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## Senator Skewers GOP's Irrational Fear Of Refugees

**Dick Durbin explains why aiding Syrians “is principled and is necessary” — not to mention really safe.**

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President Barack Obama's decision to bring 110,000 more refugees to America next year “is principled and is necessary,” Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said Wednesday, arguing that Republicans who oppose the move have an inexplicable and misplaced fear that people who claim to need help will actually be terrorists.

“The number of refugees in the world today is at an all-time high,” Durbin told reporters in his Capitol Hill office when asked about the administration's decision. “We are facing a true humanitarian crisis when it comes to Syria and the people who have been displaced by that war.”

Republicans have hammered the Obama administration's new plans to increase the number of refugees. About 85,000 refugees were settled in the United States this year, including 10,000 Syrians.

“The American people do not support these radical plans, which amount to a complete betrayal from their leaders in Washington,” Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), a vocal supporter of Donald Trump, said of the news.

Republicans have been especially opposed to Syrian refugees, arguing that they pose too great a threat to be allowed into the United States, at least for the time being.

But Durbin pointed to Canada, which has already accepted more than 25,000 Syrians, and to European allies that have taken in about 1 million of some 5 million displaced people.

“The United States can and should do more,” Durbin said, emphasizing that he thought 100,000 Syrian refugees would be a good number, considering the need.

He argued that it makes no sense for Republicans to fear terrorism from people who are themselves fleeing terrorists — especially since refugees must go through a lengthy screening process that has a strong track record.

“For the record, 800,000 refugees have been accepted in the United States since 9/11,” Durbin said. “Not one has been engaged in domestic terrorism. All right?”

The senator appeared to be overlooking a handful of cases that could be tied to terrorism, but his larger point still stands: The number of refugees linked to terror activities in the United States is minuscule, according to an extensive analysis by the Cato Institute that found 20 examples of refugees linked to terrorism out of more than 3.2 million refugees admitted since 1975.

Durbin said Republicans would be much better off focusing on the nation’s massive flow of visitors who receive no background checks.

“We have 20 million visa waiver visitors to the United States each year,” he said. “If you want to talk about security and foreigners in this country, for goodness sakes, if we did a fingerprint, biometric investigation or evidence accumulation before they got on board the plane, [it’s] not too much to ask, and it would make us safer.”

“Why the Republicans, in particular, are focused so much on these heavily vetted refugees, who have a history of being good citizens when they become part of America, I don’t understand,” he added. “Let us focus instead on vulnerabilities, and one of them is the visa waiver program.”