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# UN Report Shows Refugee System Needs Changes

## Will the Trump administration change an archaic process?

By Nayla Rush

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The latest United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resettlement assessment report summarizes its 2015 activities and introduces its 2017 strategic direction and needs.<sup>1</sup> At a time when refugee protection is addressed on a global scale, the report, “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”, provides us with insightful information about submission categories and acceptance rates, top resettlement countries of origin and destination, and more. It also suggests how badly in need of reform the entire refugee system is.

Some takeaways from the UNHCR report:

- 62 percent of all refugees referred (or submitted) for resettlement by the UNHCR in 2015 were for the United States.
- Virtually all refugees referred by UNHCR (92 percent) are accepted by resettlement countries.
- About 40 percent of refugees referred for resettlement were in the Middle East and North Africa region; sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 29 percent. The top countries were Syria and Congo.
- Contrary to official UNHCR and U.S. claims, it is not necessarily the most vulnerable and urgent cases that are submitted for resettlement. The UNHCR itself acknowledges that almost all refugees submitted for resettlement are in circumstances “where there are no immediate medical, social, or security concerns which would merit expedited processing.”
- Going beyond conventional resettlement, the UNHCR is promoting “any mechanism which allows for legal entry to and stay within a third country.”
- The UN report estimates that 1,190,519 refugees will need resettlement in 2017, though it will submit only a fraction of those cases.
- It is increasingly evident that the refugee system run by one single agency, UNHCR, is archaic, an anachronism from the Cold War, and is due for a thorough reevaluation.

## Focus on Refugee Resettlement and Other Admission Paths

Under the auspices of UNHCR, refugee resettlement “involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought protection to a third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status.”<sup>2</sup>

Refugee resettlement has become the central focus of the global protection and solutions agenda for refugees. “Resettlement is now more important than ever as a solution,” stressed the High Commissioner for Refugees

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Filippo Grandi, “and we must grasp this opportunity to increase the number of refugees benefitting from it, as well as other avenues for admission.”<sup>3</sup>

The ongoing Syrian crisis and the movement of record-breaking number of people crossing the Mediterranean by the end of 2015 have pushed UNHCR to scale up and expand its resettlement capacity. In the words of Grandi: “We are seeing resettlement taken to a new level and that enhanced resettlement can be an effective means of sharing the responsibility for refugee protection.”

But conventional refugee resettlement is not enough, according to UNHCR. To tackle the growing needs of refugees worldwide and keep pace with the increasing numbers of what it claims to be acutely vulnerable refugees, the UN refugee agency is now thinking outside the box and asking that other pathways for admission be made available. That is why, while increasing the numbers of refugees benefitting from resettlement, it is now “also focusing on how complementary paths such as humanitarian visas, family reunion, and scholarships could help bridge the gaps in terms of needs.”

The United States has been supportive of such strategy. President Obama planned on resettling more refugees (110,000 in FY 2017) and encouraged the private sector to sponsor additional refugees outside the resettlement program.<sup>4</sup> He hosted two meetings in New York coinciding with the United Nations “High-Level Meeting on Refugees and Migrants” to push his own agenda.<sup>5</sup> In the first, he sat down with top executives from 50 companies to go over ways the private sector should get involved. He also urged world leaders, in a “Leader’s Summit on Refugees” he hosted, to commit to more “responsibility sharing” by increasing funding, admitting more refugees (through resettlement or other legal pathways), and encouraging local integration.<sup>6</sup> The success of such endeavors, however, remains to be determined.

## 2015 Trends and Developments

### *Total Submissions*

UNHCR only submits to national governments the names of refugees to be *considered* for resettlement. “[T]here is no obligation on states to accept refugees through resettlement. ... Whether individual refugees will ultimately be resettled depends on the admission criteria of the resettlement state.”<sup>7</sup>

UNHCR referred more than one million refugees to over 30 resettlement countries over the past decade. These referrals (the UNHCR describes them as “submissions”) in 2015 reached the highest number during this period: 134,044. In 2014 it referred 103,890 refugees for resettlement; 92,915 in 2013; and 74,840 in 2012. Annual UNHCR submissions thus went up by 79 percent in just four years. For 2016, UNHCR’s resettlement submissions were projected to amount to 143,000.

