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THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

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THE U.S. ROLE AND STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Risch, Johnson, Gardner, Perdue, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Coons, Murphy, Kaine, and Markey.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. This meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

I would like to thank our witnesses for being here. Nancy, as I understand it, is tied up in traffic and will be coming in in a few moments. So we are going to go ahead and get started. I know we have a vote a little bit later on. We want to make sure that we get the full benefit of your testimony.

But I want to thank the members for being here.

Today's hearing is the second in a series of hearings examining the role of the United States in the Middle East. This hearing will focus on the immense humanitarian crisis emanating from the region. The images of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children fleeing for safety should challenge every moral fiber within us. These are people just like us that want only to be able to raise their families in dignity and cherish the same values and things that we all care about. And yet, we watch them on television in these desperate circumstances.

We all know the scale of this tragedy, but it is worth again outlining the numbers. In Syria, in a country with a population of 22 million in 2011, more than 4.1 million have fled the country and more than 7.6 million are displaced inside the country. So half of Syria's population is not at home, not living in their hometowns but in some other place.

Some estimates put the number of deaths in Syria at over 300,000—people have different estimates—with the Assad regime being responsible for over 100,000 civilian deaths. Let me say that one more time: The Assad regime is responsible for over 100,000 civilian deaths.

In Iraq, 8.6 million are in need of humanitarian assistance and 3.2 million are displaced.

Solutions must address why people are fleeing. I look forward to hearing the views of our witnesses today.

Nancy, welcome. You did not miss anything actually.

But I believe that after 4 years of war there is a perception that there is no light at the end of the tunnel. As Assad continues to barrel bomb his own people, the Russians and Iranians continue to ensure that he has the means to do it.

More than 1 year after establishing a global coalition to counter ISIS, we learned that the main beneficiary, Iraq, has allowed Iran, Russia, and Syria to establish their own coalition within a coordination cell in Baghdad. It now appears that our administration is seriously debating some type of an accommodation with the Russians in order to fight ISIS.

It is difficult to understand how working alongside the backers of Assad could in any way stem the flow of refugees who are fleeing the barrel bombs. It is important to remember that the war in Syria began with Assad, and he is still doing the same things today on a daily basis that he was doing at the time.

I do want to digress and say I know that David Miliband took a very opposing view to most of the Labour Party when he at one time served in the Parliament and felt that interaction inside Syria should be taking place by Great Britain. Many of us felt the same way, and as crass as it may sound, I think all of us—all of us—today as we watch what is on television and see these refugees and the circumstances they are in—all of us are reaping what we sowed. We did not get involved at a time when we could have made a difference.

I hope our witnesses can help us understand the scale and effect of the humanitarian crisis and what steps the United States and others should be taking to mitigate it.

But I would like to again stress that we cannot simply rely on humanitarianism alone in this crisis and that it is incumbent upon us to work toward realistic policies that would bring back the hope of a normal life to those in need.

Thank you again for appearing before our committee, and I look forward to your testimony.

And with that, I would like to turn to our distinguished ranking member.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. Well, Mr. Chairman, first let me thank you for convening this hearing. This committee works in a bipartisan way in order to advance our foreign policy objectives, and I congratulate the chairman for his leadership in that regard. You and I talked a while back as to what we can do. We talked about what we can do in regards to the refugee crisis globally, but we recognize that Syria is an immediate concern, it is a humanitarian crisis, and there is a conflict there that needs a solution. It is complicated, of course, by ISIS's presence in Syria.

So I want to thank you for the manner in which we were able to convene this hearing to see how the United States Senate and Congress can advance the goals of the United States in dealing with this international crisis, how we can take a look at our tradi-

tional tools and perhaps refine them, and look at new ways that we can energize the United States involvement in the international community to deal with the humanitarian crisis. And I would agree with you. We also need to deal with the political underpinnings of why people have to flee their homes.

For the first time since World War II, almost 60 million people have been forced from their homes and displaced in their own countries or forced to flee abroad. We are seeing more and more conflicts that do not end and result in exponential increases in humanitarian needs. The magnitude of the Syrian disaster is perhaps the most shocking. As the war enters its 5th year, the situation is increasingly desperate for both the refugees and host countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and northern Iraq.

Because Syrians are finding it increasingly difficult to find safety, they are being forced to move further afield. That is why so many are risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean. There are currently some 4 million Syrian refugees plus another 7.6 million internally displaced Syrians suffering and in need of humanitarian assistance. More and more families are forced to send their children to work or marry off their young daughters, just to survive.

It is hard to comprehend the impact of millions of refugees on Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. The number of refugees in Lebanon would be equivalent—by percentage of their population—to the United States receiving 88 million new refugees. That is a shocking number for that country. Turkey has already spent $6 billion in direct assistance to refugees in its care. That is a huge part of the Turkish economy. At the same time, we in the West, until very recently, have been reluctant to admit even the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. While contributing generously to humanitarian funding, the United States has only accepted about 1,500 Syrian refugees, although the White House recently announced it would admit 10,000 Syrians.

We know that the Syrian humanitarian disaster, which has destabilized an entire region, is not the accidental byproduct of conflict. It is instead one result of the strategy pursued by the Assad regime. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Syria has documented that the Assad regime is using barrel bombs, intentionally engages in the indiscriminate bombardment of homes, hospitals, schools, and water and electrical facilities in order to terrorize the civilian population. As millions of families are displaced multiple times and, as the chairman pointed out, with the casualty numbers now approaching 300,000, the number of people fleeing the country will only rise.

Mr. Chairman, I agree with you. The ultimate solution here is for Assad to leave. We know that we need to have Assad out and I believe he should leave for The Hague to be held accountable for his war crimes. So we need to work on a political solution. I know the President is in New York today meeting with world leaders to talk about a political path forward, but in the meantime, we do have the humanitarian crisis and there is no end in sight for the people trying to flee. As you said, what everyone wants is a safe environment for their families.

In Iraq, the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance has grown to 8.2 million people. Three million have been forced from their homes. Half of the displaced are children.

To the south, Yemen is on the brink of humanitarian catastrophe. That country was particularly vulnerable even before this conflict. And now civilians throughout the country are facing an alarming level of suffering and violence. An estimated 21 million people are afflicted by the war and require humanitarian assistance; 1.5 million people have been forced from their homes and are now living in empty schools or other public buildings or along highways.

The global refugee trends are indeed alarming. The international assistance being provided is not keeping up with the scale of the problem. The United Nations have been able to raise only 38 percent of the $7.4 billion it says it needs to care for the Syrians. We need to ask ourselves hard questions about how we can increase the effectiveness of the assistance.

And now protracted crises seem to be a new normal, with many refugees displaced for 17 years on average. Let me just underscore that point. Our refugee program is aimed at looking at refugees as being temporary, and figuring out how we get them back safely to their homes. That is what a refugee was always thought to be. But if you are in some other place for 17 years, the chances of you going back to your native country is remote. In Syria, some of the communities no longer even exist. And many others have been transformed to such a point that it would not be safe anytime in the near future for the Syrians to be able to return to their homes.

We need to rethink our refugee laws to recognize that a large number of refugees are not going to return to their native countries. And the United States needs to look at a refugee policy that is sensitive to the new norm and that deals with the realities that people need to find new homes for their families.

I believe strongly we need to use humanitarian and development dollars more skillfully so that we are providing durable and development-like solutions to chronic vulnerability.

In closing, we must recognize that as these conflicts proliferate, no corner of the world will be left unaffected. We must recommit ourselves to work smarter and harder to assist the world's most vulnerable people. As we seek to win the hearts and minds in this region, our efforts to provide real, tangible humanitarian assistance to the people most affected by this conflict will be more effective than sending more military assistance or more weapons into a conflict where there is no pathway for success. Our humanitarian engagement is a moral and political necessity, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses as to how we can be more effective in dealing with the humanitarian crisis and hopefully addressing the causes of why people need to flee their homes.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. And thanks for a lifetime of effort ensuring people have appropriate human rights.

Senator CARDIN. Can I just add one thing, Mr. Chairman? Most people might notice that our chairman, who is always even-tempered and always in a good mood, is particularly proud today. He became a grandfather for the first time, and I know our committee offers him our congratulations.

[Applause.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. No doubt an incredible experience. And I only wish the people we are talking about today have similar experiences.

So thank you again for your comments.

Our first witness is The Right Honourable David Miliband, somebody we all respect, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee. Mr. Miliband previously had a distinguished political career in the U.K. serving as Foreign Secretary. Thank you for being here.

Our second witness today is Michel Gabaudan. Thank you for being here, sir. President of Refugees International. Michel spent more than 25 years at the UNHCR. Thank you for bringing that knowledge with you today.

Finally, our third witness that we will hear from today is Ms. Nancy Lindborg, president of the United States Institute of Peace, someone who we also have seen many, many times, and we thank her. Nancy has served at USAID and as President of Mercy Corps. Thank you for that service.

Thank you all for being here. I know you all have been here many times. If you could each spend about 5 minutes giving your positions—without objection, your written testimony will become a part of the record. And if you could just go down the line and give your testimony, we would appreciate it. We look forward to questions and certainly your comments. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DAVID MILIBAND, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, NEW YORK, NY

Mr. MILIBAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think you probably heard, but I want to say thank you and that I am honored to be here.

I want to congratulate you on not just holding a hearing on the humanitarian situation in the Middle East but recognizing the links between the humanitarian situation and the geopolitical situation.

My organization, the International Rescue Committee, has, I think, a unique perspective on the crisis because we are working in the conflict zones of Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. We are in the neighboring states that you referred to, both Senator Corker and Senator Cardin. We are in Greece on the Island of Lesvos where half of the refugees arriving in Europe are landing on European soil. And we are active in the United States resettling 10,000 refugees in 26 cities across this country every year.

The roiling conflicts in the Middle East, as both of you have said, present the most challenging, dangerous, and complex humanitarian challenge in the world today. And I think they present a preeminent moral and geopolitical case for renewed American engagement.

Conscious of your time constraints and the benefit of a genuine dialogue in the question and answer session, I want to confine my remarks to four areas that more or less follow my written testimony and focus less on our analysis of the situation but what might be done.

First, inside Syria, there is a war without law and there is misery without aid for the millions of people that you referred to, Senator. It is driving people to risk life and limb to get to Europe. And almost worse than the numbers you recited is that there is no structured political process at the moment to offer hope of an end to the war.

The number one priority that we would present to the committee is to turn or help turn the words of U.N. resolutions, which are good words supported by all members of the Security Council, into actions that prevent death and destruction of civilians and their property by barrel bombs, car bombs, and mines. We advocate as a practical measure the appointment of humanitarian envoys by each of the permanent members of the Security Council, distinguished political or diplomatic figures who are able to work on the ground on the local access that is so essential to help the humanitarian aid that is being spoken of reach where it is needed.

Second, the neighboring states, as you both said, are coping with unprecedented numbers of refugees. It is worth noting that a World Food Programme voucher is worth $13 a month for a family in Lebanon or Jordan, a middle-class family that has fled its home in Syria.

For us, the priority must be for these neighboring states a multiyear strategic package that recognizes that these people are not going home soon. These refugees are not going home soon. In written testimony, we compare the package that is needed to the Marshall Plan, a multiyear plan which is not just an aid package but aligns private sector effort with public sector effort and addresses the economic conditions that people face not just the social conditions.

Third, I am just back from Lesvos, the island in Greece where half of the refugees are arriving. I will not dwell on the responsibilities of European leaders and European citizens. Suffice it to say that they need to show both competence and compassion, both of which have been sorely lacking over the last few years.

The three priorities in Europe are, first of all, to establish safe and legal roots to become a refugee in Europe. Without those safe and legal roots, you empower the smugglers who are currently charging 1,200 euros for the 6-kilometer boat trip across the Aegean. Secondly, to improve reception conditions, notably in Greece and on the routes into northern and western Europe. And thirdly, to implement a robust relocation plan within Europe to share the refugees between the different European states.

Just finally, it is worth pointing out that European aid for the neighboring states does now exceed American humanitarian aid, and with the 1 billion euros that was announced last week at the European summit, that European lead, so to speak, which is currently $200 million will stretch to $1.2 billion.

Finally, there is an important substantive and symbolic role for the United States in resettling refugees. IRC has been doing this for 80 years since Alba Einstein came to New York to found the organization in 1933. So far, just over 1,800 Syrians have been admitted, and with the greatest respect, the respect of someone who is a visitor to your country, even though I work here now but yet not a citizen, I would say that this 1,800 figure is not fitting for

the global leadership role that the United States has played over a very long period in refugee resettlement. The administration's commitment to take 10,000 citizens remains a limited contribution to the global effort.

And we recommend three practical steps.

One is to raise the ceiling, the number of Syrians who are allowed in. And in the course of the questions and answers, I hope we get to explain why the figure of 100,000 has been reached, 100,000 refugees to be admitted over the next year, and how that speaks to the global need.

Secondly, to fund that drive properly, including in the Department of Homeland Security where we strongly support effective security screening and can speak to that.

