

September 10, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

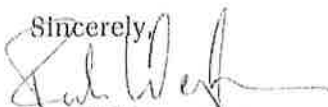
Dear Secretary Kerry:


We are a country of immigrants which for generations has shown compassion toward those who yearn to escape dangerous or politically untenable conditions. We urge you to use the resources of our government for rapid and expansive assistance in responding to this catastrophic situation where today millions of people from the Middle East and North Africa are seeking asylum from the ravages of war, oppression and persecution.

Our State Department reports there are over 11 million displaced persons from the war in Syria alone and these numbers are growing every day. Let us not look back a generation from now and chide ourselves for not taking action, such as was the case with the Rwandan genocide. This is not just a problem for the European Union. It is a global problem and deserves an immediate global response. The Obama Administration should be much more humane than the announcement of the possibility of resettling 7,500 of the refugees who have managed to make their way to Europe. As accommodating as this might seem to some, it is an inadequate response to what constitutes the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. We cannot stand by.

We should join with our German and other European allies and declare our intentions to rapidly resettle tens of thousands of men, women and children as well as exponentially increase foreign assistance to support international refugee agencies.

The challenge to become a full participating member of the global humanitarian effort in this case remains a political one, requiring strong leadership. Just as we have actively worked with the Administration in support of the Iran nuclear agreement, we will be just as vigorous in supporting what is required to address the refugee crisis. This immediate task must be guided by our own compassion and humanitarian principles. The American people know what we stand for; our moral compass still leads us. Let us show the world our humanity.

Sincerely,

Randi Weingarten
President


Lorretta Johnson
Secretary-Treasurer

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The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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