### *Recipient Countries*

The United States remains the main recipient of these UNHCR referrals, with 82,491 resettlement submissions in 2015 (62 percent of all submissions). Canada is next with 22,886 (17 percent), followed by Australia 9,321 (7 percent), Norway 3,806 (2.8 percent), and the United Kingdom 3,622 (2.7 percent).

The United States, in addition to being the number-one resettlement country is also the most generous in terms of funding; it has contributed \$5.6 billion in humanitarian aid to the Syrian crisis since 2011. UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi praised the United States for its commitment to refugees: “The United States is the biggest donor to UNHCR + provides the largest no of resettlement places.”<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1. Top 10 Countries for UNHCR Resettlement Referrals in 2015**

Country of Resettlement	Persons
<b>United States</b>	<b>82,491</b>
Canada	22,886
Australia	9,321
Norway	3,806
United Kingdom	3,622
New Zealand	1,980
Sweden	1,595
France	1,456
Finland	1,296
Germany	964
All Others	4,627
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,044</b>

**Source:** “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

## Acceptance Rate

As mentioned, there is no obligation for states to accept refugees submitted to them by the UNHCR for resettlement, but as UNHCR spokesman Leo Dobbs notes, “in recent years the overwhelming majority of those recommended for resettlement have been given new homes.”<sup>9</sup>

The acceptance rate of all refugees submitted for resettlement in 2015 is 91.8 percent. The highest acceptance rate was for refugees from Bhutan (98.3 percent) and Burma (Myanmar, 98 percent), followed by Congo (95.9 percent) and Eritrea (95.3 percent). The approval rate for Syrians is 92.6 percent.

## Top Resettlement Countries of Origin

As of 2014, Syrians became the largest group referred for resettlement. Two of every five submissions (40 percent of all submissions) were Syrians in 2015, compared to one of five in 2014. A total of 53,305 Syrians refugees were submitted for resettlement in 2015. This is no surprise as the ongoing Syrian crisis has pushed millions out of the country into neighboring states (mainly Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan).

The other top countries of origin in 2015 were Congo (20,527), Iraq (11,161), Somalia (10,193), and Burma (9,738). These five top countries made up almost 80 percent of submissions that year. Syrians and Iraqis totaled 64,466 (48 percent) of all submissions.

Most of those referred for resettlement were in the following countries of first asylum: Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. (See Table 4.)

## Top Regions

Most resettlement submissions in 2015 come from two regions: the Middle East and North Africa (MENA, 40 percent) and Africa (29 percent). (See Table 5.)

In 2015, 53,331 referrals originated from the MENA region, about 40 per cent of the global total (134,000), which is to be expected in view of the scope of the Syrian crisis. Submissions were up 130 percent from 2014 (23,169). Most submissions were made from the top Syrian-refugee-hosting countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq.

The vast majority were Syrian refugees, who accounted for 84 percent of the region’s total submissions.

The number of Syrians submitted for resettlement (from MENA) in 2015 was 44,914, almost triple the number submitted in 2014 (15,470).<sup>10</sup> As noted in the UNHCR report, “[t]he increase in submission rates on this scale was achieved largely due to the use of innovative and streamlined resettlement and humanitarian admission processes.”