And thirdly and something that has not had proper coverage I think is the scope for expanding access through family reunification schemes for Syrian American communities who are in this country across the country and have grandparents, cousins, relatives in Syria who want to come and join them. This is a DNA-based family reunification scheme that I think could offer a practical and short-term way of circumventing some of the delays that have plagued the program.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful for this opportunity to speak with you. I deliberately curtailed my remarks and very much look forward to a real dialogue. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miliband follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE RT. HON. DAVID MILIBAND

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished Senators, I would like to thank you for your decision to hold this full committee hearing on the epic displacement crisis unfolding in Syria and the broader Middle East. For the purposes of my written and oral testimony, I will focus on Syria—the epicenter of the region's humanitarian crisis—but am happy to take questions on other pressing emergencies in the region including Iraq and Yemen.

There is urgent need for renewed international leadership in both resolving and responding to the Syrian crisis, and by necessity that means deep involvement by the United States (U.S.). The Syrian crisis has spilled onto the shores of Europe for two reasons: because of the magnitude of violence and threats to civilians in Syria, and because of the pressure in neighboring states. The mismatch between need and help for civilians, both in Syria and in the countries that surround it, is vast and growing. What was a civil conflict within one state has evolved into not just a regional human catastrophe of major proportions; it is also a defining geopolitical disaster for the Middle East.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has a unique vantage point from which to offer perspective on the crisis. IRC is working inside Syria; in the four major refugee receiving countries that surround it—Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Turkey; on the island of Lesbos, which is the arrival point of over half of the hundreds of thousands of Syrians and people of other nationalities seeking asylum in Europe through Greece; and finally, IRC resettles refugees in 26 cities across the United States, including Syrians who have been given the opportunity to start their lives anew in this country. We witness the full arch of this crisis, from Aleppo to Beirut to Lesbos and Los Angeles. I hope to use the occasion of this testimony to pay tribute to the extraordinary efforts of IRC staff and our partner organizations, and highlight the vital contribution of aid workers from all the many organizations responding to the crisis in Syria, some of whom have paid with their lives.

Attention to Syrian refugees has peaked in the last month, with stunning images in the news headlines of people floating at great risk to safety across the Mediterranean and literally walking across Europe in search of asylum. While not all of the asylum seekers are Syrian, they comprise the majority. Their sheer numbers and the perilous journey they take to escape suggest the Syria crisis is at a tipping point. IRC, amongst others, has long warned that the barbarism inside Syria, in which civilians are trapped in a war without law between government forces, the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other parties to the conflict, would spill over. It has now done so in many ways, evident in the extreme pressure that hosting 4 million refugees has placed on neighboring states, in the connections between the conflict and displacement scenarios in Syria and Iraq, and finally in the onward journey out of the region to Europe.

INSIDE SYRIA

The figures of death, destruction, and displacement in Syria are shocking. The brutal, seemingly endless violence that has consumed the country since 2011, spread across its borders, and sucked in weapons and fighters from across and beyond the region, has claimed at a minimum 240,000 lives (the number is widely believed to be twice this many) and left every second Syrian displaced. Satellite imagery reveals that just a fifth of Syria's prewar lights remain on—such is the devastation wrought by shells, rockets and barrel bombs. In places like Aleppo, that figure is over 95 percent. Half the country's population have abandoned their homes.

There is a chasm between the needs of Syria's civilian population and the help they are receiving. It continues to grow. Global contributions are not keeping pace with needs, which have grown twelvefold since the beginning of the crisis and more than 30 percent in the last year alone. While food, water, shelter, health care and sanitation services are desperately required, last year's U.N. appeal to meet basic needs inside Syria was only 50 percent supported—down from 68 percent in 2013. Only 34 percent of need inside Syria in 2015 has been committed so far.

The unanimous adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2139 (UNSCR 2139) in February 2014—no small feat given the intractable nature of the Syria issue on the Security Council—brought with it much needed hope for people in Syria and across the Middle East. In the resolution, the Security Council called for an urgent increase in access to humanitarian aid in Syria and demanded that all parties immediately cease attacks against civilians—including through the use of barrel bombs—and lift sieges of populated areas. In July and December 2014, the Security Council adopted two additional resolutions—2165 and 2191—which, among other things, authorized U.N. aid operations into Syria from neighboring countries without the consent of the Syrian Government. And yet, whereas 1 million people inside Syria required humanitarian assistance in 2011, that number now stands at 12.2 million; among them some 7.6 million people forced to flee, but still trapped inside Syria's borders.

By blocking civilian movement, attacking aid convoys, kidnapping humanitarian personnel, and rejecting or miring in redtape official requests for access, the parties to the conflict are disrupting the delivery of lifesaving aid to 40 percent of those in need. All told, some 4.6 million people are currently languishing in areas defined by the U.N. as "hard-to-reach"—an increase of more than 1 million from this time last year. Over 422,000 people are completely besieged, cut off from food, water, and medicine, their lifelines choked, and escape routes blocked. A key component of UNSCR 2139—protecting civilians against indiscriminate attacks—is still sorely lacking, with government forces' increased use of barrel bombs, and opposition groups' use of explosive weapons.

IRC's eight decades of work in the world's war zones and disaster settings have not lessened the shock of what has befallen the Syrian people and their neighbors. However, what is even more shocking is the lack of a plan—or effort to create a plan—to bring the suffering to an end. It is humanitarians' job to staunch the dying, but it is only political action that will stop the killing. The political will and diplomatic energy aimed at securing an end to the war—and minimizing the impact of the fighting on civilians—have ebbed to low levels. Yet the longer the conflict goes on, the worse the options become. It is not the place of a humanitarian organization like IRC to advocate on military tactics. However, we have an intense stake in not only seeing humanitarian assistance make it to everyone who needs it, but also in the causes of humanitarian distress being addressed. A policy that truly puts civilian protection at its heart would leverage all diplomatic and political channels to curb the violence and bring hope of an end to the war.

"Friends of Syria" meetings once drew more than 100 nations. Today, the forum has been hollowed out to a core of less than a dozen countries. Early Arab League proposals, former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's six-point plan, and the Geneva II conference of January 2014, yielded minimal results, but there was at least a sense of commitment and grim determination. There are a few developing efforts toward national reconciliation through the establishment of an "international contact group" and the efforts of U.N. Syria Envoy Staffan de Mistura. However, if political and diplomatic vigor is not placed into these processes over a sustained period of time (and against all odds), the crisis will further metastasize.

IRC would put forward the following recommendations to the committee and U.S. policymakers regarding the crisis in Syria:

- *Protect civilians.* There is an urgent need for the U.N. Security Council to establish a mechanism to track and publically expose indiscriminate attacks by any means against civilians, including barrel bombs, car bombs and mines, as well as the use of besiegement, and to lay down clear consequences for violators. Ending aerial bombardments of civilian areas was highlighted by the U.N. Security Council in its resolutions: civilian protection means turning words into action.
- *Access the hard-to-reach and besieged.* Increasing humanitarian access to those in need—particularly the hard-to-reach and besieged—requires constant and unabated attention at the highest levels. The U.S. and other countries with leverage on parties to the conflict need strongly and consistently to press the belligerents to allow unimpeded cross-border aid, and to allow aid to pass into or through conflict zones. Humanitarian Envoys—senior diplomats with the backing of their head of state—should be appointed by permanent members of the Security Council and regional players to focus relentless attention to humanitarian access and protection obstacles in Syria, and actively seek ways to address them through bilateral and multilateral channels. They would advocate for the full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, and would work in tandem with all relevant parts of the U.N.
- *Provide enough aid to meet need.* The United States has been a leader in the humanitarian response to the situation in Syria. However, the funding provided simply is not keeping up with the ever-growing need for life-saving assistance. As long as the crisis goes on and the international community collectively fails to find a solution to it, ensuring humanitarian assistance is available to those whose lives have been shattered by this conflict is the minimum that we must do.

SYRIA'S NEIGHBORS

It is not only Syrians themselves who have borne the brunt of the country's conflict, but the neighboring countries which now host over 4 million refugees. In exile for years now, with their economic and personal assets long depleted, Syrian refugees live on the margins and are in desperate need of food, water, shelter, and education. There is often reference to "refugee camps"; but the vast majority of Syrians are not in camps. In Lebanon most live in decrepit dwellings or tented settlements that expose them to the elements and insecurity. In Jordan, tens of thousands of families live below the absolute poverty line. Rent accounts for more than half of refugees' monthly expenses, forcing parents to send their children to work long hours for meager pay. A 2015 assessment found that 86 percent of Syrian refugees outside of camps in Jordan were living below the Jordanian absolute poverty line of $95 per person per month.

The impact upon Syria's neighbors of receiving such a massive influx of refugees cannot be overstated and they deserve great credit for their hospitality and sacrifice. Turkey has become the largest refugee-hosting country in the world, and last autumn put the cost of hosting Syrian refugees since April of 2011 at $4.5 billion—a figure that will have only grown in the last year. In Lebanon—a country with a host of preexisting tensions and no official government of its own—Syrians now constitute somewhere between a quarter and a third of the population, making it the highest per capita refugee hosting country in the world. The World Bank estimates that its basic infrastructure will need investment of up to $2.5 billion just to be restored to precrisis levels. Jordan, one of the most water-starved nations on the planet, hosts nearly 630,000 registered refugees; proportionally equivalent to the United States absorbing the entire population of the United Kingdom. The Jordanian Economic and Social Council has stated that the cost to Jordan per Syrian refugee is over $3,500 per year and the direct cost from the beginning of the conflict is expected to rise to $4.2 billion by 2016.

The education of Syrian refugee children is probably one of the best illustrations of the strain that the influx has placed on surrounding countries and the failure of the humanitarian aid system to keep up. There are an estimated 400,000 children among the more than 1.1 million Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon. The ability of Lebanese schools to absorb these children has been limited by the scale of the task. Most have instituted second shifts to accommodate Syrian children. But in the 2014–2015 school year, only 37 percent of Syrian refugee children ages 6–14 were enrolled in school. The Lebanese Education Minister recently announced a "Back to School" initiative—funded at $94 million by U.N. agencies and international donors—that will double the number of places for Syrian children to 200,000. This

is welcome news, but leaves another 200,000 Syrian children out of school this year and on their way to becoming what is frequently referred to as a "lost generation." International and national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can continue to play an important role in providing educational opportunities to many of the Syrian refugee children who will not be reached by the "Back to School" program; they should not only be allowed, but vigorously encouraged and funded to do so.

Refugee hosting countries' public services, economies, and resources are creaking under this strain and their social fabrics are fraying. As a result, neighboring governments are now taking steps to restrict the flow of refugees into their territory with many of the formal and informal border crossings out of Syria often closed to civilians seeking safety. Hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to be living in camps on or near the borders of neighboring countries, unable to flee Syria. Increased and costly administrative regulations to renew residency permits have forced many families to live illegally and precariously. There are reports of refugees being forcibly repatriated to Syria, sometimes over missing papers and the space for refugees within the region—their ability to access essential services, or earn a living—is shrinking. Lebanon is cracking down on illegal work; Jordan has halted free health care.

With the asylum space for millions on the line, it is stunning how poorly funded the U.N.'s humanitarian Regional Response Plan has been. It was just 64 percent funded in 2014, down from 73 percent in 2013. The current year seems to be shaping up for yet another decline, with only 45 percent funding as we head into the final quarter of 2015. As a result, some services are being scaled back, despite the growing need. For example, since the beginning of the year, the U.N.'s World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to reduce the number of food voucher recipients in refugee-hosting countries from 2.1 million to around 1.4 million. Last month, 229,000 of 440,000 Syrian refugees living outside camps in Jordan stopped receiving food vouchers from WFP. The value of food vouchers distributed to Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been slashed in half. The maximum voucher amount is now $13.50 per person per month, down from $27 in 2014.

With much less to feed their families, desperation among Syrian refugees is rising, forcing them into desperate measures—including begging, child labor, low-wage and unregulated labor, survival sex, early marriage and increased indebtedness. IRC would advocate that currently available resources be provided as much as possible through cash transfers, allowing refugee families to pay for rent, food, medical care and other urgent needs as access to public services is restricted and humanitarian aid programs continue to shrink. Another critical area of focus is vocational training for youth and creating livelihoods for Syrian families so they can support themselves.

Finally, it is important to come to terms with the sobering fact that these refugees will not be returning home any time soon. Given international assistance has not been enough to meet the needs to date and is likely only to further diminish as this conflict drags on, it is of paramount importance that opportunities are made available for Syrian refugees to work in the countries to which they have been displaced. Employment laws in the region either leave Syrians to work illegally in the shadows—subject to exploitation and abuse—or best case in low levels of employment that are open to them. Not only is it a waste to let the human capital of these refugees go untapped, but allowing them to work is a key part of a strategy to make sure they thrive and contribute to the societies to which they have been displaced.

