

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

September 6, 2015

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Like many others, I have been horrified by the images on the news showing the plight of the Syrian refugees. You cannot deny that there is a growing emergency situation in Europe as hundreds of thousands of persons are forced to flee their homelands in search of safety. Something must be done and it is imperative that Canada step up and take a lead role in offering sanctuary, as has been our historic custom.

I am joining my voice with refugee agencies and church groups across the country in asking you and your government to please consider the following actions:

- Expediting applications of asylum seekers and those seeking resettlement in Canada, with flexible measures (such as Temporary Resident Permits) for Syrians with family in Canada.
- Increasing the number of resettlement spaces for Syrians to a minimum of 10,000 available to Government-Assisted Refugees, with selection based solely on need
- Upholding the principle of “additionality” that recognizes that all privately sponsored refugees are in addition to - and not in place of - Government commitments to resettlement
- Elimination of barriers to the private sponsorship of refugees, including re-instatement of full Interim Federal Health coverage for both privately sponsored refugees and refugee claimants, and lifting of the document requirements for Group of Five sponsorships.

I have been inspired by the groundswell of support from the Canadian people for swift and compassionate action to assist refugees fleeing from Syria and I look forward to hearing what you and your government will do to respond to this urgent humanitarian crisis.

I believe that I am required to do all that is in my capacity to care for those in need. As Christians, we have a special responsibility to care for refugees as we remember that our ancestors were once wanderers in the desert without a home and that Jesus himself was forced to flee his homeland as a child in order to find safety.

I implore you to act now.

Sincerely,