**Table 2. Acceptance Rates of UNHCR Submissions by Country of Origin in 2015**

Country of Origin	Cases Submitted	Pct. Cases Accepted
Syria	10,372	92.6%
Congo (DRC)	5,114	95.9%
Iraq	4,199	85.5%
Somalia	3,515	85.3%
Burma (Myanmar)	3,082	98.0%
Eritrea	1,765	95.3%
Iran	1,740	91.6%
Afghanistan	1,689	84.8%
Bhutan	1,500	98.3%
Sudan	1,329	94.8%
All Others	3,080	84.1%
Total	37,385	91.8%

**Source:** “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

**Table 3. UNHCR Resettlement Submissions in 2015 by Top 10 Countries of Origin**

Country of Origin	Persons
<b>Syria</b>	<b>53,305</b>
Congo (DRC)	20,527
Iraq	11,161
Somalia	10,193
Burma (Myanmar)	9,738
Afghanistan	4,918
Bhutan	4,477
Sudan	4,258
Eritrea	3,693
Iran	2,995
All Others	8,779
Total	134,044

**Source:** “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

The second region with the most resettlement submissions is sub-Saharan Africa, with a total number in 2015 of 38,870, up 11 percent from 2014's 35,079 submissions. The five main countries of origin were Congo, with 53 percent of total submissions from Africa in 2015, Somalia (23 percent), Eritrea (8 percent), Sudan (5 percent), and Ethiopia (3 percent).

### Resettlement by Submission Category

The UNHCR report also classifies its resettlement referrals by category. The largest number of submissions — 40 percent — fall under the “Legal and/or Protection Needs” category. They are followed by the “Survivors of Violence and/or Torture” category, with 26 percent, and the “Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions” category, with 18 percent. “Medical Needs” applies to only 5 percent of the cases. See Table 6.

The distribution in Table 6 is rather puzzling. Refugees in need of resettlement, as we are often reminded, are the ones who are the most vulnerable, such as victims of torture or extreme trauma, or those in need of special care they cannot find in their country of refuge. Let us look more closely at these categories.

UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook details each of these categories:<sup>11</sup>

#### Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs.

To be considered for resettlement submission under the “Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs” category, a refugee's situation “must meet one or more of the following conditions: immediate or long-term threat of refoulement [return] to the country of origin or expulsion to another country from where the refugee may be refouled; threat of arbitrary arrest, detention or imprisonment; threat to physical safety or fundamental human rights in the country of refuge, rendering asylum untenable.”

**Survivors of Violence and/or Torture.** Refugees who have experienced torture and/or violence in their country of origin or country of asylum “may not be easily identified unless they show clear signs of trauma, or inform UNHCR of their experiences.” When identified, these refugees “may have specific needs that warrant resettlement consideration because the trauma they have endured may have a serious detrimental effect on their mental and physical well-being. The situation in the country of

**Table 4. UNHCR Resettlement Submissions in 2015 by Top 10 Countries of Asylum**

Country of Asylum	Persons
Jordan	24,374
Lebanon	19,516
Turkey	18,260
Kenya	7,586
Malaysia	7,147
Tanzania	6,852
Egypt	6,292
Ethiopia	5,999
Nepal	4,869
Uganda	4,612
All Others	28,537
<b>Total</b>	<b>134,044</b>

Source: “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

**Table 5. UNHCR Submissions by Region of Asylum, 2011–2015**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Sub-Saharan Africa	22,267	15,710	28,141	35,079	38,870
Asia and the Pacific	38,404	38,020	37,559	27,450	21,620
Europe	7,716	8,526	11,096	16,392	18,833
<b>MENA</b>	<b>22,493</b>	<b>10,519</b>	<b>14,247</b>	<b>23,169</b>	<b>53,331</b>
The Americas	963	2,065	1,872	1,800	1,390
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,843</b>	<b>74,840</b>	<b>92,915</b>	<b>103,890</b>	<b>134,044</b>

Source: “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

**Table 6. Resettlement by Submission Category in 2015**

Category	Persons Submitted
<b>Legal and/or Protection Needs</b>	<b>52,260</b>
Survivors of Violence and/or Torture	34,206
Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions	24,321
Women and Girls at Risk	12,174
Medical Needs	6,589
Children and Adolescents at Risk	3,171
Family Reunification	1,268
Others/Unspecified	55
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>134,044</b>

Source: “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

asylum may not be conducive for effective support (due to, for example, the inaccessibility of appropriate health care, counselling services or stability) and may compound the trauma.”