IRC recommends the following in response to the influx of Syrian refugees into neighboring countries:

- *Aid: Increase international humanitarian assistance.* There are challenges to getting aid to those who need it in certain parts of Syria, but there is no excuse for it not to reach those who manage to make it out. Providing this assistance ensures Syrian refugees who flee danger do not wind up in situations of abject poverty and exploitation. The U.S. has contributed $4.5 billion to the Syrian response over the course of the conflict—this assistance is vital and welcome, but it pales in comparison to the sheer scope of need generated by the crisis. The U.N. has called for $7.4 billion for 2015 alone.
- *Economics: Create a "Marshall Plan" for the region.* After World War II, the Marshall Plan pulled Europe out of post-war devastation and laid the foundations for peace as well as prosperity. Public and private sector came together in an unprecedented drive. At that time the U.S. committed approximately $13 billion, or 3 percent of GDP. The magnitude of the Syria Crisis necessitates a proportionate response. Whether by this name or another, the international community must coalesce around a large scale, multicountry economic plan to buttress the governments and communities hosting the lion's share of Syrian refugees. Institutional and infrastructural support to ensure that these coun-

tries can provide basic services like health care and education without buckling under the additional strain is a critical part of the mid-long term strategy to respond to the Syria crisis. This could be financed through public/private partnerships and serve as a framework to bring a wide array of actors along—including the Gulf State governments. The World Bank, U.N. Development Program, bilateral development donors and other international financial institutions should reorient their work to support the economies of conflict-affected states like Jordan and Lebanon to help them weather the shock. This type of large-scale support to governments is critical to maintaining the asylum space for refugees and ensuring that the events in Syria do not further destabilize the region.

- *Helping the Most Vulnerable: Take a "needs-based" regional approach to displacement.* Iraqis internally displaced by chaos wrought by ISIS are living side by side with some 250,000 Syrian refugees. Effort must be made to provide support in these areas based on need—not displacement status—to ensure we do not end up in a situation with refugees receiving assistance while Iraqis in a similar or worse situation receive much less. This includes assisting the communities in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region—one of the only safe places to flee—which are currently hosting a massive influx of people from their own country and their neighbor to the West.

REFUGEE INFLUX INTO EUROPE

Given the dire scenario outlined above, it should not be surprising that refugees from Syria are risking life and limb to find asylum in Europe. The waves of people arriving on the shores of European member states have made a highly informed calculus on where their chances of survival are best and determined the perilous journey is their safest option. An estimated 477,000 people have arrived by sea in 2015, the vast majority of them in Greece. An estimated eight people a day die just among those traveling between Turkey and Greece, including children, which the world was so painfully reminded a few weeks ago when the photos of Aylan Kurdi surfaced in the world's newspapers and social media.

I just returned from visiting Lesbos, an island of 90,000 people where over half of all arrivals into Greece come ashore. In June, 200 refugees were arriving every day. When I visited the figure was 2–3,000 people a day. Last week the figure reached 6,000 on one day. IRC has established programs there to provide assistance in the form of clean water, sanitation, information services and transportation. Previously, families that had often arrived soaking wet and with few worldly possessions were walking the 40 kilometers north from their arrival points to register in the capital of Molyvos. Their ongoing journey, as we witness through dramatic images at train stations in Hungary and in the face of razor wire fences and tear gas on the borders of European Union (EU) member states, only becomes more fraught with obstacles.

An estimated 84 percent of the people arriving in Europe are from the top ten refugee producing countries in the world, including Afghanistan where the IRC also has programs to address the ongoing humanitarian fallout from the conflict. However, Syrians represent 54 percent of the arrivals in Europe. Therefore, as the Syria crisis continues to uproot millions of people and asylum space in the broader Middle East closes, the arrivals to Europe will continue. It behooves European leaders to respond with both compassion and competence. This situation will continue to be a test of the strength of character of the EU as an institution and its ability to manage a complex crisis in the light vocal opposition on the part of a few member states. EU member states should:

- *Establish safe and legal options for refugees to come to Europe.* Refugees will continue to fall prey to smugglers and face life-endangering options if more legitimate ones are not available to them. The tools are wide-ranging and should be maximized to increase opportunities for safe entry. These include: more proactively resettling refugees from the countries surrounding Syria; the flexible use of family reunification admission; increasing work and education visas; and private sponsorship schemes.
- *Improve reception conditions, particularly in Greece.* Arriving refugees must be managed with dignity, especially in light of the circumstances they have already endured. The humanitarian response effort in arrival countries like Italy and Greece and countries of transit like Hungary and Croatia must be financially and technically supported by EU member states. The response, including rescuing people at sea, should be well-coordinated and information should be provided to arriving refugees on their options.

- *Implement a robust and well-monitored relocation plan.* The EU's decision last week to relocate 120,000 refugees—on top of the 40,000 already agreed to—between member states should be done in an equitable fashion and every effort should be made to accommodate the wishes of refugees to be with family members. A proportional distribution plan should be followed to have an equitable split between member states. States should ensure refugees are integrated into their societies and that they live up to the commitments in the plan including those to housing and social services. When considering relocation of refugees to states that are reluctant to receive refugees or only receive a small population, liaison officers must be present to monitor adherence to asylum standards. Where refugee families are not housed together in the same country, they should be allowed to travel within the Schengen zone to visit their family members, relying on the fact that social support will only be available in the assigned country for the refugee (ensuring their return). The same standards of data protection that apply for all EU citizens should be carried out when biometric tracking is used with refugees to ensure human dignity and privacy.

U.S. RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIANS

This brings us to the U.S. role in providing sanctuary to Syrian refugees. While the U.S. can and should encourage its European counterparts to respond to the refugee influx with fortitude and compassion, the best encouragement this country can offer is leading by example. To date, despite its relative leadership in providing humanitarian assistance to refugees from Syria, the U.S. has admitted just over 1,800 refugees through its refugee resettlement program. This is a disappointingly low number for a country which has been the global leader in refugee protection since World War II and served as a beacon of hope to people around the world facing persecution and violence.

Resettlement is a life-saving option to highly vulnerable families living on the margins of survival in places like Jordan or Lebanon. However, beyond its immediate value to individuals who have suffered so much, it is a signal of solidarity and shared responsibility to other countries that have absorbed the vast majority of Syrian refugees. While a number like 100,000—which is what the IRC recommends the U.S. take at a minimum in FY 2016 (see below)—is still only a small fraction of the total refugee population, its value is not lost on countries like Lebanon, a country of just 4 million which has absorbed over a million people in the last 4 years. The signal the resettlement number sends to these countries is a critical part of maintaining asylum space and provides the U.S. and European countries the credibility they need to encourage Syria's neighbors to keep their borders open and improve conditions for those refugees who remain in the frontline states.

During the last international Syrian resettlement pledging conference in December 2014, the U.N. Refugee Agency sounded the alarm bell when it said that roughly 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population (400,000 people) were particularly vulnerable and needed to be resettled. This was set as a medium-term, multiyear benchmark. The U.S. has traditionally been the largest resettlement country in the world, possessing the geographic and population size as well as the know-how to absorb larger numbers than much smaller wealthy countries. As a result, it has traditionally taken at least 50 percent of all resettlement cases referred by the U.N. Refugee Agency. Given this tradition, the IRC is calling on the U.S. to provide resettlement for 100,000 Syrian refugees in the first year of a multiyear program, to ensure that the global community meets a goal believed necessary to save lives and stabilize the situation in the region.

The IRC has long experience of resettling refugees across the U.S. Our annual figure is around 10,000. This is a country proudly built on the labor of refugees and immigrants. It is the same country that pulled together not too long ago in a massive effort to rescue over 1.2 million southeast Asian refugees through sheer force of political will when the circumstances demanded it. There is ample precedent for admitting and successfully integrating refugees on a much larger scale, when the political will and compassion is present. Large numbers of inquiries have flowed into IRC's 26 field offices around the U.S. over the last several weeks from the American public ranging from "where do I send the collection we've taken at church?" to "how can I open my own home to a Syrian refugee family?" This is just one small reading that demonstrates the compassion and willingness to welcome that is present in American communities, and that people are hungry to live up to the principles that make this country great.

The IRC strongly supports effective and efficient security screening for refugees entering the United States. Refugees are, in fact, the single most vetted population entering the country, and the U.S. Government has spared no efforts to continu-

ously improve security checks to safeguard the integrity of the program. There are ways that the administration can admit refugees in efficient and expeditious ways without compromising the integrity of security screenings.

Finally, the U.S. has one untapped option to rapidly and safely increase Syrian resettlement: creating family reunification options for Syrian-Americans and other lawfully present Syrian immigrants. Many Syrians have a relative here in the U.S. who is desperate to take them in, just as Aylan Kurdi's aunt in Canada was attempting to do. Currently, only Syrians who arrived to this country as refugees themselves are eligible to file for family reunification—a very small number considering just over 1,800 have been admitted to date. Syrian-Americans, many of whom immigrated to this country decades ago or were born here, are not eligible to apply for their families through the refugee program. We are not fully tapping into this option and are neglecting the opportunity to aid Syrian-Americans in bringing their family members to join them in safety in the U.S. These families would play a large role in helping Syrians integrate successfully here and moving them to self-sufficiency.

The IRC recommends in regard to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in this country, the U.S. should:

- *Raise the U.S. refugee admissions ceiling to allow for at least 100,000 Syrian refugees to enter in FY 2016.* The President should raise the overall U.S. resettlement ceiling to 200,000, allowing the space in the global program for 100,000 Syrians without compromising the urgent protection needs of refugees from other troubled regions of the world.
- *Increase resources to make this happen.* The agencies and offices that manage different components of the refugee resettlement process should be provided adequate resources to bring in additional Syrian refugees. This includes the Departments of State and Homeland Security, the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Health and Human Services Department, and other federal agencies that perform security checks.
- *Expand access to family reunification for Syrians with ties in the U.S.* In order to make the 100,000 target feasible, the U.S. should expand opportunities for Syrian Americans and other Syrian immigrants lawfully residing in the U.S. to bring their family members to safety. It is time to think outside the box and use the tools that exist to expand the resettlement program to include family reunification. There is ample precedent for this approach, most recently for Iraqis, Haitians, and Central American minors. This is the single easiest, efficient and most cost-effective way to bring large numbers to safety.

I thank you and the members of the U.S. Senate for the opportunity to provide IRC's perspective on the complex humanitarian challenges facing people in the Middle East and indeed the rest of the world at this time. I look forward to answering your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

STATEMENT OF DR. MICHEL GABAUDAN, PRESIDENT, REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL, WASHINGTON, DC

Dr. GABAUDAN. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you very much for holding this hearing. And we certainly subscribe entirely to the way you have both framed the question of the Syrian crisis.

The chaos, distress, and drama we have seen on our screens over the past months are nothing but a reminder that we have collectively failed to respond appropriately to the needs of the victims of the conflict in Syria over the past year despite the tremendous amounts of funding that have been provided. And I want to thank the United States for being a leader in humanitarian funding to the Syrian crisis and certainly Congress for having made the right appropriations to grow humanitarian accounts of this country.

RI has undertaken 12 missions over the past few years in all the countries holding Syrian refugees and ones inside Syria. We have looked at how displacement has evolved, how the situation of refu-

gees has changed over time, and unfortunately how the funding has been drying up.

The drivers of displacements are multiple from the actions of the Shia militias at the beginning. We all remember the images of Homs and Hama, to the development of tremendous military operations by the Assad regime, to the rise of extremist groups, but also to the tremendous deteriorating socioeconomic situation in Syria which makes life unsustainable for many people who had to cross outside to find some ways to sustain themselves.

However, today when you talk to refugees in southern Turkey, in Jordan on what is the primary reason why they move, they all had the same answer. It is the barrel bombings over markets, over schools, over medical facilities. Another NGO has reported that the month of August saw the largest number of medical personnel killed by these shellings and barrel bombs.

The response to the crisis in neighboring countries has been, I must say, remarkable. We have seen very few crises in the world where borders have remained open for so long, where governments have accepted the refugees spread out among the population. There are very few refugees in camps. Most refugees are living in an urban setting mixing with the local population. Services have been accessible to refugees. National services of medical and schools have been accessible to refugees. And quite remarkably in all the interviews we had with refugees, there is a rather low reporting of abuses by authorities. This is not something we experience in many places where refugees seem to be targeted much more than we have seen. And I think we all have to recognize that Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraqi Kurdistan has done tremendous work in welcoming refugees.

The international response has adjusted to the urban nature of the refugee situation. However, that urban nature creates some particular challenges because the impact of refugees on host communities is much stronger than when you have refugee camps which are easier to manage. And we are seeing now that there is some erosion of the tolerance of the local population when they see the schools overburdened, access to medical facilities being dependent on very long queues, the price of rents for apartments or whatever they find where they can live going up and up and up, and even the price of basic food commodities, et cetera going up. So there is an impact on the local population that after 4 years starts to generate reactions of rejections or at least tensions with the refugee community.

