

Syrian Refugees: How Far Will We Go To Help?

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Abstract

This project brings light upon the crisis at hand and at large that is having a large effect around the world: the Syrian crisis. It has been going on for nearly five years, and yet barely any change has occurred over these years. Realizing this, there must be an issue that is being overlooked and is not being focused on. Statistically speaking, around 370,000 people have been killed due to this conflict and 13 million Syrians have become refugees. This topic was chosen to spread awareness about Syrian refugees and to help them. It is to try to have a positive change and effect on the lives of the refugees by doing something to have a long term effect. These people did not choose this life; they had no choice and just found themselves stranded and in the middle of a war. Questions might arise such as about the way they live, the things they have seen and encountered, their experience in another country they have never been to and how they managed. Mentor, Tawfik Alazem, has been helping with this project. He has a lot of experience in this field as he is the director of USCRI (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants). At the end of this, people should not only be aware of the subject at hand, but also know what they can do to help make a change and the steps they have to take.

Introduction

As the conditions became worse in Syria year by year, more Syrians have fled the country and sought refuge in neighboring countries. Some have accepted them, while others denied them entry and kicked them out. The Syrian conflict has been going around since 2011 and no progress has been made; the situation just got worse. The Syrians have been seeking refuge in neighboring countries and some international countries with some allowing them entry while others reject them. Us as Muslims should be the first in line to help our Muslims brothers and sisters. It is obligatory upon every Muslim to help his fellow Muslim brother or sister out. It

is narrated by Bukhari that the Prophet Muhammad said, "You will see the believers in their having mercy for one another, and in their love for one another, and in their kindness towards one another, like the human body: when one limb is ailing, the whole body feels it, one part calling out the other with sleeplessness and fever." (Bukhari) It also says in the Quran, "Righteous is he who . . . gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free." (The Quran 2:177) To have innocent people die every single day with us people watching and not giving it a second thought is truly disturbing. These are people, not animals and deserve every ounce of justice and deserve to have peace and live without fear of being killed. Well, animals are even treated better nowadays than refugees. When the men, women, and children leave the country and go somewhere else, they are traumatized from the horrors they have witnessed and need comforting and food and shelter. They do not need the hate coming from the media that falsely accuses them of being dangerous.

How the War has Affected the Lives of the Syrians

According to the UN, around 13.8 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance in just Syria alone. There are approximately 480,000 Syrian refugees in international countries such as the U.S., Germany, and the UK. More than 4.5 million Syrian Refugees are displaced in just five Arab Muslim countries which are Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. However, these countries have now closed off their borders and do not allow anymore refugees in. There are also some Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and others who have offered no place to stay for the refugees. Getting out of the country is difficult; however, crossing the border into another country, especially a country overseas, is extremely difficult. Many refugees are kicked

out of the countries they flee to and are forced to return to Syria where they are either imprisoned or they go back to how their lives were. When asking the children about their memories and what they have gone through, it will truly surprise an individual by the way they talk. It is as if they are grown men and women who are stuck in the bodies of children. The horrors of which they speak of and the atrocities they have witnessed and this whole war has made them forget about their childhood, took it away, and replaced it with sadness and misery. And when asking them how has the war affected them, they will say something similar: one of their family members or someone close to them had been killed. And majority of them had even witnessed people dying in front of them. And to add on to their trauma, they are placed in camps where there is no hygiene and no proper place to sleep and very little room. At times, there will be a family of 4 or 5 sitting in an open 4 person tent. These tents do not cover or protect them from the weather. Last year, many Syrian refugees froze to death because of the cold. (Americans' Fear of Foreign Terrorists is Overinflated, 2016).

How To Combat Social Misconceptions

As of 2017, Donald J Trump, President of the United States, placed a ban on seven majority Muslim countries to prevent terrorist attacks. One of these countries was Syria. If one was to look at statistics, they would see that the chances an American citizen has of being killed by a refugee is almost non-existent. One has a greater chance of being killed by an American citizen or being struck by lightning. According to the National Safety Council, the National Center for Health Statistics and Tulane University, the odds of being killed by foreign-born terrorists in all forms are 1 in 45,808. The odds of being killed by refugee terrorists are 1 in 46,192,893. The odds of being killed by illegal immigrant terrorists are 1 in 138,324,873. The odds of being killed

from a visa waiver program entrant are 0 in 1. One is more likely to die from asteroids, lightning, shark attacks, and heat pressure than refugees or terrorists. (How likely are Foreign Terrorists to Kill Americans? The Odds May Surprise You, 2017). The issue with bans and restrictions on Muslim-majority countries is that they are placed to keep America safe. Trump and his administration professed that this prohibition is to protect Americans from terrorism. Placing controls on immigration from these countries does not provide much help for the safety of U.S. citizens. According to a study by Alex Nowrashteh in 2016 at the Cato Institute, around 3,024 American citizens were killed beginning in 1975 through 2015 from terrorism caused by people overseas, which includes the terrorist attack on 9/11 that killed nearly 3,000 people. However, since September 11, 2001, terrorists born in other countries have killed six citizens every year, and none of the attacks were from countries in Trump's ban. (Former Immigration Chief Warns Donald Trump's 'anti-Muslim' ban won't make America Safer, 2017).

