



## TESTIMONY OF DEBORAH STEIN AND KATIE CONWAY ON BEHALF OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH<sup>i</sup>

JANUARY 7, 2014

We thank Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Cruz for the opportunity to submit this testimony. The Episcopal Church, a member of the 80-million member worldwide Anglican Communion, welcomes this important and timely hearing, “The Syrian Refugee Crisis,” and wishes to voice its strong support for continued and significant humanitarian assistance abroad for Syrian refugees and a robust refugee resettlement program that can meet the needs of vulnerable people fleeing violence and seeking peace. The Episcopal Church has been engaged in humanitarian assistance abroad and refugee resettlement in the United States since the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief was established in 1940 and we continue these ministries of presence today.

Episcopalians have just celebrated Epiphany, the culmination of Christmas, in which we recall the journey of the magi toward the infant Jesus. One important theme of this story is persecution and refuge. As it is written in Matthew:

*“<sup>13</sup> Now after [the magi] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.” - Mathew 2:13-15*

The story of the flight of Mary, Joseph, and their infant son, under the cover of night and threat of death, points Christians today to acknowledge and address the needs of refugees and other victims of persecution on our own time. Episcopal Migration Ministries has worked in public-private partnership with the U.S. Government to resettle thousands of refugees since the inception of the refugee resettlement program and remains committed to serving and welcoming refugees as they begin their new lives in our communities.

The case of Syrian refugees presents unique challenges worthy of particular attention from the U.S. government and its partners. Of more than 2.3 million Syrian refugees, 1.1 million are children<sup>ii</sup>. Since the conflict began displacing large numbers of Syrians in 2012, the number of people forced to flee the violence there has eclipsed those of the Rwandan genocide or ethnic cleansing in the Balkans<sup>iii</sup>, and an entire generation of Syrian children struggles daily to secure housing, food, healthcare, and education with no end to displacement in sight.

The U.S. has provided key humanitarian assistance to neighboring countries receiving Syrian refugees. As the conflict continues, however, it can and must provide even stronger commitments. In addition to providing ongoing support to displaced people, the U.S. should



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maintain a robust and fully funded domestic refugee resettlement program that is able to receive higher numbers of Syrians while continuing to serve other refugees, asylum seekers, unaccompanied immigrant children, victims of trafficking and other vulnerable populations. In FY2011 and FY2012, the U.S. resettled a total of 60 Syrians despite staggering levels of displacement<sup>iv</sup>. While proposed FY2014 resettlement numbers from the region are higher, the gravity of the Syrian refugee crisis demands a more robust response. The United States should work to safely, swiftly, and effectively to resettle Syrian refugees as testament to our national commitment to refugee protection and an effective demonstration of burden-sharing with refugee-hosting states in the region such as Turkey and Jordan.

Increased federal funding is necessary in order to equip the sort of public-private partnerships at the heart of our nation's refugee-resettlement system, such as those embodied in the work of Episcopal Migration Ministries, to respond adequately to the special challenges presented in resettling Syrian refugees. These refugees often have suffered torture and other forms of extreme violence and many families have lost breadwinners. These factors frequently require extended case management and mental health services in order to give them the best chance of success and a firm foundation in their receiving communities. The U.S. government also should consider the needs of Iraqi refugees who were awaiting resettlement in Syria, and should seek to honor our nation's commitment to these refugees.

We hope that this hearing moves our national conversation and actions towards the security and peace that we seek for the people of Syria. Thank you for carrying the costly burden of public service, and for the opportunity to submit these views to the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Stein and Katie Conway

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<sup>i</sup> Deborah Stein is the Director of Episcopal Migration Ministries and Katie Conway is the Immigration and Refugee Policy Analyst for The Episcopal Church, a multinational religious denomination based in the United States with members in 15 other sovereign nations.

<sup>ii</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "The Future of Syria: Refugee Children in Crisis," November 2013, available at: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Future-of-Syria-UNHCR-v13.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Intervention at UNHCR Excom High-Level Segment, Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns, Sept. 30 2013, available at: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/09/20130930283777.html#axzz2IHT9mmdS>

<sup>iv</sup> Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2014, p. 1, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/219137.pdf>

