

# International Asylum Seeker/Refugee Policy Issues

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## [UN calls compassion for refugees](#)

Michelle Nichols, *IOL News*, 12 November 2015

Following the Paris attacks, authorities and some politicians have raised concerns over the admission of refugees and have demanded a halt to an influx of refugees and migrants. Poland, for instance, said it could not accept migrants under EU quotas without security guarantees and seven US governors have said they would not allow Syrian refugees to be settled in their states, contending it is too dangerous to let in people from that war-torn country following the Paris attacks. According to the UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric, however, refugees should be treated with 'compassion and empathy' since these people are fleeing 'the very destruction of Daesh that we're seeing in Paris'. He further stated that 'it is understandable that countries need to take whatever measures they need to take to protect their own citizens against any form of terrorism. But obviously focusing that on refugees, vulnerable people who are themselves fleeing violence, I think would not be the right way to go'. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker also defended the line in stating that 'there is no need for an overall review of the European policy on refugees'.

## [Syrian refugees brace for backlash after Paris attacks](#)

*News 24*, 16 November 2015

On 16 November refugees and German citizens came together to stand in silence for one minute in front of the French Embassy in Berlin. Syrian refugees were amongst the people who came to pay tribute to the victims of Paris. One refugee expressed his empathy saying that he knows what it is like since what happened in Paris is what has been happening 'every day in Syria, 100 times per day for five years'. Since the attacks in Paris have raised fears of a backlash in Europe, many refugees have expressed their concerns that attitudes could change. To counter any attempt at drawing a link between terrorists and migrants Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere came out quickly, saying that he 'would like to make this urgent plea to avoid drawing such swift links to the situation surrounding refugees'. He also said authorities would watch far-right extremists closely, noting there have already been in recent months 'appalling scales of attacks against asylum seekers and asylum seeker shelters'. On Sunday, the interior minister further confirmed that security would be stepped up at asylum seeker shelters.

## [Sweden says can no longer house all refugees](#)

Johan Ahlander, *BDlive*, 19 November 2015

On 19 November Sweden announced that it can no longer host all of the refugees arriving since all of their venues are full already. According to operating officer Michael Ribbenvik of Sweden's migration agency the country has 'entered a new phase where the migration agency no longer can provide

housing for all. We don't have enough beds'. Sweden has taken in more asylum seekers per capita than any other European country over the last few years. Up to 190,000 refugees are expected to arrive this year, a record for the wealthy Nordic nation of 10-million people. Prime Minister Stefan Lofven has called the situation unsustainable. Almost 10,000 refugees have applied for asylum in the last seven days alone and close to 140,000 have arrived so far this year.

### [US House passes bill to slow Syrian refugees despite Obama veto threat](#)

Megan Cassella and Patrizia Zengerle, *News24*, 20 November 2015

Following the Islamic State attacks in Paris on Friday that killed 129 people, The US House of Representatives passed Republican-backed legislation on 19 November to suspend Mr Obama's programme to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees in the next year and then intensify the process of screening them. The measure was approved on a vote of 289-137, with 47 of Mr Obama's 188 fellow Democrats breaking with the White House to support it. After the House vote, Mr Obama's attorney-general, Loretta Lynch, called such screening both impractical and impossible. The bill, which would create the strictest-ever US screening of refugees from a war-torn nation, passed with the two-thirds majority the House would need to override a presidential veto. It now goes to the Senate, also controlled by Republicans, where its prospects remained uncertain. If it passes in the Senate, each chamber would have to muster a two-thirds majority to override any Obama veto. However, Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid said there was 'no way' the House bill would pass in the Senate.

### [Obama vows US will welcome refugees](#)

*News24*, 21 November 2015

President Obama vowed on Saturday that his country will continue welcoming refugees, saying that as long as he is president America is 'going to keep stepping up'. Obama visited a learning centre in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, on Saturday which serves the poor as well as some refugees. He mentioned that these youngsters in the centre 'represent the opposite of terror, the opposite of the type of despicable violence we saw in Mali and Paris [...] Anybody who had a chance to see those kids, hopefully you understood the degree to which they're just like our kids. They deserve love and stability and protection'. The refugees Obama met with have all been cleared to come to the US and have been assigned to specific cities, the White House said. Obama will confront the refugee debate even more directly when he returns to Washington on Monday. One of his first orders of business will be a White House meeting on Tuesday with French President Francois Hollande, who is vowing war against the Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks, as European nations tighten border controls out of fear that terrorists could strike again.

### [Indonesia denies offering Australia an island to house refugees](#)

Jewel Topsfield & Nicole Hasham, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 2015

According to the newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*, the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for political, legal and security affairs, Luhut Panjaitan, offered Australia an island as a temporary refugee camp on Friday. The newspaper reported Mr Panjaitan had said Indonesia's "kind offer" would come with strict requirements, ranging from requiring Australia to entirely finance the camp to limiting the period of use of the island. However, Mr. Panjaitan told another newspaper that he had never made that offer.

Instead what he did say was that he does not want to repeat the experience of a refugee on an island again, remembering the refugee camp on Galang island between 1979 and 1996 and the problems resulting from it. A meeting between Australian Attorney-General George Brandis and Mr. Panjaitan took place in which 'enhanced intelligence sharing' between the two countries was discussed, however, no comment was made about the island proposal. Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young said if Australia was willing to resettle people found to be refugees, the proposal 'could be a step towards a genuine regional solution'. 'We need to establish a fair and efficient system where people's claims are assessed before they're forced to get on a boat in order to reach Australia,' she said.