UNHCR encourages a broad interpretation of the definition of violence and torture when considering resettlement:

*Violence itself is an extremely diffuse and complex phenomenon, and defining it is not an exact science. Notions of what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of behaviour and what constitutes harm, are culturally influenced and constantly under review as values and social norms evolve. A useful definition has however been produced by the World Health Organization: Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. (Emphasis added).*

Moreover, a refugee may have experienced violence directly or indirectly: “Refugees may have themselves survived or witnessed other forms of extreme violence in their country of origin or their country of asylum.”

**Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions.** The category was previously known as “refugees without local integration prospects” and is described like this:

*This submission category focuses on refugees who do not require resettlement for immediate protection needs, but who require an end to their refugee situation — a durable solution. These refugees are unable to return home in the foreseeable future, and have no opportunity to establish themselves in their country of refuge. In many cases, these refugees are in protracted refugee situations. (Emphasis added.)*

A “protracted refugee situation” is any situation:

*[I]n which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance. (Emphasis added.)*

What is also telling are the acceptance rates by submission category. The category with the highest acceptance rate is “Family Reunification”, with 95.5 percent. The one with the lowest acceptance rate is the “Medical Needs” category, with 88.1 percent. One would assume the opposite to be true.

### UNHCR Resettlement by Priority

UNHCR resettlement submissions are divided not only by category, but also by priority levels. There are three priority levels: emergency, urgent, and normal. (See Table 8.)

Each priority level is explained in UNHCR’s Resettlement Handbook.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 7. Acceptance Rates of UNHCR Submissions by Category in 2015**

Category	Acceptance Rate
<b>Family Reunification</b>	<b>95.5%</b>
Children and Adolescents at Risk	93.8%
Legal and/or Protection Needs	92.7%
Survivors of Violence and/or Torture	91.9%
Women and Girls at Risk	91.8%
Others/Unspecified	91.3%
Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions	90.5%
Medical Needs	88.1%

Source: “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

**Table 8. UNHCR Resettlement by Priority in 2015**

UNHCR Submission Priority	Persons Submitted	Percentage
<b>Normal</b>	<b>118,719</b>	<b>88.56%</b>
Urgent	6,770	11.00%
Emergency	281	0.40%
Unspecified/Other	805	0.04%
Total	134,044	100.00%

Source: “UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017”.

**Emergency.** “This emergency level applies to cases in which the immediacy of security and/or medical condition necessitates removal from the threatening conditions within a few days, if not within hours.”

**Urgent.** “Refugees who face conditions requiring their expeditious resettlement, but within a less limited time frame than indicated above, are categorized as urgent cases. These refugees have serious medical risks or other vulnerabilities requiring expedited resettlement within six weeks of submission.”

**Normal.** “The majority of cases fall within this category. This level applies to all cases *where there are no immediate medical, social, or security concerns which would merit expedited processing*. UNHCR expects decisions and departure within 12 months of submission.” (Emphasis added.)

Most of the 2015 submissions fell under the “normal” priority (about 89 percent), while only 11 percent were “urgent.” This is in total contradiction of the general discourse underlining the urgent and exceptional status of refugees in need of resettlement. Some examples of such discourse:

- UNHCR notes in its report: “Resettlement does not only provide Syrian refugees with a durable solution but has often been a *critical and life-saving intervention* for refugees with *urgent protection needs* and compelling vulnerabilities.”<sup>13</sup> (Emphasis added.)
- Anne C. Richard, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, testified before a House committee: “Resettlement is offered to refugees who are among *the most vulnerable* — people for whom a return to Syria someday would be extremely difficult, if not impossible — *such as women and girls at risk, survivors of torture, children and adolescents at risk, and refugees with medical needs, disabilities, and/or physical or legal protection needs*.”<sup>14</sup> (Emphasis added.)
- Gina Kassem, the regional refugee coordinator at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, stressed the role of UNHCR in referring the most vulnerable cases to the United States for review.<sup>15</sup> Priority is always given to traumatized groups, such as victims of torture or gender-based violence, she claimed.

