Friends Committee on
National Legislation
A Quaker Lobby in the Public Interest

STATEMENT OF
Yasmine Taeb, Legislative Representative for Human Rights & Civil Liberties
FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION
HEARING ON: "CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE: PREVENTING TERRORIST INFILTRATION THROUGH U.S. REFUGEE AND VISA PROGRAMS"
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and members of the Committee: I am honored to submit this testimony for the record on behalf of the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Quakers are challenged to answer that of God in all people and therefore called to act with openness to all refugees, regardless of their country of origin or religion. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) calls on Congress to treat refugees with the same dignity and respect and urges the Committee to support the U.S. refugee resettlement program.

Since 1943, FCNL has lobbied Congress to prevent war, protect vulnerable populations, and support effective, principled policies to help build a more peaceful world. Perhaps the most vulnerable population today is those who are displaced worldwide – approximately 60 million people and the highest numbers since World War II. Syrian refugees seeking resettlement worldwide total nearly 4.6 million with another 8 million internally displaced. Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt are currently hosting 4.45 million Syrian refugees while the United States has been able to resettle only around 2,000. Of the Syrian refugees who have resettled in the United States, 77 percent of them are women and children.[1]

FCNL urges members of Congress to reject any proposals that would stop, pause, or obstruct refugee resettlement in the United States. The United States has a history of welcoming refugees and immigrants. Since 1975, the United States has successfully resettled more than 3 million refugees. The United States has the most secure, vetted, and robust refugee screening process in the world, which involves the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies. The entire vetting process, which includes biometric

[1] Myths and Facts: Resettling Syrian Refugees, U.S. Department of State, November 25, 2015, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/11/250005.htm.

and investigatory background checks, fingerprints, photographs, and in-person interviews, takes 18 to 24 months. Syrian refugees also undergo iris scans to verify their identities and must prove that they are not affiliated with any terrorist group.

As a faith community, FCNL urges members of Congress to speak up and speak out against derogatory, inflammatory, and fear-mongering rhetoric about refugees; it has no place in response to any humanitarian crisis. FCNL unequivocally opposes any legislation or proposal that prioritizes Christian refugees at the expense of Muslim refugees and individuals from other faiths resettling in the United States. It is our responsibility as Americans to welcome those most in need, offer refuge, and lift up our shared humanity.

People around the United States are ready and willing to welcome refugees into their homes, communities, and hearts. Higher walls do not make our communities safe or thriving; building stronger bridges does. We are called as people of faith to work in community with and answer that of God in each person – we ask that Congress do the same and welcome refugees with open hearts and minds.

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