The humanitarian needs remain because many refugees are poor. What we have seen over time is refugees being pushed from poverty to misery. More begging is happening from Istanbul to Amman and on the border cities. There are children working because as the parents are not allowed to work, they do send their children to work. It is easier for children to work legally than for adults. We have seen lowering of the age of early marriage for women, which is a way for families to try to get some funds, and we see an increase in what we call sex for food and basically the trading of young ladies to just be able to feed their family. All these are absolutely the trappings of the pauperization of the refugee population.

There were not many indications that people wanted to move until the end of 2013. When we talked to people in the first years, they said we go back to Syria as soon as we can. It is only at the end of 2013 that the mood started changing. In 2014, they mostly moved through Egypt and Libya trying to get the smuggler's boat to Italy, with the sort of disasters we have seen and tremendous amount of risk for them. But the numbers remain sort of tolerable perhaps compared to what we have seen in 2015 where smugglers moved their route through Greece, probably making it much cheaper and therefore bringing a much higher number of people who wanted to leave.

The poverty they have suffered, as their own resources were depleted over time, is certainly a main factor. For many people, the lack of education for children is also a motive for trying to move forward to Europe. But also, as I mentioned, the fact of their welcome is drying up. Governments now realize that they have a huge amount of people that are getting poorer and poorer and being like a lead ball on their own developments. And local populations, as I said, are starting to react, and we had riots in different countries against the refugees. That outflow will not stop because either the Europeans get their act together, which we hope they will, and then more people try to leave or it stays as it is now. And we have seen the difficulties they have faced to date have not really staunched the flow. So unless we go back to the root causes, which is how we address the situation of refugees in first asylum countries, I think the regional instability will keep on.

We have to look at increasing support to humanitarian funds. It is true that funds have been available over the years in larger quantities, but they have not kept up with the needs. And actually what we have seen over the past year is a proportion of the U.N. appeals that have been funded has gone down and key services like education, et cetera, have been actually cut. In Jordan, food rations have been cut by half in the last few months. We have to maintain support to humanitarian needs, and we look certainly forward to U.S. leadership in this field.

But we need to activate a much stronger response to the development needs of neighboring countries. Most of the challenge they face cannot be dealt by humanitarian agencies. They need development money. They need bilateral aid, but the key drivers of big development are the development banks. The High Commissioner has done due diligence in trying to approach the banks, but I think it is time to look at ways for the governing bodies of these banks to put this sort of situation as part of their regular mandate. It is not just a question of humanitarian response. It is a question of guaranteeing the stability of the neighboring countries to Syria. And I think this is why we see now these host countries becoming extremely nervous.

Resettlement is important because it offers an orderly way of leaving the country. However, even with the highest number we can dream of, it is going to touch a small percentage of the refugees and it cannot leave us neglecting the needs on development that are humanitarian.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, we hear that there are some attempts to reinvigorate the peace process. We have always believed

that there was no real military solution to the conflict and that some peace had to be negotiated. I think it is very important that the people who come to the negotiating table must make a much stronger commitment to protection of civilians. Then we must see a stop to the barrel bombings, et cetera, if we want to be able to talk to people that are going to be credible in the peace process by the refugees. If this does not happen, we will not see at any time any possibility of return.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Gabaudan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. MICHEL GABAUDAN

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and the members of this committee for holding this important hearing today. Refugees International (RI) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that advocates for lifesaving assistance and protection for displaced people in some of the most difficult parts of the world. RI does not accept any government or United Nations funding, which allows our advocacy to be impartial and independent.

Based here in Washington, we conduct 12 to 15 field missions per year to research displaced populations. Our ongoing reporting on the Syrian crisis includes my recent trip to Turkey to look at both cross-border assistance as well as birth registration.

Since spring 2011 RI has conducted a dozen missions in the region, and has been able to witness the evolution of the situation of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, and northern Iraq. I shall never forget the blank stares of children who fled the horrors inflicted upon civilians in Hama and Homs at the beginning of the conflict. Since then the causes of displacement have multiplied, with heavy military operations, the advent of various extremist groups, and the seriously deteriorating socioeconomic conditions all contributing to the largest movement of refugees and internally displaced people in the last three decades. But today, as many Syrians will tell you, it is the barrel bombs of the regime, dropped on civilian centers such as markets, schools, and health facilities, that represent the most compelling cause for the continued displacement of women, children, and men from their homes. The conflict has to date has killed over a quarter million people, displaced more than half of the preconflict population, and sent over 4 million refugees across the borders.

As we have watched the causes of displacement evolve, we have also watched with frustration as assistance to the displaced has shrunk alarmingly over the years and is not keeping pace with the ever-growing needs, to the point where Syrians are now risking their lives to get out of the region—and even returning to Syria—in order to find better opportunities for a future. Funding shortages and aid agencies' inability to keep up with the desperate emergency needs even 4½ years on have led to secondary migration flows and the need to work on emergency aid and long-term stability at the same time, but with few resources at our disposal.

Countries hosting the largest numbers of displaced Syrians (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey) have made enormous efforts in receiving and assisting the 4 million Syrians who have collectively crossed their borders over the past 4 years. Support for Syrian refugees is estimated to amount to $7.5 billion from Turkey alone. But in spite of the scale of the needs, many other countries have not been able to maintain their support for the survivors of the crisis. The recent influx of refugees to the European Union has brought some much-needed attention back to the displacement caused by the conflict in Syria. But we need to recognize that the European crisis is merely a symptom of the world's collective failure to respond to the problem both politically (a peace process is nonexistent) and socially (aid to refugees and IDPs is well below basic requirements).

Over the course of 4½ years, assistance by the United States to the Syrian crisis, which focused on the humanitarian needs of Syrians both inside and outside the country, has been absolutely critical. Most recently, the U.S. Government contributed more than $400 million in additional humanitarian assistance for the Syria crisis. I want to take this opportunity to thank Congress for supporting core humanitarian funding accounts, such as Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) and International Disaster Assistance (IDA). Continued U.S. aid is essential, because although the world now considers Syria a long-term conflict and the Syrian refugee crisis a protracted one, Refugees International's recent work in the region indicates that emergency humanitarian aid is still a desperate need.

LIFE IN HOST COUNTRIES FOR SYRIANS

Until about 18 months ago, most Syrians RI spoke with in the region were intent on returning home as soon as possible. Even knowing that their houses and property were destroyed and that it would hard to build a new life, they wanted to stay as close to home as they could in order to make returning faster and easier. But as their time in exile grew longer, people began to say that they saw no future for themselves in their host countries. This change of attitude happened at roughly the same time that large numbers of Syrians began leaving from the north coast of Egypt to make the journey across the Mediterranean to Europe; some even went over land to Libya in order to get on boats there. They knew these trips were dangerous, they knew that hundreds of people who had gone before them had drowned, and they knew that they could be detained in attempting to leave Egypt. But all of this appeared to be a better option than remaining in a place where they saw no future for themselves. During RI's mission to Egypt in spring 2014, Syrian refugees were saying that taking their chances in dangerous waters seemed more promising than remaining in Egypt. Some were even trying for the second or third time to make the crossing by boat.

Another 18 months on, the migration routes and the people on them have changed. Today, the Syrians leaving for Europe by sea are embarking mainly from Turkey, but they are coming from across the region, where it has become more and more difficult to survive.

The neighboring countries hosting so many of the Syrians have long been feeling the pressure of the influx of huge numbers of people, of the strain on infrastructure, and of the ever-decreasing support the world has been able to provide. It is important to note that the huge majority of Syrian refugees—85 percent—are not living in the camps that we hear so much about, but rather are in urban and rural areas trying to get by in the local communities that are often not better off than the Syrians. Almost 2 years ago in Jordan, RI, visited a rural area where poor Jordanians and Syrian refugees were living in the same difficult conditions. Already at that time, the Jordanians we spoke with had the same needs as the refugees—food, medical care, employment, children's education, but the majority of the assistance provided was going to their Syrian neighbors. How could such host communities reasonably be expected to absorb yet even more refugees? From the perspective of the Jordanians, at least the Syrians had the fallback of a refugee camp.

Camps are, in fact, the option of last resort for handling refugee assistance, and it is commendable that there are so few formal camps for a population of this size. However, the fact that people are living side by side with the host communities makes it harder for humanitarian groups to find those in need, and practically impossible to separate the needs of the refugees from the needs of the hosts. The U.S. Government, the UNHCR, and their partners have all shifted focus to include greater attention to support for those outside of camps, but the scale of the task is enormous, and the numbers of people in need increase every day. Refugees and host communities are all sharing the same resources while facing the same struggles with health, education, and employment. The sheer numbers of Syrians make this even more of a challenge.

Over a year ago in Lebanon, a Syrian mother told us about how she had pulled her teenage daughter from school to put her to work at a nearby local business. She had not been able to find work herself because the Lebanese host community where she lived was reluctant to hire Syrians in general, but children could often be put to work successfully because they were paid less and had fewer expectations than adults, either Syrian or Lebanese. Situations like this were leaving the Lebanese with the feeling that refugees were taking opportunities they wanted for themselves, even when those opportunities were far less than desirable.

Inside Syria, despite three Security Council Resolutions supporting better access for humanitarian aid and the sustained efforts of Syrian civil society, INGOs, and donors, and as a result of the fluctuating nature of the conflict, with armed actors constraining free movement and the safety of aid workers, the efficient delivery of assistance remains a constant challenge

SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The financial reality of assisting so many displaced Syrians is beyond grim. Each year, the United Nations and its partners require more and bigger contributions in order to help more refugees. But each year, additional crises around the world demand attention and money from the same donors who now must somehow provide more aid without a simultaneous increase in how much money they have available.

The results of this are readily apparent in the aid available to Syrians. Food rations have been cut, health services have dwindled, and education programs have

been closed down. RI has seen more and more Syrians each year living on the streets in their host communities or in inadequate and even dangerous housing. In Lebanon, additional protection concerns arose with the shortage of aid. In addition to not having enough food or being evicted for not paying the rent, Syrian refugees can be arrested or detained for begging in the streets or working illegally.

Other agencies have reported on increases in child labor as families run out of savings, in early or coerced marriage intended to protect young girls whose families can no longer support them, and in people returning to Syria when the help they need is not available. As many Syrians have told RI and other groups over the years, "We can die here, or we can die at home." For the poorer families, as a result of depleted financial resources and increasing poverty, lack of hope to settle in first asylum countries, and absence of other durable solution, more people now appear to be choosing to brave the dangers of returning home.

Beyond international financial support, the host countries themselves are worried about their long-term futures as they are being affected by hosting so many Syrian refugees. While it is not at all clear that refugees are the economic burden that many have suggested, it is also not clear how to make the most of the economic benefits they can bring. This is a main challenge in host countries, where citizens and refugees are seen to be competing for jobs in tight markets. Work permission for refugees is a politically and socially fraught issue in the region, and without an effective plan for livelihoods, those tensions simply increase. And while an informal labor market does exist, Syrian refugees in all the host countries in the region have regularly told RI about the exploitative nature of this option. Most recently, a Syrian mother of three in Jordan described how she had taken on several catering projects from home, and her futile efforts to get the businessowner to pay her after the work was done. She had tried to get regular work, but people did not want to hire Syrians, so she resorted to unofficial labor and was taken advantage of. It is a story we have heard countless times.

The creation of livelihoods is one of several points—but arguably the most crucial one—where humanitarian aid and development assistance intersect. While there has been wide recognition over the past few years of the desperate need of development support for livelihoods in the main host countries and for the general involvement of development actors in the refugee response, how to create and implement such programs remains largely untested. And while these projects are being developed, refugees are facing more and more difficult circumstances and taking their next steps, literally.

NEXT STEPS

The inability to find a living situation that has a sustainable future appears to be driving Syrian refugees from the regional countries to more distant destinations like the EU. Tragically, many of them do not survive that journey across the sea, and those who do are not always welcome in Europe. This has been of tremendous concern over the past 2 months, and much has been made of the chaotic situation in Europe as it involves Syrians.

However, as stated above, we need to recognize that the European crisis is merely a symptom of the world's collective failure to respond to the problem.

The most serious situation, and the one that needs the most attention, is the poorest refugees in the neighboring countries: those who cannot afford to move and are trapped in growing poverty and misery, with little hope for the future. Most of these Syrians will never have the means to move on to Europe or North America. And in spite of current discussions in the media, most will never be resettled, or even be eligible for resettlement.

Thus, we need to recast the approach to the Syrian crisis by:

(1) Fully funding humanitarian appeals. The $4.5 billion request for Syrian refugees is only 40 percent funded, and the appeal for inside Syria has received even less money—only 33 percent. As I mentioned previously, the humanitarian support the U.S. gives is essential, and the support it can prompt from other donors is equally important;

(2) Developing a "Marshall Plan" type of development assistance to first asylum countries in order to ensure refugees' impact on host communities is mitigated, a comprehensive plan for educating refugee children is implemented, and that livelihood programs are developed on a large scale. The U.S. can play an important role here by using its considerable governance weight with the development banks, in particular, to encourage their involvement in the regional response and reinforce the idea that host country development is now an essential element of addressing the Syrian displacement crisis;

(3) Facilitating orderly departure from first asylum countries through resettlement that must include the Gulf States as receiving countries, in addition to the traditional resettlement countries; and

(4) Urgently renewing attempts at a peace process led by the United Nations, including a dedicated attention to the protection of civilians by the parties wishing to participate in the process.

