



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on June 1, 2016

1,037 Syrian Refugees Admitted in May; 2 Were Christians

The United States admitted 1,037 Syrian refugees during May, but according to statistics compiled by the State Department Refugee Processing Center, only two of these were Christians. The other 1,035 refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war were Muslims.

The data compiled by the State Department was broken in a June 1 news story by CNS News, but has been largely ignored by the other media.



Since the Syrian population is about 87 percent Muslim and 10 percent Christian, one would naturally expect similar percentages to be found among refugees from that nation, but that has not been the case. The figures for May show that only 0.19 percent of the monthly total were Christians. The number of Christians among the total number of Syrians admitted into the United States since the crisis began is also very low — only 1.3 percent.

CNS News reported that there have been 2,099 Syrian refugees admitted so far this year, with only six of those (0.28 percent) being Christian. Of the remainder, 2,043 (97.3 percent) were Sunni Muslims, 17 (0.8 percent) were Shi'a Muslims, 30 (1.4 percent) were from other branches of Islam, and 10 (0.47 percent) were Yazidis (ethnically Kurdish members of an ancient religion).

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One factor that has been cited as contributing to the low percentage of Christian refugees is that Christians do not feel safe in seeking asylum in United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps that the UN agency has set up in countries surrounding Syria. An article in *Christianity Today* published last November said that only two percent of Syrian refugees accepted by the United States since the conflict broke out in 2011 have been Christian. The article continued:

The US government [relies] on United Nations refugee camps and application processes to decide which refugees to accept. The majority of refugees considered for resettlement in the US and in the UK are referred by the UNHCR.

However sources in Syria and Iraq say that Christians fleeing persecution deliberately avoid UNHCR refugee camps because they are afraid they will be targeted there. Instead they are housed in local churches and Christian houses and are therefore not processed through the UNHCR scheme.

The same article noted that, as of last November, only 53 Syrian Christians had been accepted by the United States since the conflict broke out in 2011, compared to 2,250 Muslims out of a total of 2,216 refugees.

On May 26, Representative Chris Smith (R.-N.J.), speaking at a House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee hearing, expressed indignation about the plight of the Christian refugees from Syria:

[Christians in Iraq and Syria] can't even get into a UNHCR or IDP [internally displaced persons]



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camp or a refugee camp, are unwanted, [and are] at risk.

And as [Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Carl Anderson] pointed out, a news report showed or indicated that of the 499 Syrian refugees admitted to the United States in [the first three weeks of] May, not one — and I repeat and say again — not one was listed as being Christian or as explicitly coming from any of the groups targeted for genocide.

For me that has got to change. I mean that is unconscionable, it's not like we haven't been raising this for, in my case three years, in the cases of so many others, three years. And we've had hearing after hearing.

We've got the designation. Why aren't Christians being focused upon?

CNS also quoted Anderson's testimony before the committee: "Those who face genocide are a tiny fraction of the population," said Anderson. "They often must avoid official refugee camps because they are targeted for violence there by extremists."

Anderson also observed that Christian and Yezidi religious minorities, "as survivors of an ongoing genocide," must "be prioritized in American policy decisions." The leader of the K of C also urged Congress to pass legislation introduced by Senator Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), the Religious Persecution Relief Act, which he said would "provide for overlooked minorities in the prioritization of refugees."

Speaking in South Carolina last November 15, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) proposed having the United States give priority to Christian refugees from the Middle East, saying:

There is no meaningful risk of Christians committing acts of terror. If there were a group of radical Christians pledging to murder anyone who had a different religious view than they, we would have a different national security situation.

But it is precisely the Obama administration's unwillingness to recognize that or ask those questions that makes them so unable to fight this enemy. Because they pretend as if there is no religious aspect to this.

Speaking on CNN the same day Cruz made his comments, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush said that U.S. assistance to Middle Eastern refugees should focus primarily on Christians fleeing the violence. "We should focus our efforts as it relates to refugees on the Christians that are being slaughtered."

However, speaking at the G20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, on November 16, President Obama sharply criticized the proposals offered by Cruz and Bush and condemned those who want a "religious test" for admitting refugees from Syria, labeling the idea as un-American.

"When I hear political leaders suggesting that there would be a religious test for which a person who is fleeing from a war-torn country is admitted, when some of those folks themselves come from families who benefited from protection when they were fleeing political persecution, that's shameful, that's not American," Obama said. "That's not who we are. We don't have religious tests (for) our compassion."

In response to Obama's declaration that "we don't have religious tests (for) our compassion," Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) noted, "To my political colleagues and all who wag their tongues in the public discourse: The religious test has already been imposed. It was imposed by radical Islamists — not, to be sure, by the entire Islamic world — but impose it these extreme religious misfits unmistakably did."

Rohrabacher has introduced a bill that requires the State Department to designate Christians (and



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Yazidis) as targets for genocide.

Update: *The latest data from the State Department's Refugee Processing Center puts the number of Syrian refugees admitted to the United States in May at 1,069.*

Photo of Anti-Assad rally by Syrian Americans: AP Images

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