



ARTS AND SCIENCE STUDENTS' UNION • University of Toronto
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Hon. Chris Alexander, M.P
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A1L1

Dear Minister Alexander,

We are writing to you today as concerned global citizens. Day after day, we continue to watch heartbreaking images of families fleeing the civil war in Syria. Often, this is a treacherous journey – families pile up on dangerously overcrowded boats or trucks and risk their lives in seeking safe refuge. We have seen the human cost of this mass exodus, in dead men, women and children. Those who survive the journey are left in limbo in refugee camps that are overcrowded. As we see the world reacting to this crisis, we are left asking ourselves, what exactly is Canada doing?

The UNHCR and European Union have described the present situation as a crisis, and some EU member states have stepped in and accepted Syrian refugees. Sweden has accepted 40,000 Syrian refugees since the conflict began, totaling 20% of asylum seekers who have reached Europe. Germany has accepted close to 40%. In fact, just this past week, the German government announced that they expect to take in up to one million asylum seekers this year alone.

Canada, in comparison, has only committed to taking in 10,000 refugees over the next three years. This number is hardly proportional to the crisis, which has created over 4 million refugees according to the UNHCR. Instead of properly responding to the crisis, the Canadian government has been content to demonize refugees, attempting to deny them basic health care and use rhetoric that criminalizes people whose only crime is fleeing persecution. As Canadians, we can and must do better. We cannot ignore human suffering.

Today, we are calling upon the Canadian Government to accept more refugees from this crisis. As a students' union whose membership includes Syrians and Syrian-Canadians as well as people from all corners of the earth, we cannot stand idly by as people continue to die seeking safe refuge.

Canada has a proud legacy of standing up for human rights in the international stage. Keeping this in mind, we hope your government acts swiftly in response to this crisis by accepting more refugees to our shores.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Executive of the Arts and Science Students' Union, University of Toronto