

**Statement of the Missouri Catholic Conference
On Terrorists Attacks in Paris and Syrian Refugee Crisis**

We, the Catholic bishops of Missouri, write to express our solidarity with all those terrorized by ISIS and other violent extremists who falsely invoke the name of God to justify their bloody attacks on innocent people. Our concern especially goes out to the French people as they cope in the aftermath of the November 13 terrorist attacks and to the many Syrians also terrorized by ISIS who are fleeing their country for the safety of new lands.

The bloody attacks on innocent Parisians on the night November 13 have galvanized the world as never before to the threat posed by ISIS and other violent extremists. According to French security and other worldwide intelligence sources, the attacks in Paris were either masterminded or inspired by ISIS forces in Syria. Legitimate concerns have, therefore, been raised that ISIS is seeking to insert terrorists into the ranks of refugees coming to Europe and America from Syria.

It is only natural that Americans wonder whether they can be safe from terrorist attacks and whether allowing Syrian refugees into our country will raise the threat of those attacks. As a nation of immigrants, Americans understand our country has a proud tradition of accepting immigrants and refugees, but we also want to be safe and secure.

In this time of increased anxiety, it is especially important to reflect and take stock of what is actually occurring when admitting Syrian refugees into our country. The Syrian refugees go through multiple layers of interviews and security checks, making them the most thoroughly vetted group of people who come to the United States. Security screenings are rigorous and involve the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Defense and multiple intelligence agencies. It can take up to two years for a refugee to pass through this vetting process.

It is true that none of these security measures can guarantee our absolute safety. Even a police state could not offer this guarantee. The challenge is to weigh security concerns with our American tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees, as symbolized by the iconic Statute of Liberty. In our view, appropriate security measures have been taken and our country should not refuse to welcome Syrian refugees who have been through the vetting process.

We urge Governor Nixon and all public officials to work with federal officials to both keep our citizens safe and to allow refugees from war-torn Syrian to settle in our state.

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