Why Syrian Refugees and Not Other Refugees

Upon reading this, many people might say "Why focus on Syrian refugees only?" Well, currently Syrian refugees outnumber any other refugees from other countries and are in the greatest need of help. Also, Syrians are regarded as threats and nuisance and spreading the truth and the importance of helping them out is the top priority. There are many organizations that have fundraisers to help the Syrians in their own country; however, there are barely any organizations to help out refugees. Refugees that come here require a place to stay, beds, food, clothes, and medical attention. Also, the parents need jobs and the kids need to attend schools. All this requires a lot of money and if there are not enough organizations and attention to this

issue, the situation will not get any better. The job of these organizations is not only to help out the refugees, but to also spread awareness about their suffering and about how they are innocent people.

Friend Or Foe?

Syrian refugees have been regarded as a threat and have been labeled by the media as a nuisance. A book written by the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence of the Committee on Homeland Security House of Representatives called “Admitting Syrian Refugees: The Intelligence Void and the Emerging Homeland Security Threat” talks about how that bringing in Syrian Refugees brings upon a huge risk and a possible breach of security here in the United States. What people do not see and need to realize is that these innocent civilians are the victims, not the terrorists. The stereotype of the refugees, or people in general, coming from a Muslim-majority country has a tremendous effect on the way Americans view them. Multiple studies have shown that Muslim Americans and refugees have faced an enormous amount of discrimination simply due to the fact of the way terrorist groups have been portraying Islam. Although the United Nations has identified that over 13.5 million Syrian refugees in Syria are in need of assistance and more than 6 million are displaced, the US has placed a hold on refugee admissions for 120 days for security procedures to be reviewed. Travel restrictions were placed on 7 Muslim-majority countries that were thought of as a “concern” by the administration. The US professed that this prohibition is to protect americans from terrorism. However, according to statistics and research by the National Safety Council and the National Center for Health Statistics, placing these controls does not provide much help for the safety of US citizens. The

ideology and misconception that Syrian refugees are a threat to security and safety of citizens plays a major role in how the media portrays them and spreads hate and Islamophobia.

What Good Can We Expect With Helping Them

Syrian Refugees have been in catastrophic pain and have been in need of help for years. Over half of Syrian refugees are children- at least 2.4 million. Over 2 million of those children do not have regular access to aid. At least 306,000 were born as refugees, and over 200,000 children are living in blockaded areas. Countries should and could admit refugees, not only for the refugees' benefits but also for theirs (Syria's Civil War Explained from the Beginning, 2017). By allowing refugees into the country, they are safe from the Civil War and have a chance to start a new life. Refugees positively contribute to the countries they immigrate to by increasing economic growth, expanding the tax base for the government, and fortify the economy. A common misconception is that once refugees enter, jobs will become harder to find and fewer options will be available. However, Syrian refugees have a broad range of skills that can boost the economy. At an International Labor Organization survey in 2013 of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it was found that "Half of the workers were skilled or semi-skilled while the other half were low-skilled workers in agricultural or personal services such as cleaning. The United States does not have a fixed supply of jobs. By working in the United States and consuming goods and services, more jobs will be created to supply them." The evidence for accepting refugees shows what benefits a country can receive from them. By not allowing Syrian Refugees, there is more harm than good. "Kate Jastram, an attorney and an expert in forced migration with UC Berkeley's Blum Center for Developing Economies, says it would be detrimental for the U.S. to close its doors to Syrian refugees. Not only would it intensify America's anti-Muslim reputation,

she says, but it would alienate the estimated 3.3 million Muslims living in the U.S., as reported by the Pew Research Center, or those who hope to migrate here,” stated Berkeley news.

Countries that are capable of taking in Syrian refugees should not be concerned with believing that they are out to harm; they do not pose any threat to the U.S. government or American citizens.

What Can Be Done to Help

There is no possible way to reverse the amount of damage that has been caused, but whatever can be done to help should be done. Help can be given by providing money, community service hours, spreading awareness, funding refugees, challenging immigration systems to allow more refugees, sending supplies to civilians, and simply making dua. Every small thing counts and will make a big change. There are multiple trusted organizations that offer various needs to Syrian refugees that need contributions. UNICEF, World Vision Refugee Crisis, Save the Children, Syrian American Model Society, International Rescue Committee, and Islamic Relief USA are all charities that help refugees but need support. Innocent civilians are starving, living without shelter, and have lost their loved ones. The refugees are in need of help and everything should and could be done to save lives.

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