## Regional Displacement Issues

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### [Shootings in Burundi capital kill 4](#)

Reuters, *IOL News*, 16 November 2015

On Sunday 16 November at least four people died in shootings and explosions that occurred in various neighbourhoods in Burundi's capital, Bujumbura. One of the victims was a police officer. Not only police posts were targeted but also the Mayor's house, however, the Mayor managed to escape without being injured. A week prior to the shootings the United Nations Security Council asked Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to report within 15 days on options for boosting the UN presence in Burundi amid growing concern that the violence could spiral into an ethnic conflict.

### [UN rights expert urges continued international support for Somalia](#)

Jacqueline Jones, *JURIST*, 17 November 2015

UN Assistant Secretary-General for human rights Ivan Simonovic called on Somalia's international partners to increase their aid in Somalia, saying that without continued aid from the international community Somalia may not be able to maintain its gains against the Al Shabaab militia. He further condemned the human rights abuses committed by Al Shabaab, saying, '[v]iolations of international human rights and humanitarian law affect the reputation and credibility of security forces. Such violations also alienate the population they are expected to protect, and therefore negatively affect the ultimate success in the fight against terrorism.' He said that the Somali government cannot overcome terrorism by military means alone, but must address the root causes, including 'poverty, corruption and lack of good governance, unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization.'

### [Children's futures being compromised as violence escalates in Burundi, says UNICEF](#)

UNICEF, 18 November 2015

UNICEF warned that children are at risk given the escalation of violence in Burundi since April, stating that the crisis has left 17 children dead and many more injured. According to UNICEF's Regional Director in Eastern & Southern Africa, Leila Gharagozloo-Pakkala 'Children must not pay the price for the crisis in Burundi [...] Burundian law establishes clear respect for children's rights, and the protection of children from violence. Such laws must be respected'. UNICEF said it is deeply concerned on the impact on children from both violence and increasing poverty and vulnerability. It states that child rights violations have multiplied since April, with children being caught up in violent clashes and raids, schools being hit by grenade blasts and more than 100 children being arbitrarily detained, at times for long periods alongside adult prisoners. UNICEF said it is imperative that at this time there is

continued investment in children, from protection to education to healthcare. The organization is appealing for US\$25 million to support its humanitarian response for children and families affected by the crisis in Burundi. This funding will facilitate lifesaving services and supplies for children in Burundi as well as Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## South Africa

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### [Zuma's warning after Paris attacks](#)

Moses Mudzwiti, *IOL News*, 16 November 2015

At the working dinner of G20 on the topic of Global Challenges, Zuma expressed 'strong condemnation of the senseless terror attacks in Paris' as well as the recent bombings in Ankara and the twin suicide bombs in Beirut, Lebanon. He warned against a backlash against refugees who have fled wars in their own countries and sought refuge in European countries as well as warned against labelling all refugees as 'terrorists'. Zuma stated that terrorism and violent extremism continue to result in the killing and maiming of innocent people; damage property and infrastructure, foster fear in local communities, undermine social and economic confidence and, in many cases, entrench the forces of poverty. According to Zuma the lack of progress on political dialogue and the absence of a sustainable long-term solution have created the space for terrorist groups such as IS, al-Qaeda and the others associated with them to exploit divisions for the furtherance of their distorted beliefs. In his opinion 'collective global action against all forms of terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations is imperative' as well as 'addressing the root causes of terrorism'.

### [Foreign nationals protests outside Grahamstown municipality](#)

Olwetu Matsipane, *SABC*, 19 November 2015

Following xenophobic attacks and the looting of over 300 shops on 21 October in Grahamstown, A group of foreign nationals protested outside Grahamstown municipal offices on 19 November, demanding financial assistance and to return to their businesses which were looted and closed by residents last month. Among their demands is the compensation of R10000 per shop owner in order to restart their businesses. According to the foreign national, Mohammad Ullah, the foreign nationals are demanding money to start their businesses as well as food supplies for the next two months. However, Mayoral Committee's Mthuthuzeli Matyhumza says 'as this municipality we don't have money to reimburse them to start their business. We don't have money to renovate their businesses. We are talking about 260 shops that were looted. That created a challenge because even for us as a municipality, we are under section 139 in terms of the administration, and we don't have money'. The municipality has been holding meetings to ensure that the foreign nationals are reintegrated back into the townships. Reintegration could prove difficult, however, since foreign nationals fear for their lives as there are still people who do not want them back.

### [Hawks arrest 18 cops, 2 officials at border post](#)

Gia Nicolaidis, *Eyewitness News*, 21 November 2015

Eighteen police officers and two Home Affairs officials have been arrested at a border post between South Africa and Botswana in the North West province. The Hawks say the suspects have been linked

to more than 50 criminal charges, including fraud. According to Hawks' Hangwani Mulaudzi the suspects 'were aiding smugglers with bringing contraband products into the country and also targeting visitors from Botswana, where they don't search their vehicles, don't search their luggage but when they pass, they will follow them and demands bribes from them.' More arrests are imminent.