



Seattle Human Rights Commission

1963 – 2015 • *52 years of championing human rights and fostering a just world*

Senator Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

December 7th, 2015

Dear Senator Cantwell,

We write to express our deep concern for the refugees who are fleeing violence in Syria, and to urge you to support Syrian refugees during this humanitarian emergency. There are now over four million refugees who have fled Syria due to violence¹, but the United States has accepted only about 2,100². We ask you to lead and co-sponsor legislation that will fund and expedite refugee resettlement, such as the bipartisan Middle East Refugee Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act.

The Seattle Human Rights Commission joins Governor Jay Inslee and Seattle Mayor Ed Murray in welcoming refugees to our state and city. The City of Seattle was declared a Human Rights City on December 10th, 2012, committing itself to protect, respect and fulfill the full range of inherent human rights for all as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international human rights treaties. We are proud that our city and state uphold the commitment to human rights in our welcoming position toward refugees.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects everyone's rights to "life, liberty and security of person." Article 14 states that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution³." By encouraging refugee resettlement, Washington State will be promoting human rights and saving the lives of Syrian refugees whose homes and livelihoods have been destroyed in the conflict.

The Seattle Human Rights Commission urge you to support legislation that will save the lives of Syrian refugees.

Please support and co-sponsor the bipartisan Middle East Refugee Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act (Senate Bill 2145). This bill, which is currently in the appropriations committee, will provide the funds needed for effective refugee resettlement programs in the United States, allowing more refugees to successfully resettle.

¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/nov/19/syrian-refugees-in-america-fact-from-fiction-congress>

³ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Please advocate for an increase in the number of refugees resettled in the United States.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has submitted over 22,000 Syrian refugee applications to the US for resettlement consideration⁴, but less than 10% have received asylum. In addition to your support of Senate Bill 2145, we urge you to advocate for and sponsor legislation that will increase the number of refugees resettled in the United States.

Thank you for your support,



Sarah Bishop, Co-Chair
Seattle Human Rights Commission



Alex Becker, Co-Chair
Seattle Human Rights Commission



Margaret Babayan, Co-Chair
Seattle Human Rights Commission

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf>