all is not everyone, though. It would be a huge problem if even a few Islamic State fighters slipped in. The danger is worth taking seriously.

The president and the government have been making silly statements about the Syrian refugees. Such statements only make people trust the government less.

For example, the government says the refugees are mostly women and children. It says very few of the Syrian refugees already in this country are men of fighting age. So what? What matters is who wants to come now. Many who just left Syria are young or fairly young men.

There would still be a problem even if the government only let in women and children. The women and children would have brothers, fathers and uncles. Sooner or later the men would try to come here, too. They would want to help take care of the women and children.

In any case, some Islamic State fighters are women.

Many people are unhappy that the refugees are not being let in. They should not be angry at the governors. They should be angry at the president instead. People just do not believe Obama when he says there is no reason to worry. It is his fault they do not believe him.

I hope the president and the governors can find an answer that will allow us to take the refugees. It is not that people do not trust the refugees themselves. The problem is that many people no longer trust the president.

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## **CON: Our governors can't just say no**

Thirty-one U.S. governors say they will not allow Syrian refugees into their states. The governors are the top leaders of their states.

The Syrians they want to keep out are refugees who escaped Syria's bloody war. They are looking for a new home.

The 31 governors are making a big mistake. They are wrong not just because they should be helping people in need. They are actually helping Islamic State.

Islamic State is a group of fighters also known as ISIS. They have conquered parts of Syria and Iraq. They are trying to spread their own kind of Islam.

Islam is one of the world's main religions. There are many kinds of Islam, just like there are many kinds of Christianity. Believers in Islam are known as Muslims.

Many of the Syrian refugees are Muslims. Most Muslims have nothing to do with groups like ISIS. They want nothing more than to live in peace like anyone else.

### **What Islamic State Wants**

Islamic State fighters say they are at war with the West. They say they will strike at Westerners in their own countries. Both the United States and Europe are targets, they say.

The first thing we need to understand is that Islamic State is actually weak. Most Muslims do not support the group at all.

Islamic State does not want us to know that. The group want us to believe that its fighters are everywhere. They want us to be afraid.

Islamic State fighters also want us to turn against Muslims everywhere. They want to make Muslims the enemy of the West. They believe if that happens, millions of peaceful Muslims living around the world will join them.

Their plan is quite simple. They want to divide us. They want us to see the world as us against them.

Islamic State also wants us to turn away Syrian refugees. The group thinks that would make Muslims feel that we hate all Muslims.

The war in Syria began in 2011. Since then, 11 million Syrians have been forced to leave their homes. More than 250,000 people have died in that war.

A lot of different groups are fighting in Syria. Many want to get rid of Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad. They feel Syria deserves a better government.

Islamic State just wants to seize power themselves. Many Syrians have left the parts of Syria that Islamic State controls. They were afraid for their lives.

## **Helping Refugees Find A Safe Place**

Many Syrians are now struggling to find new homes in Europe. The U.S. needs to help them too.

The U.S. government has promised to take in 10,000 new Syrian refugees. They are supposed to be spread out among the states.

Many state governors are blocking these plans, however.

The governors say they are afraid Islamic State fighters will sneak in among the refugees. They should not be worried. The U.S. screens refugees very carefully. People cannot settle here until their stories have been checked and rechecked.

About half of these refugees are children. Another quarter are elderly. Almost all the rest are mothers or couples coming with children. We should not be afraid of them. They need our help.

Let us not forget what is written on the Statue of Liberty:

“Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Can you honestly read that and still feel we should turn the refugees away?

Let us say no to leaders who are spreading hate and fear. Let us do the right and caring thing.

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## Quiz

- 1 What is a difference between the PRO and CON points of view?
  - (A) The PRO writer thinks most of the refugees are dangerous, and the CON writer does not.
  - (B) The PRO writer thinks Obama has made too many mistakes. The CON writer thinks the 31 governors are the ones making a mistake.
  - (C) The PRO writer thinks 10,000 Syrian refugees is too many. The CON writer thinks 10,000 is not enough, given how many refugees need homes.
  - (D) The PRO writer thinks most Muslims support the Islamic State. The CON writer thinks most Muslims do not support the Islamic State.
  
- 2 Which of the following statements from the article BEST supports the PRO author's claim that some people do not know if they can trust Obama anymore?
  - (A) President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. will take in 10,000 of them.
  - (B) President Obama says there is no reason to worry.
  - (C) He told people the group was almost beaten. Then, they attacked again.
  - (D) Many people are unhappy that the refugees are not being let in. They should be angry at the president instead.
  
- 3 What do the PRO and CON authors agree on?
  - (A) Most Muslims do not support the Islamic State.
  - (B) The Islamic State is happy if we turn away refugees.
  - (C) Women and children are all potential ISIS fighters.
  - (D) The Statue of Liberty reminds us that it's important to take care of the needy.
  
- 4 Which of the following statements from the article BEST supports the CON author's claim that taking in refugees is safe?
  - (A) The first thing we need to understand is that Islamic State is actually weak.
  - (B) Islamic State also wants us to turn away Syrian refugees.
  - (C) People cannot settle here until their stories have been checked and rechecked.
  - (D) Let us not forget what is written on the Statue of Liberty.

## Answer Key

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