New strategies to this ongoing emergency displacement crisis must begin now. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Ms. Lindborg.

STATEMENT OF NANCY LINDBORG, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. LINDBORG. Thank you. Good morning, and thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee. I know a number of you have traveled to the region, and I greatly appreciate your focus and attention to this escalating humanitarian crisis.

I testify before you today as president of the United States Institute of Peace, which was founded by Congress 30 years ago specifically to look at how to prevent, mitigate, and recover from violent conflict. And we do so by working in conflict zones around the world with practical solutions, research, and training. There is clearly a deep connection between what we are seeing right now in the humanitarian crisis and conflict that has spun out of control and become very, very violent throughout the region.

I agree wholeheartedly with both of my colleagues, and both of you have, aptly described what is a starkly terrible crisis, numbing statistics, and heartbreaking stories through the region. So let me use my time to look at four recommendations that I would make as we look forward. Most importantly, even as we seek solutions for the crisis in Europe and the resettlement that both Michel and David have talked about, I would urge that we use this moment to expand our commitment to providing assistance in the region and look at solutions in the region because even if Europe and the United States take the most generous number of refugees possible, that will only scratch the surface of this crisis.

So, first of all, we absolutely must sustain and increase our collective commitments to meeting the most immediate needs. As we have heard, the number of commitments have decreased against the needs. Thank you to all of you for having supported a very generous U.S. commitment, about $4.5 billion to date since the Syrian crisis. But this is against a global backdrop of 60 million people currently forcibly displaced from their homes. There is a global burden that is stretching the humanitarian system, straining it to its limits. We need to ensure that not only does the United States continue its commitment, but that we get a larger collection of countries to help shoulder that burden. It consistently falls on a small number of countries. We need to expand the number of countries that are providing assistance.

Secondly, we also need to ensure that humanitarian assistance is as effective and efficient as possible. We have seen, as Senator Cardin noted, that we continue to treat the problem as if the refugees will go home when, in fact, there is a 17-year average duration of displacement. We are often constrained by our institutional

mandates, our structures, and by stovepiping from doing the kind of assistance that enables refugees not only to survive but to look for some sort of sustainable future, as well as providing support for the host communities who are heavily burdened by the huge numbers of refugees.

I have recently returned from Iraq where I met with a number of civil society organizations and Kurdish officials in Iraqi Kurdistan where one in five people are now displaced. They have some 3 million displaced Iraqis who fled ISIS over the last year. Despite a huge mobilization to provide assistance to these folks, their infrastructure simply cannot cope, including their water systems, electrical systems, schools, and clinics. You have people who are sitting in camps and containers, squatting in apartments, studies interrupted, no way to make a living. They do not see a future for themselves. A number of the displaced Iraqis with whom I spoke want to go to Europe because they do not see a future for themselves. As one civil society activist told me, we have seven camps in Erbil. That is seven time bombs as people are sitting here month after month, year after year, with no work and no education.

This is something that we need to look at seriously. And it is far worse as you move into Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey in terms of the burden and the stretch on their infrastructure.

So our assistance needs to focus more on education, on employment, on the kind of trauma counseling that can help people recover and on helping the communities bear the burden more effectively as we ask them to continue hosting.

Thirdly, we can start now to help people return. In certain places in Iraq, there are opportunities to return, but we need to ensure we are helping communities deal with what could become cycles of conflict because of the mistrust that now exists between communities in the wake of ISIS. By working with communities to have the kind of facilitated dialogue that builds bridges, reduces tensions, and rebuilds social cohesion, we give people a better opportunity to return home without repeated cycles of conflict.

Finally, in addition to pushing hard on the kind of diplomatic solutions that get at the roots of the conflict in Syria, I would also urge us to look more broadly at how to increase our efforts to provide the kind of development assistance that focuses on those places that are most fragile, whether they are weak, ineffective, or illegitimate in the eyes of their citizens, that are really the source of the flow of refugees, not just Syria and Iraq, but Afghanistan, Eritrea, Yemen, and Somalia, places where you have a web of hopelessness borne of conflict, oppression, and poverty. By focusing more on those areas, we have a better chance of managing conflict. At USIP, we say conflict is inevitable, but it must be managed it so that it does not become violent, it does not end up pushing people out of their homes and into the kind of crises that we see today.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lindborg follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NANCY LINDBORG

Good morning and thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and other members of the committee, for this opportunity to discuss the U.S. role and strategy in the Middle East in the midst of an escalating humanitarian crisis. Your

attention to this complex and protracted crisis is important and very much appreciated.

I testify before you today as the President of the United States Institute of Peace, although the views expressed here are my own. USIP was established by Congress 30 years ago with the mandate to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent global conflict, and we do so by focusing on practical solutions, research, and training in conflict zones around the world.

I have spent most of my career working on issues of democracy, civil society, conflict, and humanitarian response. These experiences have led me to the strong conviction that we as a nation must invest more in approaches and tools that help us interrupt the spin cycles of conflict that engulf so many countries; it is more urgent than ever to get ahead of crises before humanitarian needs escalate, before conflict becomes violent and, as we are seeing now, before violence forces millions of people from their homes.

The roots of the current refugee crisis in Europe are in Syria and Iraq, as well as in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen—all places where violent conflict, oppression, and poverty combine to create a web of hopelessness. The journey from there to Europe is long, arduous, and shockingly dangerous. And yet, according to the European Union's border control agency, Frontex, more than 500,000 desperate people have made that journey this year, illuminating the distressing calculus that drives men, women, and children to risk their lives.

The debate here and in Europe over how many refugees and migrants to accept hopefully will result in the greatest possible number of people restarting their lives in safety. We can certainly afford to absorb many more refugees here in the United States than is currently contemplated. More than 20 former senior U.S. Government officials from both parties recently issued a public statement calling upon the U.S. to accept 100,000 Syrian refugees. However, even if Europe and the United States collectively take the most generous number of people possible, it will only scratch the surface of the crisis now stretching across a swath of fragile and conflict-torn Middle Eastern and African countries.

As the world focuses on the wave of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, we must redouble our efforts in the frontline states. We must ensure critical assistance is reaching refugees and displaced people in the region, with an emphasis on building resilience for populations that may not go home anytime soon and helping those who can return. That also must include continued support for the countries and communities bearing the brunt of this crisis. Most importantly, we must not lose our focus on the roots of this crisis—the conflicts and oppression born of governments that are ineffective or illegitimate or both.

I recently returned from Iraq, where I met with Iraqis who have been displaced since ISIS rampaged through their villages and cities more than a year ago. They are now living in camps, containers, or crowded apartments paid for with dwindling savings. Many of them are from minority communities—Christian, Yezidi, Shabak, and others—and are terrified of returning home in the absence of security guarantees. I met with two Yezidi sisters who escaped from their captors after having been sold to three different men. Now, sharing a container with another family and without access to trauma counseling or a way to support themselves, they are sliding into a new kind of hopelessness. I also met with a young Sunni mother who is alone with her two children, determined not to return to her ravaged community but rather make it to Europe, where she believes a better life awaits. There are countless stories of people with lives interrupted by terror and, now, uncertainty.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, the strain of hosting so many displaced is clear. Churches, civil society organizations, and mosques have mobilized to provide life-saving assistance, but as the numbers of displaced continue to rise, resources are being rapidly depleted. Iraq's Kurdish region already had taken in 275,000 Syrian refugees before the ISIS expansion into northern Iraq drove another 1.5 million Iraqis toward the safety of the Kurdish region. Now, one in five residents of Iraqi Kurdistan is displaced, placing an incredible strain on a region already reeling from plunging oil prices and the constant threat of ISIS. Many people are unable to find work or ensure their children attend school. As one civil society leader noted to me, "We have seven internally displaced camps here, which equals seven time bombs, as people sit without work or education for year after year."

Nationwide, Iraq has more than 3.2 million internally displaced people crowding into cities, camps, and makeshift shelter. Infrastructure—water systems, electrical supply, schools, and health clinics—is all strained to serve far more people than intended. And now, reports are emerging of cholera in Iraqi cities. Just over a week ago, the World Health Organization reported that it was supporting Iraq's Ministry of Health, which on September 15 had declared a cholera outbreak in the provinces

of Najaf, Diwaniya, and parts of west Baghdad. The agencies are working together to step up measures to stop transmission and prevent further spread of the disease.

The story of displacement is even more stark in neighboring countries. The population of Lebanon, with its politically fragile demographic balance, is now fully one-fourth Syrian. Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey have been taking in refugees for 5 years now and together shelter 3.6 million Syrian refugees, according to the U.N.

Much of the focus is now on Syrian refugees, but there are an additional 7.6 million Syrians displaced within what is left of their country, with an astounding 12.2 million citizens inside Syria who need urgent humanitarian assistance. So as the conflict continues, the number of people choosing to leave the country is only likely to grow.

Even as we seek solutions for refugees in Europe and the United States, we must also refocus on determined action in four areas:

- Meeting the immediate humanitarian needs in the region to ease the suffering of millions forced from their homes and living on the edge of existence;
- Recasting assistance to refugees, internally displaced and hosting communities, to emphasize longer term resilience and rebuilding of social cohesion for what are likely to be extended displacements stemming from protracted conflicts;
- Enabling a return home for those able and willing to do so;
- Redoubling efforts to address the root causes of violent conflicts that are driving these cascades of crisis.

THE MOST IMMEDIATE NEEDS

The Syrian war, now in its 5th year, is contributing to a global humanitarian emergency of record displacement. According to the U.N., nearly 60 million people are displaced globally due to violence, conflict, and repression—roughly equivalent to the entire population of Italy. Thanks to your important support, Senators, the United States has been the global leader in dedicating significant resources to the humanitarian response. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the U.S. has committed $4.5 billion, saving countless lives. But the sustained level of crises worldwide is draining funding and attention. The U.N. has only raised 38 percent of the $7.4 billion it says it needs this year to care for Syrians fleeing the fighting, and only half of the $704 million requested for Iraqis displaced by ISIS. The World Food Programme has been forced to drop fully one-third of Syrian refugees in the region from its food voucher program this year due to funding shortfalls. The needs in Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Central Africa Republic keep falling even further from public view.

Now is not the time to shortchange critical aid programs. Even as the U.S. Government continues its generous support, it is important for a broader community of nations to join in the financing of these vital life-saving programs. Despite significant efforts over the last 5 years to broaden the donor pool, the primary funding continues to come from a small group of nations.

There is also an urgent need to augment civilian protection for those still living inside Syria and facing daily deprivations and death. Despite a hard-fought effort that resulted in the unanimous passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2139 in February 2014, to ease the delivery of aid to Syrians, there has not been a serious effort at implementation. This resolution calls for unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance across borders to those trapped inside Syria and, most importantly, a cessation of the targeting and killing of civilians, especially medical personnel. However, this resolution has never been fully respected, while the barrel-bombing campaigns, targeting of civilians, and blockage of life-saving assistance continues.

RECASTING ASSISTANCE FOR LONGER TERM RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

We also must ensure these assistance programs are as effective and efficient as possible. It is critical to focus on enabling refugees and displaced families to access employment, education, and trauma counseling, with the goal of helping them prepare for a future, not just survive the present.

In the face of protracted conflicts, the global average for displacement is now 17 years—it takes 17 years for families to return home, which is a lifetime for a young man or woman. And yet, all too often, aid programs, constrained by mandates, types of funding, and institutional strictures, continue to be administered as if displacement is a short-term problem.

For those displaced by violent conflict, living in strange cities, and without resources, it is a daily struggle both for survival and dignity. Host-country policies often prohibit refugees from working legally, forcing many into underground economies and unsafe work. And despite generous efforts by Jordan and Lebanon, there simply is not enough space in their schools for the enormous number of Syrian chil-

dren. Across the Middle East, some 13 million children are not attending school because they are affected by conflict. And nearly 4 million of the displaced Syrians are children, many out of school for almost 5 years now. Investing in the future of these children must be a top priority.

Also vulnerable are the many poor communities hosting the bulk of the refugees, especially in fragile Lebanon and Jordan. Our assistance must focus as well on building bridges between host and refugee communities and shoring up weak infrastructure and faltering economies that must now meet expanded demands. Again, thanks to your support, Senators, the U.S. Government has generously provided budget support and development assistance to the region, particularly to Jordan.

Over the last 5 years of the Syrian conflict, the U.N., the World Bank, host country governments, and local and international nongovernmental organizations have made significant strides in seeking new ways of working together to address the crisis more effectively. With U.S. support, the World Food Programme and nongovernmental partners have been able to launch an e-card platform to provide cash on debit cards for food and essential nonfood items, enabling women to have a choice and voice in their purchases instead of queueing up for bags of food, while also injecting critical funding into the local economy. In Jordan, U.N. agencies have teamed up to use biometric registration so refugees can use iris scans at ATM machines to access assistance, which reduces costs and increases accountability. The World Bank and the U.N. Development Program are supporting local governments to develop "resilience strategies" that chart a development course in light of the ongoing crisis.

However, there is still much more that needs to be done, especially to increase education and employment opportunities. We must seize the opportunity of this crisis to push our assistance strategies to be more creative, look longer term, and support the resilience and dignity of those we seek to help.

ENABLING RETURNS OF REFUGEES AFTER CONFLICT

Where there is hope for displaced people to return to their home communities in the foreseeable future, the international community can begin preparing the ground now. In Iraq, military forces will drive ISIS out of occupied areas eventually, but tensions and trauma will linger. The war has militarized large segments of the society, making caches of weapons ubiquitous and violence acceptable. We can help reduce the risk that cycles of conflict will continue by investing in rebuilding communities to make the way for sustainable returns. Key to this is support for those working to rebuild the social fabric and seeking reconciliation at all levels, from the local to the federal.

In Iraq, thousands of families have already returned to Tikrit, a city in northern Iraq that was wrested from the control of ISIS in April by a combination of U.S.-led coalition air strikes and Iraqi regular and militia ground forces. Human rights organizations since then have documented accounts of retribution in the early days after that liberation because of outrage over a June 2014 massacre by ISIS of 1,700 Iraqi cadets in training at a military base nearby known as Camp Speicher. The cadets killed were mostly Shia from the country's south, and with ISIS touting itself, however disingenuously, as defender of the region's Sunnis, blame for the massacre extended to entire Sunni tribes accused collectively of collaborating with the extremists and taking part in the killings.

But in some parts of Tikrit, USIP partners on the ground were able to conduct careful negotiations and inclusive dialogue among tribal leaders connected to the survivors, families of victims, and those accused of involvement in the massacre. The dialogue served to increase understanding of the facts and reduce tensions. Shia tribes that included victims' families, for instance, learned that Sunnis in the area had actually helped some of the survivors escape, even to the extent of allowing wives and sisters of Sunni tribal leaders to accompany the Shia cadets for cover as they passed through ISIS-controlled checkpoints. The channels of communication opened by those negotiations allowed 400 families to return, and thousands more have followed.

In some cases, the process of rebuilding the social fabric can begin with people even while they are displaced. Facilitated dialogue involving displaced people and local citizens and officials of their host communities can enhance everyone's sense of dignity and control over their lives, and achieve tangible improvements in living conditions not only for those displaced but also for their hosts. USIP has learned that effective dialogue—the kind that produces positive change—requires a great deal of planning and skill. The more complex and polarized the environment in which dialogue takes place, the more thought and skill are required. These structured forums can lead to measures that improve political inclusion on potential

flash-point issues such as government budgeting. They can improve relations between citizens and police forces still hampered by the legacies of authoritarian culture and practices. They can prevent electoral violence, one of the most common triggers of broader violent conflict. The skills that are learned and practiced in the process—listening, communicating clearly and openly, negotiating respectfully—can later be transferred to home communities when displaced people return to newly liberated areas.

ADDRESSING THE ROOTS OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Finally, there is the pressing need to prevent conflict from becoming violent in the first place. At USIP, we emphasize the point that conflict is inevitable, but violent conflict is not. The refugees we see streaming into Europe are coming from places that have experienced long-term unrest, repression, and weak or illegitimate governments. These are well-documented factors that spur violence, undermine development gains and prevent sustainable peace.

Just a few days ago, we saw the passage of new Global Goals for development by all members of the United Nations. The successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Global Goals are remarkable for the historic inclusion of Goal 16, which calls for peaceful, inclusive societies as essential for sustainable development, with an emphasis on justice for all and accountable, inclusive institutions at all levels. This goal acknowledges the centrality of good governance and state-society relations to meet and sustain fundamental development goals, with the ability to manage conflict before it becomes violent. It may seem a quixotic effort, but 15 years ago, we never thought we would meet so many of the Millennium goals either. Now is the time to double down on helping those countries willing to tackle the challenges of Goal 16, and key will be the role of committed, courageous members of civil society.

Members of the committee, as the international community rightly assists the refugees who are making their way to Europe, I urge the United States also to keep our attention fully focused on the regions that are at the epicenter of the crisis.

Thank you for your continued support for these efforts.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you all very much for not only what you do but for being here today.

And with that, Senator Cardin has a conflict. So I am going to, as a courtesy, let him ask questions first.

Senator CARDIN. See the conflicts are all over. [Laughter.]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the courtesy.

And let me thank all of our witnesses not only for being here but what you do to help in regards to this international humanitarian challenge.

U.S. leadership is so desperately needed in multiple strategies. Yes, in the geopolitical landscape to deal with resolving these conflicts so people can live safely in their homes, that is obviously where the United States must put a great deal of attention.

As has already been pointed out, a lot of these refugees are going to be in border countries for a long time, and the cost, is tremendous not only the dollar cost but as it affects the stability in those countries. And there are international responsibilities. The United States must be a leader. And as I pointed out in my opening statement, the United Nations has indicated that it does not have the money it needs to address the humanitarian needs.

And then lastly the resettlements. And I just want to talk a moment about that because there are 20 million refugees. We know 4 million are now from Syria. And most of these refugees are not returning home anytime soon. Some are not going to be able to return home. And regarding our refugee policy numbers, those caps were based upon the philosophy that refugees would be returning to their host countries. That is not the real world today. So for the United States to have a cap at 75,000 or 85,000 or 100,000, does not recognize that there are 20 million refugees worldwide, and

that many of them are not going to be able to return safely to their homes, and many want to resettle in a place where they can have a future for their family. To live 17 years as a refugee on average does not give you a future for your family.

So I guess my first question is: Should we be looking at the 20 million differently? Should we be realistically determining how many of these individuals need permanent placements, particularly those who are recent and do not have roots in the border country, but really want to reestablish roots for their families? Should we be looking at these numbers more realistically today?

Mr. MILIBAND. Thank you, Senator. Let me just say three things in response to what I think is a really apposite question because what we all face is at least 20 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced people, the 60 million that Nancy referred to. The central question is is this a trend or is it a blip. Those numbers were a world record last year, more than at any time since World War II. And my thesis to you is that this is a trend and not a blip. So your question is absolutely right. And I think three things are important.

First of all, refugee resettlement is important for the substantive help that it offers, for the sake of argument, to the 100,000 people that you mentioned. But it is also a symbolic value of standing with the countries that are bearing the greatest burden. No one can pretend that refugee resettlement into Europe or into the United States is going to "solve the problem." It is not going to involve the majority of the refugees, but it is a symbolic as well as a substantive show of solidarity.

Second, a critical point. The vast majority of refugees live in poor countries neighboring those that are in conflict. And the Syria case is a prototype. And local integration is going to be the solution either because we acknowledge it and embrace it or because it happens de facto. And I think what Michel Gabaudan was saying is that we have to embrace this point that there are going to be the majority of refugees in neighboring states, and the question is do they become economic contributors or are they simply seen as an economic drain.

And just to amplify his point, he was saying that at the moment, the World Bank by its mandate is not allowed to work in Lebanon and Jordan because they are considered to be middle-income countries. And in the new world that you are describing, it has got to be a central part of the World Bank's modus operandi that fragile states, conflict states where 43 percent of the world's extreme poor now live—I mean, that is the central challenge for the sustainable development goals that were embraced last week. It has got to be a central part of the philosophy of the World Bank that fragile states are its business.

Frankly—and I hope my colleagues agree with me on this—it has also got to be a point of reflection for the NGO and humanitarian movement. We have to recognize that economic interventions need to sit alongside the traditional social interventions that we have done, not just health, education, protection of women and kids, but also economic livelihood programs.

The third and final point is that already in the course of the 45 minutes we have been together, it is evident that the words "hu-

manitarian" and the words "development" do not do justice to the policy problems that are faced here. And I would submit to you that the budget headings, such and such is humanitarian, such and such is development, do not do justice to the problem. And the institutions that we have got, some of them working on humanitarian crises, others on development—that separation does not do justice.

Just to give you a figure, in the 20 biggest crises last year, $5.5 billion were spent on the so-called humanitarian intervention, and $28 billion was spent on development interventions. Now, the truth is they have to work together, and that is a major challenge to the international system, which I think it would be tremendously positive if the committee was able to engage with them.

Senator CARDIN. Let me change gears just for one moment. The United Nations estimates that there are over 400,000 people inside Syria who are besieged and who we cannot be reached with humanitarian assistance. And they are saying there are another 4.8 million that are hard to reach. Do we have a strategy for dealing with vulnerable populations within Syria that we cannot effectively reach through conventional means?

Ms. LINDBORG. The U.S. Government was the leader in providing assistance that was going across borders, across the Turkish and Jordanian borders, to reach those who could not be reached through the U.N. Damascus-based effort. Many courageous NGOs were very much a part of that. That has been curtailed by the incursion of ISIS into some of those areas, although the work continues and there continues to be extraordinarily courageous efforts to reach those refugees.

The barrel bombs are equally a problem, as my colleagues have noted, and despite the provision of a U.N. security resolution that David mentioned, there is not a serious effort to provide civilian protection.

So as we look at resolving this conflict, civilian protection has got to be chief among the goals that we collectively put in front of the international community. In the absence of that, people are just being pummeled by both sides by Assad's people and by ISIS, and that further curtails the ability to reach them with assistance, and even if you did, they are threatened with death.

Mr. MILIBAND. Can I just add a short point on that? The short answer to your question is, "No," there is not a good strategy for reaching these besieged areas. The truth is those people are in a worse position today than when the U.N. Security Council resolutions were passed. And so our proposal for the humanitarian envoys who will be on the ground trying to name, shame, negotiate, organize the delivery of aid is at least one idea to try and break this terrible deadlock because at the moment once a month, the U.N. Secretary General reports to the Security Council that medical aid is being taken off lories and dumped. And there is no accountability for that kind of abuse of basic morality, never mind international humanitarian law. And so I think that your focus on this and your demand or the implicit demand that this has to be at the absolute center of any basic approach to the humanitarian situation in Syria is absolutely right.

Senator CARDIN. Well, there is no question that these individuals who are vulnerable, that we cannot reach, or hard to reach are

going to add to the numbers. They are going to add to the number of casualties. They are going to add to the number of people who try to flee Syria for a better life. It is going to add to the number of refugees. It is going to add to all the numbers we are talking about. It is just a matter of how quickly they can find a safe place or leave or they will become casualties of the war.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Dr. Gabaudan, I think people in our Nation get confused. We allow about 70,000 refugees into our country right now each year. And I know the administration has talked about raising that to 85,000 and then to 100,000 over the next couple of years. And then there have been statements about, on top of that, adding 100,000 Syrians into our country immediately not by the administration but by others who are advocating for that.

I know we have the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee here, but is there a way to actually screen and deal with that, or is that a number that really is one that is not realistic relative to our ability to screen those coming in?

Dr. GABAUDAN. Senator, in terms of the capacity, the United States has shown in the past that it can admit large numbers. We saw that with Vietnam. We saw that with Cuba. We saw that with the Kurds, et cetera. So there is capacity in this country. There is a question of resources, of course.

I think that the U.S. system has the most serious vetting system in the world. If you look at other countries who resettle refugees, they do not come half the way the United States does in vetting the people which it admits.

The U.S. resettlement program has a tremendous quality, which is it chooses people on the basis of vulnerability, and that vulnerability is usually assessed at the beginning by the U.N. who makes the initial submission to the United States. When you start looking at people who suffered torture, women, female of household, et cetera, the sort of criteria the United States uses, I think you already have a filter deepened by the work of Homeland Security. So I think there is certainly the technique and the capacity.

For Syrians, I do understand that it will take some time to reach the numbers because I was told that the intel that the Government has on the Syrians is not as good as the one it had on Iraqis, et cetera.

So there are genuine difficulties that will have to be overcome. But our experience over the past 40 years in dealing with resettlement is that this country has the capacity, has the experience, and has shown the willingness to do it when the conditions require it.

The CHAIRMAN. I know there are some discussions right now about us working with Russia as it relates to Syria. And I just want to understand from your perspective—you are dealing with refugees—are they fleeing Assad's barrel bombs or are they fleeing ISIS? I know they are fleeing both, but generally speaking, can you get at, for this discussion, the greater root or the roots, if you will, of why people are fleeing the country briefly? And then I want to follow on with additional questions. But go ahead.

Mr. MILIBAND. Let me just speak to the experience I had last week in Greece. Over the course of 2 or 3 days, I must have spoken to 200 or 300 refugees, the majority of them Syrian.

The answer to your question is it depends where in Syria that they are coming from. The majority that I met, they were from Aleppo, from greater Damascus, or from Deir ez-Zor, which is out in the east of the country. And it is a different situation in different parts of the country.