Sensitive categories such as “Women and Girls at Risk” (9 percent), “Children and Adolescents at Risk” (2 percent), and “Refugees with Medical Needs (5 percent) constitute a small percentage of submissions, while most submissions fall under the “Legal and/or Protection Needs” (40 percent) and the “Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions” (18 percent) categories.

One would think medical needs would take precedence over legal/protection needs. Yet the former encompasses 5 percent of the total submissions vs. 40 percent for the latter. Also, as mentioned, the medical needs category has the lowest acceptance rate.

As for the “Lack of Foreseeable Alternative Durable Solutions” category that focuses on “refugees who do not require resettlement for immediate protection needs, but who require an end to their refugee situation” — aren’t almost all refugees in that situation? Do any of the 4.8 million Syrian refugees in the region *not* wish to put “an end to their refugee situation”? Refugees without local integration prospects in this category are “often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance.” But are those prospects guaranteed in the United States, or elsewhere? Most refugees resettled in the United States are likely to struggle with language, educational, and professional barriers. Beyond the initial help they receive (for about eight months), many rely on some type of government aid.<sup>16</sup> Is the solution replacing one form of “enforced reliance on external assistance” with another?

## UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs and Capacity for 2017

With the increase of resettlement needs for Syrian refugees, UNHCR is focusing its efforts on reforming the resettlement process to render it more efficient while encouraging, in parallel, other informal admissions routes and promoting local integration.

The UNHCR report describes a “Plan of Action for Urgent Up-scaling of Resettlement, Legal Pathways and Stabilization/ Comprehensive Local Integration” prepared at the end of 2015: “[T]he Plan of Action acknowledged that meeting increased resettlement quotas can only be sustained over time by substantially reforming current resettlement procedures; and furthermore recognized that increased resettlement would also need to be complemented with greater efforts to expand humanitarian and other complementary pathways for admission to protection and solutions.”

**Reforming the Resettlement Process.** In order to meet the needs of Syrian refugees in an expeditious manner, UNHCR is recruiting additional staff and experts to identify the most vulnerable among Syrian refugees to be referred for resettlement and humanitarian admission, concentrating its training activities on the areas of integrity and anti-fraud, as well as reforming its traditional resettlement procedures.

**Complementary Pathways for Admission.** Despite these efforts, perceived resettlement needs of refugees continue to surpass current capacity; hence the appeal for complementary pathways for admission outside the standard refugee resettlement process. The number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in the main hosting countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq) totaled 4.8 million in March 2016. The number should increase to over five million by December 2016.

Despite increased pledges for resettlement, UNHCR believes that resettlement submissions, no matter how simplified and expedited, will not suffice. Complementary pathways to admit refugees are needed as a new and concrete expression of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing. Pathways for admission include “*any mechanism* which allows for legal entry to and stay within a third country.” [Emphasis added.] In a high-level meeting convened by UNHCR on “Global Responsibility Sharing through Pathways for Admission of Syrian Refugees” in Switzerland last March, many states pledged to give scholarships and student visas for Syrian refugees and committed to expand family reunification.<sup>17</sup>

## UNHCR Strategic Response to Rising Needs

According to the UN refugee agency, the projected number of refugees in need of resettlement in 2017 is calculated at 1,190,519. This forecast is 72 percent higher than 2014’s projected needs of 691,000 persons. Since then, the large-scale resettlement of Syrian refugees was set in motion.

In 2017, Syrians will account for 40 percent of the 1.19 million refugees that UNHCR says will be in need of resettlement. Other major refugee groups are as follows: Sudan (11 percent), Afghanistan (10 percent), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (9 percent).

UNHCR recognizes that resettling over a million persons in one year is simply not feasible. Submissions depend on the number of places made available by resettlement countries, but also on UNHCR’s capacity to process applications. UNHCR’s submission target for 2017, therefore, will only include some 170,000 (14 percent) of the 1.19 million persons it considers in need of resettlement.

