



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 10, 2012

## Lewiston, Maine, Mayor Rebuked for Advising Somalis to Assimilate

The mayor of [Lewiston, Maine](#), is in hot water for telling immigrant Somalis that when they land in his city, he expects them to shed their native culture and become Americans.

The remarks have sent some in the state into a rage, demanding that Mayor [Robert MacDonald](#) resign.

MacDonald hasn't apologized and he isn't going to resign.



In the last 10 years, [Somalis have flooded](#) the city thanks to the resettlement efforts of the religious left, and they are draining the city's welfare resources.

### MacDonald's Remarks

During an interview with the BBC recently aired in the United States [Mayor MacDonald uttered](#) the following remarks about the Somali immigrants who have settled in Lewiston: "You come and you accept our culture, and you leave your culture at the door."

According to the [Maine People's Alliance](#), MacDonald is a racist. And his latest remark isn't his only one outside what the left defines as acceptable discourse. [The MPA insisted](#):

Over the past few weeks, Lewiston Mayor Robert MacDonald has made a series of inflammatory anti-Somali remarks.

First, he used his column in a local newspaper to complain that "submissive Somali women turn into obnoxious customers at the grocery store cash register."

Then he dismissively told a BBC documentary crew that "you know what, when you come here you accept our culture and leave your culture at the door." This brought national and international criticism to himself and the city he represents.

Instead of apologizing for his statements he went even further in remarks to local television stations, saying "These people are yelling about I'm insensitive to their culture, well if it's so great why aren't they back in Somalia. Why are they over here?" and "don't try to insert your culture, which obviously isn't working, into ours, which does."

He has been dismissive of any criticism, writing that "these complaints are coming almost exclusively from boo-hoo white do-gooders and their carpetbagger friends" and "a small number of extremist white liberals and their African surrogates."

He told NECN TV that "if you think I'm an extremist, then I consider you the enemy."

The MPA's online petition that contains this litany of charges does not suggest that MacDonald's remarks are inaccurate, only that they are "racist."

A spokesman for the group flung down the gauntlet [in the city's Sun-Journal](#) last week. "The first



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request we make is for an apology,” the [spokesman said](#). “However, given how since before he was elected he’s been making disparaging remarks about immigrants and this has been a pretty constant attitude coming from his office we are asking for his resignation as well.”

But though MacDonald has not apologized or resigned, he did “clarify” his remarks, the [Sun-Journal reported](#), although the newspaper heavily abridged them in its print story.

“What I meant by that comment is that I believe that when people come to the city of Lewiston from other countries they need to assimilate into the American culture,” he said.

“I did not mean they had to abandon their religion, their traditions, their language or their style of dress. Lewiston has a long history of immigrants settling here, such as the French and the Irish. I fully recognize that, as individuals, we are all the product of our experiences in our cultures, which makes up the very fabric of who we are.”

[MacDonald said](#) the Somalis had “enriched” the city, and that “I value every person within the city... we are all people, period.”

He also complimented the Somalis for treating him like family and for their educational and entrepreneurial success.

Some of his remarks seem to contradict what he told the BBC interviewer.

## **Welfare Clients**

MacDonald isn’t the first Lewiston mayor to sound off about the growing Somali Muslim presence. Ten years ago, Mayor Larry Raymond [told them](#), in an open letter, to advise their friends and relatives to stop coming because they had “maxed out” city resources.

The reason the city was besieged? As historian [Roger McGrath wrote](#) in the *American Conservative* in 2002,

The problem goes back to the [Refugee Act of 1980](#), which amended the [Immigration and Nationality Act](#) and changed a traditional American policy of favoring refugees from Communist countries.

The act put the United States in line with the United Nations by redefining “refugee” more broadly to include anyone “who is unwilling or unable to return to his country of nationality or habitual residence because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Potentially half the world falls under the definition. The Refugee Act also provided for both a regular flow and the emergency admission of refugees as well as federal monies for their resettlement.

In 1999, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) declared the Somali Bantu “refugees,” and the United States agreed to resettle them.

That done, the Somalis began settling in Clarkston, Ga., “but problems quickly developed with local blacks who, the Somali contend, preyed on them,” [McGrath reported](#).

A few Somali had problems with another form of American diversity. [One Somali] said that he was resettled north of Atlanta in a “war zone” between Vietnamese and Mexican gangs. Moreover, Somalis soon learned that welfare benefits and public housing were more generous and better elsewhere, especially in New England. By February 2001, they had discovered Lewiston, and the influx began. The numbers of those arriving accelerated last summer, exceeding 100 a month.



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Although it is difficult to get an exact fix on the figures, it seems that more than half of all Somalis in Lewiston are on the dole. Welfare spending has more than doubled since their arrival.

In 2009, [Refugee Resettlement Watch reported](#), the Somalis that settled in Atlanta sent out scouts to other cities to find a better place to live. RRW, which tracks the hundreds of thousands of refugees the State Department and its religious and civilian auxiliaries are “resettling,” also reported, citing another source, that Lewiston was the Somali choice because of the welfare benefits.

RRW [also reported](#) that the ultra-liberal [Catholic Charities Maine Refugee and Immigration Services \(RIS\)](#), the State Department’s [key resettlement arm](#), is responsible for bringing the flood north.

Since 2000, nearly a thousand Somalis have moved to the city, the federal [Office of Refugee Resettlement reports](#). And [since 1983](#), nearly 100,000 Somalis [have entered](#) the United States, [according to](#) RRW.

## Other Somali Problems

Importing the Somalis isn’t merely a welfare problem, as [The New American reported](#) in September. A trial for a Somali whom the federal government suspects of terror financing [just began](#) in Minnesota. The Somali, the officials allege, was a fundraiser for the Somali terrorist group [al Shabaab](#).

Terror isn’t the only criminal pastime for some Somali immigrants. In May, a federal court convicted three Somalis involved in a sex slavery ring. They were among 29 of the Africans arrested for operating the ring, which kidnapped girls as young as 13 in Minnesota, Tennessee, and Ohio. [According to](#) Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “members and associates of the gangs transported underage Somali and African-American females from the Minneapolis area to Nashville for the purpose of having the females engage in sex acts for money and other items of value.”

The gangs included the Somali Mafia and Somali Outlaws.

*Photo: Somalian Ismail Ahmed, left, argues with Jeff Thorsvali prior to a march of support for the Somali community, Oct. 13, 2002, in Lewiston, Maine: AP Images*



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