But the point that you made that they are facing a pincer movement, on the one hand, they have got the barrel bombs of Assad, and then on the other hand, they have got the terror of ISIS. And it is almost as they flee from the barrel bombs, they end up being driven into the hands of ISIS, and that is what is forcing them out. The particular circumstances in different parts of the country are obviously a matter detail, but there is a wider significant point; 95 percent of the barrel bombing attacks and other attacks that the Assad air force are undertaking are not against ISIS targets.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, so people understand, these are just against civilian populations. Right?

Mr. MILIBAND. And other rebel groups, and some of them are against other rebel fortifications because obviously there is Jabhat al-Nusra and other groups. But it is certainly the case that a very small proportion of the bombing raids are targeted on ISIS.

The CHAIRMAN. Does anybody differ or want to add to that?

Ms. LINDBORG. I would just add, having been in Iraq last week, that it very much differs depending on the circumstances. For example, I met with a couple of Yezidi sisters who had recently escaped, having been sold to three different men. They are now living in a container with another family clearly dealing with enormous trauma. They do not really have a sense of what their future is, and they have no ability to imagine going home, which is true for a number of the minority populations that have been pushed out of their homes. In the absence of security guarantees, they are saying they want to be resettled. They cannot go back unless there is security. So that is one set of specific issues.

I also met with a young Sunni woman who had been studying for her university exams when ISIS swept through Mosul. She fled with her family. She is now living in a very crowded apartment. She has not been able to resume her studies. It has been over a year. She is just wondering what is her life likely to be. She also wants to go to Europe. So there are lots of reasons that people are desperate to envision a better life.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just ask this question. It is hard for me to contemplate this even, but if an effort were put in place to strengthen Assad, which is what Russia and Iran are pursuing right now, what effect would that have if we were somehow a part of that or winked and a nod and said that was okay? What would that do from your perspective based on what you are seeing on the ground relative to the refugee crisis? I think I can answer for you, but if you would answer for the record. Mr. Miliband?

Mr. MILIBAND. I congratulate you on the precision of your question, and leading a humanitarian organization, I am going to have to be extremely precise in my answer.

I think that from our point of view the violations of international law and basic rights are coming from all sides, but the majority are coming from the Assad government.

Secondly, it is evident to anyone who reads the newspapers or follows the debate that significant actions by the Assad government have bolstered ISIS and have enabled the growth of ISIS.

Thirdly, any diplomatic or political approach needs to address both sides of the coin if it is to have a chance of success.

Ms. LINDBORG. I would just add that as we mentioned earlier, there is a tool, U.N. Security Council Resolution 2139, which was unanimously passed, that has not been upheld by key actors in the region who are now making different moves. There is an urgent opportunity to push key actors to take that seriously. That addresses the targeting of civilians, the barrel bombing, and the withholding of the humanitarian assistance.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Gabaudan—and I know I am running out of time myself. I would say I do not remember many U.N. Security Council resolutions that have been adhered to, and it seems that when they are not adhered to, we just change them to something that can be adhered to. So I am sorry. I am a skeptic. But Dr. Gabaudan.

Dr. GABAUDAN. No. I fully subscribe to what David was saying regarding the source of the main drivers of exodus. Of course, there are changes. Kobani was clearly driven by the ISIS offensive. But if you speak to refugees on the border, the majority will refer to the barrel bombing. This is the story we get on and on and on. And I am talking about Syrian doctors who work for NGOs that have a 501(c)(3). You know, these are people who understand where we come from, et cetera. I am not talking about wild groups, et cetera.

My fear is that any attempt at peace that does not immediately have an impact over how, in this case, the barrel bombing are being used against civilians will go nowhere, will be completely discredited by the large majority of the Syrians we meet in neighboring countries.

The CHAIRMAN. So, if I could, unless the barrel bombing stops, the refugee crisis will continue to get worse.

And just in closing—I apologize to my colleagues here—are the Sunni—are any of the Arab countries, Saudi Arabia, some of those that are working to unseat Assad in certain ways—are they taking any refugees at present?

Mr. MILIBAND. They are not signatories to the 1951 Convention. So they do not recognize the status of refugees. If they were sitting here, they would say there are 500,000 Syrians living in Saudi Arabia and 120,000 Syrians living in the United Arab Emirates. Some of them have arrived recently; others have been there for a long time. But their status is not as refugees. Their status is as migrant workers.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Perdue.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you.

I would like to thank our witnesses today not just for being here today but for what you are doing in the middle of a huge crisis. We all empathize.

Mr. Miliband, I would like to start with you. In 2011, the United States created a vacuum in which ISIS began to grow. They needed land to legitimize the caliphate. They have done that. In the last few years, we have created a vacuum by not having a Syrian strat-

egy, and now we just see in the last few weeks the formalization of Russia's presence there with military troops and so forth. In the last 5 years especially, we have seen Iran and Russia supporting the Assad regime, which we have been talking about today.

My question is what complication does Russia, now showing up with military presence—and do you have any perspective being in the region? You talk about development and humanitarian help coming together. I would like to know how this development and the lack of a U.S. strategy in the region complicates your ability to deal with the ongoing crisis? I have a couple followup questions on that about prevention.

Mr. MILIBAND. Thank you very much, Senator. I should say that every time the Senators applaud the work of our organizations, it is very reinforcing for our staff who are out there in the field in really the most dangerous places doing extraordinary work. And I want to thank you very much for what you said which I see as a tribute to their work.

I think that in respect of the complication I think you said that is being inserted by the Russian moves over the last 2 or 3 weeks, I have to defer to those who are privy to the intelligence and to the military optionmaking that is going on. As the leader of a humanitarian organization, what I have to keep on stressing is that all decisions, both military and political and humanitarian, need to be made with the needs of the citizens at the heart.

What I would point to over the last 5 years is the extraordinary fragmentation and complexity that has developed both within Syria and in Iraq as well, and that complication makes it doubly difficult for us to do our job. So the negotiation that is necessary to have local consent to deliver aid depends on engaging with a bewildering array of local actors whose power changes sometimes on a weekly basis.

The wider point about the Russian role I think has to be split into two parts. Until the passage of the U.S. Security Council resolutions, there was no cover for the cross border work that we and others were trying to do. And so the issue then was trying to get that cover. Since the passage of the resolutions, however, we have not actually been able to do more work. We found our situation constrained in part by the position on the battlefield but also by the lack of official backing from those who supported the resolution. I think that is why the emphasis that Nancy has put on turning those words and that resolution into action, notwithstanding the history the chairman referred to, remains very, very important because a Security Council resolution is only as strong as the nation states who back it and their willingness to see it through.

Senator PERDUE. You know, yesterday—and I want to move this question now to Assad and Putin's relationship with Assad. Yesterday he made a comment—and I quote—"refugees undoubtedly need our compassion and support, but the only way to solve the problem is to restore statehood where it has been destroyed, to strengthen the government institutions where they still exist."

My question—and I will start with Dr. Gabaudan. Can we solve this problem as long as Assad is barrel bombing his own people, targeting open markets, targeting children? The question then before us is, can we solve this? There are two levels of this. One is

obviously the immediate crisis and then the long-term solution. As you said, Mr. Miliband, this is no longer a blip. It is a trend. If that trend is there, then going back to what Senator Cardin mentioned earlier, we have got to develop a different strategy. This is not just about feeding people for a few weeks. It is about education. It is about training.

So my question is in trying to prevent this now, or at least getting at the immediate crisis, how should we look at Putin's comments relative to Assad and also what Iran's position has been over the last decade with regard to Bashar Assad.

Dr. GABAUDAN. Well, I can only answer this from the perspective of what I heard from refugees and not from a politician or a strategist. So I hope you will take my answer in this context.

I certainly think that if a negotiation takes place with Assad, it has to be credible with a large number of people who have fled the country. There should be an immediate stop to the deliberate attack against civilians. Any process that does not control that from day one will be doomed and will not lead anywhere in terms of satisfying the population who have left this very violence. Now, whether he is prepared to do that as a precondition for getting into peace negotiations, I do not know, to be honest, and I am not anywhere close to these discussions. But I think it is essential that people who are going to be associated to a peace settlement have to make a commitment to stop immediately the sort of deliberate attack on civilians. I know in a conflict there will always be civilian casualties by the very nature of the conflict, but the deliberate attacks on civilians is something that is far too grievous to sustain a peace process.

Senator PERDUE. We have all traveled to the region. Senator Gardner and I were just there this spring in Jordan. They are overwhelmed. Basically the parallel would if the United States had accepted refugees, it would be the size of England, for example. They are overwhelmed. We see that.

What I am really concerned about long-term are the children. We talk about it being half the problem basically today. Ms. Lindborg, would you just speak to that and elaborate just a little bit more about what we can do in the immediate future and then what the long-term implications of that are? Because this looks like a breeding ground for dissent, and I totally understand that. Would you just speak to that and what we need to be doing now in order to prevent further exaggeration of this crisis in the future?

Ms. LINDBORG. Yes, you are absolutely right. There is an enormous population of children who are out of school both from the Syria crisis and Iraq and through the region who are the next generation growing up without a future, without a sense that they have something positive to connect to. As we look regionally at this whole issue of how to counter violent extremism while at the same time we are not, as a global community, enabling these displaced kids to connect to education and something more positive in their lives. This situation is creating, as the activists in Iraq told me, seven hot spots, seven time bombs.

There was a very important effort launched 2 years ago called No Lost Generation, which was an effort to focus across the humanitarian and development community on education and on enabling

fuller support for kids. One of the challenges that we have—and David spoke to this—is that we get trapped inside the differing mandates and stovepipes of the way in which we deliver humanitarian and development assistance. My hope is that this current crisis will really catalyze us to move further and faster on some of the more innovative ways that we know we can use to provide more appropriate assistance that gives people a chance to have a living, to get the kind of help they need to recover from trauma, to get their kids educated. That is one of the most important things that would enable people to not leave the region. Otherwise, they have a sense that only by going to Europe or the United States will they have an opportunity for those basic ways of having a more dignified life.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I might just point out the barrel bombs are being delivered by air. I think everybody understands that. I cannot imagine what these many refugees and people around the world are thinking about nations like the United States and others that know this is happening as we are sitting here in these nice circumstances and are continuing every day to allow that to happen, plus the torturing of people in its prisons. And yet, we are going to the U.N. Security Council and talking about hollow—hollow—resolutions.

But anyway, Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your testimony, and let me just briefly join the chorus of voices that have recognized the International Rescue Committee. I have done work with them. It is extraordinary work and you should be incredibly proud to lead them.

As someone who comes from a community that were refugees to the United States, I have a very strong appreciation of the willingness of the country to accept those who are fleeing for whatever the reasons. So I am a strong supporter of broadening our response. But I also understand that at the core of the problem, as Ms. Lindborg says in her testimony, that the most generous contribution of the United States only scratches the surface.

But at the end of the day, unless we get to the root causes, we are treating symptoms but not the causes of what makes people flee from their home. And in this case, in the case of Syria, the ongoing conflict. The barrel bombing, which unfortunately in and of itself, is a horrific act, is also exacerbated by the use of chlorine gas in violation of international standards, as well as my thought was that when this committee passed an authorization for the use of force to stop Assad's use of chemical weapons against his people, that we would be looking at a permanent stoppage of chemical weapons against his people. And while I certainly rejoice in the fact that we did do a lot to relieve the risk to the people of Syria by a variety of chemical weapons, we have not relieved them from the total risk at the end of the day. And so at some point, it is hollow if you do not follow through.

What I wanted to get a sense here, first of all, is on your statement, the most generous contribution of the United States scratches the surface, and maybe, Mr. Miliband, you can help me with this

too. In other countries, the numbers of refugees that are flowing into them—what would be roughly the percent vis-a-vis the population of their countries that are taking place? Whoever can answer that.

Ms. LINDBORG. Well, I can say it is one-fourth of the Lebanese population. In Iraqi Kurdistan, it is one-fifth of their population. These are unimaginable numbers to have occurring——

Senator MENENDEZ. 20 to 25 percent.

Ms. LINDBORG. Twenty-five percent of the population in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee right now.

Mr. MILIBAND. Just to follow that, 85 percent of the world's refugees are in developing countries. So the European comparison would be Germany has agreed to take 500,000 refugees or accept 500,000 asylum claims over the next year and for each of the next 3 years. That is in a population of 90 million. Italy, a population of some 60 million, has taken in each of the last 2 years 120,000 refugees. The U.K.—the Prime Minister has pledged that they will take 4,000 a year in a population of 60 million. So you can see the variation there and the big gap between the neighboring states in the Middle East and the European governments. It is worth saying that the United States at its peak was taking about 180,000 refugees a year in 1979, 1980, 1981 when so-called Vietnamese boat people were arriving here in very large numbers.

Senator MENENDEZ. So with the administration's announcement that they will move up to 85,000 total refugees—that is not necessarily Syrian refugees—that would be about 2 percent of the American population. So I say that in the context of understanding the challenges of other countries here compared to what the United States is looking at. And I say to myself in that regard, you know, we are either going to choose to help countries where, in fact, refugees are flooding to in the first instance and while we are, to be more robust about it, or we have to think about what is a number that is acceptable here in the United States as part of an international commitment.