The projected submissions from the MENA region in 2017 are 50,500 (an almost 100 percent increase from 2016 initial target of 26,865). This large increase in target is mainly attributed to the dramatic increase in pledges and quotas for resettlement of Syrian refugees.

At the conference in Switzerland mentioned above, UNHCR called on countries to pledge to the “resettlement and other admission pathways for at least 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population by the end of 2018 as a demonstration of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing.”<sup>18</sup> That amounts to the admission, one way or another, of some 480,000 of Syrian refugees over three years (2016-2018).

## Resettlement and Other Admission Channels Are Not the Answer

This call has been rejected. UNHCR could not get world leaders to agree to resettle 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population (or to commit to a specific target for any nationality for that matter).

At the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants that took place at UN headquarters in New York last September, 193 member states agreed to provide a more coordinated response to the refugee crisis, but refused to commit to UNHCR's plan.<sup>19</sup> All members signed a non-binding declaration ("the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants"<sup>20</sup>) that sets the ground for additional resettlement, access to education and employment for refugees, and a commitment to combat xenophobia. The declaration is fairly abstract and is not legally binding. Separate global compacts for refugees are to be developed over the next two years through a process that is not yet defined. UN member states agreed to start negotiations in preparation of a conference on international migration to be held in 2018.

Alexander Betts, the director of Oxford University's Refugee Studies Centre, "viewed the event [UN Summit] as a largely wasted opportunity that has deferred urgently needed reforms of the global refugee system."<sup>21</sup>

More concrete measures were taken the next day at the "Leaders' Summit on Refugees" hosted by President Obama. The White House released a fact sheet summarizing the results, including commitments from the countries attending for increased funding and resettlement, and improved refugee access to education and employment.<sup>22</sup>

But pledges mean nothing if they are not carried out. In fact, most pledges made in London last February at a summit for Syrian refugees have not been fulfilled.<sup>23</sup> Anne Richard, the Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, admitted "For me the much harder piece is follow-up. ... The countries that make commitments — do they mean it, and will they follow through? Usually an administration would spend the next year making sure these countries follow up — but the Obama administration is going to leave office at the end of January."<sup>24</sup>

## An Archaic System Needs Change

We don't know yet the specifics of the incoming Trump administration's refugee policies, but it's certain that UNHCR will need to revise its 2017 projections. But that's not all that needs to change; Betts makes a valid point when he notes that, "The refugee regime was created in the 1950s for Europe and the early cold war era. Yes, it's been adapted incrementally, but we've never had a moment of systematic reflection."<sup>25</sup>

Oxford professor Paul Collier is of the same opinion: "[T]he refugee system is broken. The world has an agency, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, that is devoid of strategy except for a Refugee Convention that is an anachronistic relic of the cold war."<sup>26</sup> Today's refugees, Collier adds, are "overwhelmingly fleeing mass disorder rather than state persecution. ... Refugees need a haven that is proximate, so that it is easy to reach and from which it is easy to return once a conflict ends."

Instead of pushing for more resettlement or other admission pathways, UNHCR (and the United States) should put more emphasis on helping refugees where they are and, ultimately, helping them return. Humanitarian assistance or calls for local integration are not enough, especially for hosting countries. A development-based policy can give millions of Syrian refugees autonomy and opportunity and render them better equipped to rebuild a postwar Syria.<sup>27</sup>

Why resettle a few thousands and let millions live in despair in the region? Despite endless assertions, it is not the most vulnerable who are being brought in for the most part, but only those "fleeing mass disorder" who were picked for resettlement referral by UNHCR staff in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, how can we expect refugees to successfully integrate (economically, socially, culturally) into the United States in just a few months? Robert Carey, the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, recently asserted that "resettlement agencies ... help refugees to become employed and self-sufficient within their first eight months in the United States."<sup>29</sup> The reality is, undoubtedly, less polished than these imagined trajectories.

