

Refugee Crisis in Europe

We are all aware from media reports of the growing refugee crisis in Europe, with a constant stream of arrivals of people from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The ISIJ of Toronto has received several e-mails and text messages from members listing ways in which people can assist. As Maulana Rizvi stated in his Friday Khutba, we as Muslims should do whatever we can to help, regardless of the faith, sect or race of the refugees.

On Sunday evening, during the Wafaat majlis program of our 9th Imam Muhammad al Taqi (a.s.), the President announced the creation of the ISIJ of Toronto **“Refugee Relief Fund”**. Donations to this fund shall be directed to specific Canadian charities that are credible and have their people on the ground so that we can also benefit from the Federal government’s offer to match our donations dollar by dollar. This fund will also be used for the relief of Yemeni refugees. The World Federation, which has started a similar initiative, has asked us through NASIMCO to assist with collecting funds for some 600 Shia refugees who were rescued and are currently in Djibouti, East Africa, living under very difficult conditions and waiting to be re settled. **Please donate generously to this fund.**

Many of you are anxious to do more, to help the refugees and raise awareness of their plight. After a careful review of the information we received and with the advice of the professionals we have reached the conclusion that the ISIJ does not have the kind of resources or the means necessary to handle the Refugees Sponsorship effort. This role is more suited the relief agencies that we can all work with in our own individual capacity.

The ISIJ of Toronto has compiled a list of actions and resources through which members can get involved and help out – see below.

Please note that the ISIJ neither endorses nor specifically recommends any of the parties or agencies listed below. If you choose to deal or work with one of them directly you do so strictly in your personal capacity.

1. Sponsor a refugee family via Lifeline Syria.

Lifeline Syria is a group, whose mandate is to recruit, train and assist sponsor groups to welcome and support 1,000 Syrian refugees coming to Canada as permanent immigrants to resettle in the GTA over the next two years. They will accomplish this goal by facilitating private sponsorships of refugee families. The group has strong leadership including Ms Ratna Omidvar, a Professor at Ryerson University and expert on Cultural Diversity matters. They will be holding an information session on September 17th at Noor Cultural Centre in Toronto from 6.00 to 8.00 pm (<http://lifelinesyria.ca/events4/>).

The following link describes what is required as a sponsor in more detail: <http://lifelinesyria.ca/sponsor/>.

2. Send an email to a Government official.

Write to the Prime Minister, Immigration Minister, and Members of Parliament etc. As a Canadian you have the right to express your dissatisfaction with what the government has done for the refugees. Below is a sample letter:-

Dear . . .

As a Canadian citizen I am very concerned about the lack of assistance from the Canadian government for Syrian refugees. Accepting only 2300 Syrians out of 10 million and more displaced people is a poor show for a country like Canada. Canada has accepted many more refugees from other countries such as the Philippines and Haiti. If acceptance is based on religion then that goes against all that Canada stands for as a nation.

The recent photo of the Syrian child found dead on the shores of Turkey has shocked everyone. I ask that you prevent more deaths like this from happening by making it easier for Canadians to take in and help support Syrian refugees.

Thank you

Send the letter to:

Prime Minister Stephen Harper: stephen.harper@parl.gc.ca

Federal Immigration Minister Chris Alexander: Chris.Alexander@parl.gc.ca

Tom Mulcair - Leader of the NDP thomas.mulcair@parl.gc.ca

Justin Trudeau- Leader of the Liberal party justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Elizabeth May - Leader of the Green Party Elizabeth.May@parl.gc.ca

3) Sign a Petition.

<https://www.change.org/p/the-honourable-chris-alexander-mp-minister-for-citizenship-and-immigration-no-more-drownings-immediate-sanctuary-for-syrians-fleeing-war>

4) Donate directly - The following organizations, among others, provide help to Syrian refugees:

The World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna'Asheri Muslim Communities - the WF has been working with the displaced from Syria for over four years now and it is one of their largest appeals to our community:

<https://www.world-federation.org/content/syrian-refugee-appeal>

The Syrian Kids Foundation (SKF) - aims to offer humanitarian relief and social services to Syrian refugees from all different backgrounds, sects and religions. The services include free education, psychological counseling, social relief, recreational activities, and essential subsidies. <http://syriankids.ca/donate/>

Project Amal ou Salam is a volunteer-run grassroots organization that sponsors schools and provides workshops for Syrian refugee children. <http://projectamalouislam.org/donate/>

Islamic Relief Canada works with communities to strengthen their resilience to calamities, and provides vital emergency aid when disasters occur. <http://islamicreliefcanada.org/donate/>

Thank you and wa'salaam.

Shabbir Jaffer

(Vice President, ISIJ of Toronto)