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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

September 25, 2015

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

I remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis in Syria, which has resulted in millions of refugees being displaced in neighboring countries. The recent photo of the young boy washed up on the shore of Turkey awakened the world to the severity of the crisis. When coupled with the reports of terrorists targeting and brutally murdering religious minorities, the need for a response and action has become crystal clear.

Our nation must respond in a comprehensive way. To date, we have provided \$4.1 billion to aid Syrian refugees since 2012. I urge your administration to ensure this money is used effectively and in a coordinated fashion with neighboring countries to assist refugees in the region until they can be resettled in their home country.

Your administration has also promised to increase our country's intake of Syrian refugees. Granting refugee status to those in dire circumstances has been a historical practice of our nation, but the Syrian refugee crisis is atypical because of the region's ongoing security challenges. Accordingly, prior to admitting any refugees, we must fully vet these individuals so that we do not allow anyone entry into the United States that poses a threat to this country or our citizens.

For applicants being considered for resettlement in the United States, I ask your administration to adhere to and even further prioritize the process outlined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Under UNHCR guidelines, applicants are prioritized by refugee status, such that orphaned children, single mothers, those with serious medical conditions, and those being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, or nationality are provided with the first opportunities for resettlement. Given their extreme vulnerability, it is paramount that orphaned children should be given first priority. Religious minorities of the region must follow closely behind. Men, women, and families of faith in the region are not just being persecuted for what they believe but are being targeted for eradication. This has been evidenced by many events, including the ruthless murdering of Christians who refused to convert to Islam and the community of religious minorities who were run out of town and up a mountain by terrorists, where they were stranded for months. When considering who to provide refuge

status, victims of this kind of persecution – those who fear for their lives because of their religious beliefs – should be prioritized appropriately.

Ultimately, no amount of financial aid or other assistance will end the growing Syrian refugee crisis. The only permanent solution is for your administration to develop a strategy to bring stability to Syria and the broader Middle East region. In closing, I request that you develop and submit to Congress a strategy that addresses all the circumstances contributing to Syria's instability, including the Assad regime, ISIL, the presence and influence of Russia and Iran, and the security conditions in Iraq. This strategy must include the resources, funding, timing and authorizations needed for successful execution, and I respectfully request that you submit it to us no later than October 26, 2015, so that we can quickly debate and consider it.

I fear that the longer the United States fails to lead on a comprehensive Middle East strategy, the worse the Syrian refugee problem will become. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James M. Inhofe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James M. Inhofe  
United State Senator