The West should stop using resettlement as a conscience alleviator. Of the thousands it helped resettle, most are still struggling. Despite all the good intentions, resettlement can be, as the French would say, "a poisoned gift."

The refugee system is indeed broken. But we should not count on UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi to fix it, as he is the one pushing for increases in resettlement and alternative admissions. Nor should we expect the United Nations as a whole to promote a change to refugee strategy. The new UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, served as UN High Commissioner for Refugees himself from 2005 to 2015. Known for his passionate idealism, he was chosen to head the UN primarily because of his expertise on refugees and his handling of the Syrian crisis.

The UN's refugee strategy appears to be "more of the same." Let us hope the same does not apply to the United States under the new administration.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leo Dobbs, "[UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2017](#)", UNHCR, June 8, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> "[Information on UNHCR Resettlement](#)", UNHCR website.

<sup>3</sup> Leo Dobbs, "[UNHCR report sees 2017 resettlement needs at 1.19 million](#)", UNHCR, June 13, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Nayla Rush, "[White House Looks to Private Sector to Increase Refugee Admissions Outside the Resettlement Program](#)", Center for Immigration Studies blog, July 6, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> "[United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants](#)", United Nations website.

<sup>6</sup> "[Leader's Summit on Refugees](#)", U.S. Department of State website.

<sup>7</sup> "[UNHCR Resettlement Handbook](#)", UNHCR, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCH Washington (@UNHCRDC), "[The United States is the biggest donor to UNHCR + provides the largest no of resettlement places' @RefugeesChief Filippo Grandi #ExCom2016](#)", Twitter post, October 11, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> "[Record number of refugees need to be resettled: UN](#)", AFP, June 13, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> The number of Syrian refugees submitted for resettlement in 2015 here (44,914) is different from the number listed in Table 3 (53,305). The difference is due to different submission locations. Syrian refugee submissions from the MENA region (and not elsewhere) totaled 44,914 in 2015. The remaining 8,391 come from outside the MENA region.

<sup>11</sup> "[UNHCR Resettlement Handbook and Country Chapters](#)", UNHCR, 2014, Chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Leo Dobbs, "[UNHCR report sees 2017 resettlement needs at 1.19 million](#)", UNHCR, June 13, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Testimony of Anne C. Richard at, "[Terrorist Travel: Vetting for National Security Concerns](#)", before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, December 17, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Khetam Malkawi, "[First Syrians arrive in US under surge resettlement program](#)", Associated Press, April 7, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See Karen Zeigler and Steven A. Camarota, "[The High Cost of Resettling Middle Eastern Refugees](#)", Center for Immigration Studies, November 2015.

<sup>17</sup> "[Pathways for Admissions of Syrian Refugees](#)", UNHCR website, March 30, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Leo Dobbs, "[UNHCR report sees 2017 resettlement needs at 1.19 million](#)", UNHCR, June 13, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> "[United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants](#)", United Nations website.

<sup>20</sup> "[New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants](#)", United Nations website, September 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Kingsley, "[US-led coalition to double refugee resettlement places and expand aid](#)", *The Guardian*, September 20, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> "[Fact Sheet on the Leaders' Summit on Refugees](#)", The White House website, September 20, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> [Supporting Syria and the Region](#), London 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Patrick Kingsley, "[US-led coalition to double refugee resettlement places and expand aid](#)", *The Guardian*, September 20, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Paul Collier, "[The challenge is manageable but the global system remains devoid of a strategy, writes Paul Collier](#)", *The Financial Times*, September 20, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Nayla Rush, "[Refugee Resettlement Is Not the Answer: Help the millions of Syrians where they are](#)", Center for Immigration Studies blog, April 6, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Nayla Rush, "[The UN's Role in U.S. Refugee Resettlement: A "Benefit of the doubt" Screening Policy](#)", Center for Immigration Studies, January 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Hearing on "Oversight of the Administration's FY 2017 Refugee Resettlement Program", Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest, September 28, 2016.