

THE OBSERVER

Keep our nation great

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As a resident of Indiana and a member of the Notre Dame community, I do not see overwhelmingly credible evidence that Syrian refugees threaten our security. While I appreciate the caution shown by Gov. Pence and appreciate his desire to protect Hoosiers, the federal government already has an effective review protocol in place that vets refugees and ensures the safety of American citizens. According to a recent Cato Institute study, this process lasts on average 18 to 24 months and has successfully resettled 859,629 refugees into the United States since 2001. The number of these refugees with ties to an incident of domestic terrorism? Zero.

I fear Gov. Pence has conflated the actions of a single Syrian terrorist in Paris with the intentions of millions of Syrian refugees. Yes, what happened in Paris was awful, and I don't want it to happen here. But we should not hold the actions of a single, deranged terrorist as representative of the many law-abiding, freedom-loving Syrians who desire peace and a safe home.

The majority of refugees welcomed into our country so far have been women, children and orphans, the most vulnerable groups in a humanitarian crisis. The recent terrorist attacks in Paris, while horrifying, do not alter the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria that has forced millions of Syrians into migration. Yes, we must be vigilant in the face of terror, but by halting and reversing our welcome of these innocent human beings, we are not only playing into the fear ISIS desires to spread, we are also fundamentally betraying the ideals that have made our nation great throughout its history: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Thank you to Gov. Pence for valuing our safety, but it is time to make public policies based on facts, not fear. It is time for us to act on the values of compassion, mercy and hospitality that make our nation great.