

From the Social Justice Committee of Good Shepherd:

Linda Hartke, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services President & CEO LIRS Response to ISIS attacks and Syrian refugee resettlement

"We are broken with grief at the senseless loss of life in Paris, as well as the deaths in Beirut, Egypt and across the Middle East – all at the hands of brutal terrorists. These actions of ISIS are the embodiment of evil, carried out by champions of death and cruelty. They are intended to cultivate fear and mistrust in our very midst.

We live in a world where there is so little time allowed for grief. Even as we mourn, and leaders of the world's nations commit to bringing the perpetrators to justice, we cannot forget the new victims of ISIS, suffering under an onslaught of terror today, tomorrow and the day after.

Every day, average Syrian people, including Christians persecuted for their faith, are being tortured and murdered, bombed and traumatized. An open field, a perilous journey, separation from family, a rickety boat, a refugee camp – are their only hope for safety. And for the most vulnerable, a relatively small number, who have no chance of ever being able to go home in safety – starting life anew in a strange land is the only possibility other than death.

The protection that the United States offers to a very small percentage of the world's refugees must not be foreclosed for Syrians who themselves are fleeing the terror of ISIS. The US refugee program has, since 9/11, built up rigorous and multilayered security screenings to ensure that those we admit as refugees do not mean us harm. To close the door on resettling Syrian refugees would be nothing less than signing a death warrant for tens of thousands of families fleeing for their very lives.

As Christians, as Americans, and as global citizens – we must choose to stand for hope and life. We must not bow to the fear that ISIS spreads, to the seeds of doubt they cast over the land, or to the test they present to our most cherished values.

We are a nation and people that stand up to those who slaughter innocents. We stand with the most vulnerable who seek safety and a future. And we stand for welcome."

The U.S. Congress can be emailed using the following address:

<https://secure2.convio.net/lirs/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=215#.Vkyc39-rRBx>

The Governor of Iowa can be emailed using the following address:

<https://governor.iowa.gov/constituent-services/register-an-opinion>

The U.S. President can be emailed by the following address:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

Or instead of email, you can phone these numbers and leave a brief message:

Telephone message to the Governor of Iowa: (515) 281-5211

Telephone message to Representative Blum and Senators Grassley and Ernst 1-866-961-4293

Telephone message to the President: (202) 456-1111

Sample Message: (you should modify and shorten as you see necessary)

In light of the tragic attacks in Paris, we must stand together with vulnerable Syrian refugees who seek safety and a future. Reacting out of fear, Members of Congress have proposed extreme measures that would exclude all Syrian refugees from the protection of the United States resettlement system. This is not an acceptable response to this tragedy.

Our nation's proud history calls us stand for welcome, even in the wake of fear. "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else" 1 Thessalonians 5:15. As a person of faith, I implore you not to turn your back on the suffering of vulnerable Syrians who are fleeing the same violence from which we seek to protect ourselves.

The United States refugee resettlement program has a sophisticated and multi-layered approach to vetting any prospective refugee prior to entering our country. Indeed, refugees are the most highly screened population that enter the United States. The current screening process often takes years to complete and includes face-to-face interviews, database checks and biometrics by the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies.

As your constituent and a person of faith, I call on you to ensure that the United States upholds our country's tradition of welcoming all vulnerable populations. We cannot and should not reject the protection needs of any deserving Syrians. While the United States must balance the integrity of our resettlement system with our desire to provide protection to vulnerable refugees, we must not bow to fear. As Christians, as Americans, and as global citizens-- we must stand for welcome. I remain grateful for your commitment to vulnerable populations, especially as so many are responding with fear rather than welcome and protection