



Rejecting refugees helps no one except ISIS, hurts many

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November 22, 2015

While countless Syrian refugees are attempting to flee persecution in their war-torn countries, Texas Governor Greg Abbott, among 25 other governors, have bought into the hysteria that rejecting refugees will somehow make the U.S. a safer country.

While Ahmad al-Mohammad, the Paris terrorist who carried the Syrian passport, has been greatly publicized, it is easy to forget that the majority of the other attackers were French-born, as well as some Belgians, according to a Wednesday Independent magazine article. The attacks on Paris were tragic, but to assume they could have been prevented by refusing Syrian refugees is preposterous, as the majority of attackers were French.

Going by Abbott's logic, perhaps the French and Belgians should currently be banned from coming to the U.S. Unlike the entry process of Syrian refugees, which can take years of intense scrutiny and examination, French and Belgian citizens currently do not need even a Visa to get into the U.S.

Not only have France and Belgium had their citizens support ISIS, but Canada has had its own citizens make the conversion. According to a Dec. 7, 2014, Global News article, a former University of Ottawa student joined ISIS. If ISIS is cowardly enough to kill innocent people in a crowded concert hall, there is no doubt they would use Canadian extremists to gain entry to the U.S. Going by Abbott's logic, perhaps we should begin blocking Canadian citizens from entry as well.

In fact, according to a recent CATO Institute study, banning Syrian refugees may be just as absurd as blocking Canadians from entering. According to a Wednesday CATO report, "Of the 859,629 refugees admitted from 2001 onwards, only three have been convicted of planning terrorist attacks on targets outside of the United States, and none was successfully carried out."

Instead of attempting to prevent these attacks by clamping down and rejecting refugees, the U.S. must battle ISIS by fighting the cycle that turns refugees and citizens into ISIS militants. According to a Tuesday Vice News article by Stephen O'Brien, the U.N. is warning nations that rejecting Syrian refugees will do nothing to help fight ISIS. In fact, many analysts say the rejection of these refugees could actually help ISIS.

Harleen Gambhir, a counterterrorism analyst, wrote in a Nov. 15 Washington Post column, "The strategy is explicit. The Islamic State explained after the January attacks on Charlie Hebdo magazine that such attacks 'compel the Crusaders to actively destroy the gray zone themselves ... Muslims in the West will quickly find themselves between one of two choices, they either apostatize ... or they (emigrate) to the Islamic State and thereby escape persecution from the Crusader governments and citizens.'"

Unfortunately, the U.S. has a critical tendency to persecute and alienate minorities in times of war. In World War II, fear and anger led countless Japanese-Americans to be harassed, though many Americans believed the persecution was in the nation's best interest.

Earl Warren, then-attorney general of California, told Washington, "Opinion among law enforcement officers in this state is that there is more potential danger among the group of Japanese who were born in this country than from the alien Japanese," according to William Manchester's, "The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932-1972."

Though Warren's statement may have been false, it certainly was popular. Manchester writes that insurance companies began to cancel Japanese-American insurance policies, milkmen refused to deliver their milk, grocers refused to sell them groceries and bankers declined to cash their checks. From barbershop windows hung signs that read things like, "Japs shaved. Not responsible for accidents." In times of war, the American public can be experts in alienation.

While the U.S. society continues to justify rejecting refugees by labeling them as a threat (Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller recently compared the refugees to venomous rattlesnakes, according to a Thursday Texas Tribune article), in reality, the U.S. is rejecting countless innocent men, women and children who wish to escape persecution.

According to a March 2015 National Geographic article, the U.N. estimated that among Syrian refugees in Turkey, women and children make about 75 percent of the refugee population. These women and children become doomed wanderers, fading into urban slums, crowded camps, brothels and countless lean-tos.

In a 2013 report by Michael Goldfarb of Doctors Without Borders, Goldfarb said in Lebanon, hundreds of thousands of refugees were in substandard housing structures, without access to proper health care, impoverished and were in the process of preparing for a cold winter.

These refugees are not terrorists, extremists nor radicals. By rejecting them, we confine them to war-torn countries where ISIS will try and recruit them. Hopefully, soon U.S. governors will realize rejecting refugees only creates more misery for refugees and helps ISIS. To truly combat ISIS, we should accept the refugees and give them opportunity to grow.