



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 10, 2015

Flood of Refugees From Syrian Civil War Challenges Europe

With hundreds of thousands of immigrants fleeing the ongoing civil war in Syria having already arrived in Europe, and with no end in sight, European nations are frantically trying to accommodate the flood of refugees. A report in the *New York Times* on September 3 cited a UN forecast that 3,000 immigrants a day, many of whom have fled from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, will enter the Balkans — the first stop on their journey to Western Europe — during the next few months.



The favored final destination for most of these immigrants is Germany, a prosperous nation offering much economic opportunity. Germany has received over half a million applications for asylum since the civil war began in Syria in 2011. France and Sweden have also received over 200,000 applications, with Italy, Hungary, the United Kingdom, and Austria all receiving more than 100,000.

As was noted in a [September 9 New American](#) article, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker asked EU members in an address to the European Parliament that day to accept 160,000 migrants.

Most of the immigrants first enter Europe to refugee camps in Turkey, crossing northward through Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary, before crossing the border into Austria and on to their final destination — Germany. However, the large number of immigrants passing through Hungary has created many problems, and the Hungarians built a 110-mile-long razor wire fence along its border with Serbia to stem the flow. Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that Hungarian army troops would be deployed along the fence, and “anyone who does manage to cross it will be arrested and face legal consequences.” But he rejected the use of lethal force, noting: “No gunfire will be necessary.” [The New American reported](#) on September 7 that Orban has criticized efforts by European Union leaders such as Juncker to impose immigration quotas on member nations before the continent’s borders are made secure. Orban told Hungarian diplomats in Budapest on September 7:

As long as we can’t defend Europe’s outer borders, it is not worth talking about how many people we can take in....

The quota system wants to treat the effects before it treats the causes of immigration. The main reason for this is because (the EU) cannot control its outer borders.

The same argument has often been made in the United States, as many U.S. politicians have asserted that our borders must be secured before “immigration reform” is even considered.

In addition to the financial considerations of host countries faced with sheltering large numbers of refugees, some voices in Europe have expressed concern that large numbers of Muslim immigrants will accelerate the continuing decline of the Christian majority in a continent that was once largely



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Christian. There is still a collective memory in Europe of the time — centuries ago — when the continent was a Christian citadel threatened by invasion by militant Muslim armies who managed to occupy the Iberian Peninsula for centuries (711-1491) and whose conquest of all of Europe was stemmed only by Christian victories in historically significant battles such as Tours (732), Lepanto (1571), and Vienna (1683).

While Europeans may no longer fear an invasion by Muslim armies and navies, they are fearful of another type of invasion. Large numbers of Muslim immigrants have settled in Europe in recent decades, and in 2010, an estimated 44 million Muslims were living there (excluding the European part of Turkey). A Pew Research Center study published in January 2011 forecasted an increase in the Muslim percentage of the European population from six percent in 2010 to eight percent in 2030. A significant factor in this increase is the higher fertility rate (the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime) among Muslims (2.2 in 2010) compared to the non-Muslim fertility rate (1.5 in 2010). A Pew study published in 2015 projected that in 2050 Muslims will make up 10.2 percent of Europe's population. A replacement fertility rate (that is, high enough to sustain a population) is commonly presented as being around 2.1 children per woman.

However, it might be asked if Europeans who do not have enough children to sustain their population might bear much of the responsibility for the decline in the percentage of Christians.

An article in the *Financial Times* for September 8, "Migrant crisis adds to Europe's anxiety about Islam," addressed the uneasiness existing among many Europeans over the influx of millions of Muslim migrants and mentioned Orban and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico as European leaders who have publicly voiced such concerns.

In an opinion piece he wrote for Germany's *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Orban addressed a common concern among Europeans — the potential impact that the new immigrants would have on the historically Christian culture of Europe, noting that they "are mostly not Christians, but Muslims."

He continued:

That's an important question because Europe and Europeanism have Christian roots.

Or is it not already a cause for concern in itself, that the Christian culture of Europe is already hardly still able to hold Europe in their own Christian value system? If we lose sight of the European idea, [Christianity] can become, on its own continent, a minority.

The concern expressed by Orban and other Europeans about how a large Muslim migration might impact Europe's Christian culture is a valid one, but no more so than the impact that any large, uncontrolled migration might have on any existing culture. A large part of what makes a nation a nation is the existence of a common culture. This culture is represented not only by similar religious beliefs, but also by a shared history and a common respect for the nation's political system. When immigrants are admitted in small numbers, they tend to assimilate and embrace the prevailing culture. When too many arrive in too short a period of time, they tend to Balkanize and divide the nation instead of integrating into it.

At the root of all such considerations, however, is the ultimate issue of national sovereignty. A nation without the power to determine who may enter it and establish residency within it is no longer a sovereign nation, but a mere geographic location on a map.

Photo of Syrian refugees: [Ungarn September 2015](#)



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