But I want to go to the core question, which is how do we stop—I would assume—and correct me if I am wrong for the record—that none of you advocate that in order to stop the refugee crisis, that we should accept the violators of human rights and core international principles as a way to solve that problem. Is that a fair statement? You are nodding. Can you just say yes or no for the record?

Mr. MILIBAND. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. So if that is the reality, that means in the case of Syria, moving away from Assad, even if it is in a transition, but at the end of the day moving away from Assad—and I only see the circumstances getting worse, not better. We are doing nothing to stop the barrel bombing, including that with chlorine gas. We have Russia that is now sending all types of military hardware and creating an airbase for itself in Syria. I see at the end of the day that they have been a patron of Assad and will continue to be a patron of Assad until they see a solution that protects their interests at the end of the day. So in the interim, I see them using that force. And whatever entity they are using that force, again let us say ISIL for argument's sake, inevitably in a circumstance such as

this, it will create more refugees. And I see Iran that has continued to support Assad.

So I do not see a lessening of the refugee crisis. There are still, as I understand it, millions displaced who have not become refugees. At some point their displacement is going to lead them to be refugees, and when it leads them to be refugees, we are going to even have a more significant crisis.

So at the end of the day, is not our goal, while in the interim, certainly doing everything we can for those who have sought refuge, to really dedicate ourselves to ending the violence, stopping the barrel bombing, and getting a transition in Syria? Because if we do not do that, there is not enough space, time, money to ultimately meet the crisis in the lives of these people.

Mr. MILIBAND. Senator, I think you spoke very powerfully about symptoms and causes, and you have to treat the causes as well as the symptoms I think you are saying. And you are absolutely right.

The way I would put it from my own organization's work is that we can staunch the dying, but it takes politics to stop the killing. And that is the fundamental challenge that we face.

Now, staunching the dying is very, very important. I do not have to tell you that. And we could be doing much, much better. We can also be doing more than staunching the dying. We can be staunching the radicalization. We can be staunching the misery by much more effective work both inside Syria and in the neighboring states.

But if your question is, Are there true limits to the effectiveness or the impact of humanitarian work in the absence of peacemaking of a serious kind? then the answer has to be unequivocally yes. And until we stop the killing, we are not going to be able to be doing justice to the people on the ground or to the values that we all stand for.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Gardner.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Lindborg, I have a couple questions for you. You mentioned Security Council resolutions. And I think it was in 2014 a couple of security resolutions passed, Resolution 2139 in February 2014. I think you mentioned 2139, which demanded that parties promptly allow rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access, and then Resolution 2165, which has basically called upon notification not consent for delivery of humanitarian aid.

You mentioned that not all countries are—violations are being reported on all sides. Could you go into that a little bit more in terms of 2139 particularly?

Ms. LINDBORG. As David mentioned, there is a monthly report on progress, and there is a routine where lack of progress is reported and there are not any teeth in the resolution to do anything about it. And hence, Senator Corker, your skepticism.

You know, there is not a Chapter 7 provision because there is not agreement among the Security Council members. For a number of years, there was a bit of a charade where there was not even full belief by all the Security Council members that we had a humanitarian crisis going on inside of Syria.

I think what is going on globally today makes that a very difficult case for people to still make, for countries to still make that we do not have a humanitarian crisis of truly epic proportions. The resolution does provide one tool for forcing the conversation and forcing the agreement that the killing is at the root of the crisis.

Senator GARDNER. In terms of 2139, what ought we be pushing with the United Nations right now in terms of perhaps an amendment or enforcement?

Ms. LINDBORG. I am sorry?

Senator GARDNER. 2139 in terms of what we should be pursuing.

Ms. LINDBORG. There is no enforcement built into the current resolution. It was a hard-fought effort to get passage of it the way it was, and it is without teeth.

Senator GARDNER. You talked a little bit about—in response to the chairman's question—a little bit about barrel bombing and the pincer movement that, Mr. Miliband, you described. What would change the refugee crisis if barrel bombing were to be stopped? How would that change the refugee situation?

Ms. LINDBORG. Well, it would certainly decrease the deaths. As we have heard, the targeting is often of medical personnel, of clinics, of markets. I mean, we have seen the utter destruction of cities like Aleppo. People are fleeing often because their lives are just literally in shambles and their loved ones killed. There is still, obviously, the threat of ISIS and of other armed groups. It is a very chaotic situation. Yet, in pockets there are efforts to still maintain a life, and there are efforts to still have local administration in parts of Syria. I would add that we also need to continue and redouble our efforts to support those who are on the ground who are seeking to create some sort of ongoing stable lives for their communities.

Senator GARDNER. Mr. Miliband, would you like to talk about that in terms of putting an end to the barrel bombing, what that would do as our efforts continue, obviously, with ISIS and others?

Mr. MILIBAND. Yes. I think that there are two ways of looking at it.

One is obviously on the more political side, and that is something that you will be thinking about as you contemplate your views about the ultimate resolution of the conflict. But there is no question that the position on the battlefield creates traction on the wider diplomatic and political front. And I leave that to you.

On the humanitarian front, there is no question that the daily, hourly abuse of international humanitarian law has created what someone said to me, Aleppo is hell and I had to escape from hell. And it is as blunt as that.

Frankly, we have had our own people, who were not actually our staff but were benefiting from our services, go home. We lost seven of them. They were barrel bombed. Now, this is a daily reality for people who are, to pick up something the chairman said at the beginning, giving up hope. And at the moment they see their chance as putting their fate in the hands of smugglers and criminals who say they will get them to Europe as offering them more than staying in their own homeland in their own country. And that is obviously an indictment of the global response over the 5 years of the conflict.

Senator GARDNER. I am intrigued by Ms. Lindborg. In your testimony, you stated even if Europe and the United States collectively take the most generous number of people possible, it will only scratch the surface of the crisis now stretching across a swath of fragile and conflict-torn Middle Eastern and African countries. And I just want to make sure that as we continue this conversation that we are providing the most effective support possible because humanitarian aid is not going to—excuse me—refugee aid—the United States, Europe is not going to solve the problem alone. We have got to get to the bottom of the barrel bombing and the continued drivers of this conflict because we can open up as much as we want, but the crisis will still exist. And we have got to have a better strategy than we have right now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the witnesses for your work and your testimony.

Just to explore, the U.N. Security Council resolution, what it called for but the absence of teeth to enforce it, has been incredibly disappointing. And I know everybody worked hard to get it passed in February of 2014 originally, and that was not easy. The fact that it was brought up during the middle of the Winter Olympics in Russia probably make it a little bit harder for them to throw the veto in as they have in the past with the eyes of the world on them during that Olympics. But it has been very discouraging that work has not happened.

Senator McCain was probably the first in this body, beginning really in the fall of 2013, to start to talk about the notion of a no-fly zone, a humanitarian safe zone, some use of military force to create safe space most likely in the north of Syria near the Turkish border where people could go if they were fleeing Bashar al-Assad, ISIL, cholera, hunger. They could go with the thought that the creation of that zone and the protection of it with military force would allow the cross border delivery of aid under circumstances where the aid workers and others would not be jeopardized.

I was originally not a fan of that proposal, but by probably February of 2014, I came to his way of thinking, seeing the numbers dramatically increase. My first visit to Turkey was at a time when there was about 750,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey in the summer of 2013 and now it is 2 million. Other countries are seeing the same thing, and now we are seeing it spread not only through neighboring nations but throughout Europe.

It is not easy. I assume that there is a whole lot of challenges in doing that. But to me it just seems if we do not go upstream and try to create some safe area with an additional nearly 8 million displaced people within Syria, that the crisis is going to continue. And even if we wave a magic wand and we say the United States will take 10 times the number of refugees that we have said we would take, it is still a drop in the bucket compared to the challenge that is likely to come.

So am I wrong? Is that a strategy that is the wrong way to go about it? I am not sure you would get a majority of votes in this body for it. I think the vote that we had about using military force

against the use of chemical weapons against civilians barely got a majority on this committee, and it was likely not going to get a majority in the Senate. It certainly would not get a majority in the House. Still, if the administration were to advocate strongly for it, there is some bipartisan support for the notion. But as folks who do this work, am I looking at this wrong?

Ms. LINDBORG. Senator Kaine, I have long wrestled with this question through this crisis. You know, the history of safe zones and no-fly zones for humanitarian purposes is fraught with cases where it did not work well and it is filled with moral hazard.

At the same time, I think that as the crisis progresses and the level of killing continues that is prompting this level of crisis, for us to continue to not take some action that is forthrightly about civilian protection creates enormous tragedy for the people of Syria and is not at all consistent with who we are as a country. It seems to me that as we did in places like Kosovo, that it warrants a very, very hard look with our allies or maybe through concerted diplomacy with other actors who now claim to be interested in putting solutions on the table, that we look very closely at how to provide civilian protection. We should ask what is the best way of doing it and have that be the joint concerted goal of our actions and look at what military means might be required for a no-fly zone or a security area.

Senator KAINE. Other thoughts?

Mr. MILIBAND. I would say two things, Senator, about this.

First of all, I think it would be very welcome if the debate about no-fly zones moved from slogans to details because the details really matter.

Secondly, I think NGOs like ours can offer the benefit of experience of different ways in which governments around the world have tried to deliver so-called safe areas or no-fly zones because we have suffered from the details being got wrong. And I think that immediately you see that a safe area, which is designed to protect some people in some part of the country, immediately creates the moral hazard that Nancy referred to because for us barrel bombing any part of the country of Syria is an affront not just in parts of it. But that only is to make the point that obviously the debate about safe areas engages other questions and merely civilian protection, a proposal for safe zones most recently in the Armed Services Committee last week, was for reasons beyond the humanitarian. And that is why I think our best contribution is to advise on the humanitarian impact of different models of military and other action to protect civilians. And on that basis, I think we have got something to say without taking away from you the ultimate judgment that you have to make about who to put at risk and in what ways.

Senator KAINE. But clearly, we are all in a position here where the existence of a U.N. resolution that calls for cross-border delivery of aid without the consent of the Syrian Government and the stopping of barrel bombing, that that resolution now, you know, a year and a half old with zero enforcement of it—I mean, the impotence of that and the message that sends about the impotence of the international institutions and the unwillingness of the nations that are members of those institutions to do anything to back up

their words—that is incredibly destructive not only in this circumstance but more generally. Would you not agree with that?

I do not know the legal precedent on this, and maybe this is the wrong panel to ask this. But is there a legal precedent for a group of nations taking action to enforce a U.N. Security Council resolution that the U.N. is unwilling to enforce?

Mr. MILIBAND. The closest precedent would be the Kosovo experience where, obviously, there was not a U.N. Security Council resolution and the U.S. administration at the time decided not to put a vote at the U.N. because it did not want a Russian veto. But the action took place. I cannot think of an immediate precedent of the kind that you describe.

Senator KAINE. And looking back on that action, what is the humanitarian sort of NGO's conclusion about that in retrospect. Was that a good thing to do or not?

Ms. LINDBORG. Well, having been with an NGO at the time, I think there was widespread concern that Kosovo was undergoing the beginnings of mass atrocities and that without the campaign, there would have been terrible, terrible loss of life in Kosovo. With some mixed feelings, there was gratitude that action was taken that saved so many lives.

Senator KAINE. So action that was taken to save lives in an ethnic cleansing situation, a huge atrocity, even without a predicate of a U.N. Security Council resolution calling precisely for delivery of aid into this area—you know, I know you can make mistakes and there is risk, there are mixed feelings about it. But the general sense was gratitude that the actions were taken.

What projections have your organizations done—I am about done. But what projections have your organizations done about the likely pace of continued migration out of Syria over the next year or two if sort of status quo continues?

Mr. MILIBAND. Just to finish off on your previous question. of course, the other relevant example would be the Rwandan genocide earlier in the 1990s, then Kosovo, about which people have very strong opinions.

Our projections——

Senator KAINE. And on that, was there a Security Council resolution but no international action was taken or it was taken horribly late so that the slaughter was just at dramatic levels before anybody did anything?

Dr. GABAUDAN. I wanted to go back to your first question, Senator, which is projections. I do not think we have numbers in mind, but certainly the people who are leaving now are people with a certain level of education and who have the resource to pay the smugglers and all——

Senator KAINE. Many do not.

Dr. GABAUDAN. That is going to dry off. The people who are staying in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, et cetera, are those who are getting to the levels of absolute misery. I mean, I think these are those we have to retain in our mind.

Mr. MILIBAND. Sorry. I did not answer you. None of our projections included a scenario where the German Government would say 3 weeks ago anyone from Syria can claim asylum in Germany. And

so the truth is what projections we have done, they need to be revised in a very substantial way.

Now, I think it is only fair to the committee to say both from within Syria and from within the neighboring countries, there has been a significant up-tick in the last month or 2 months of people leaving, including people who are staff members and others. Undoubtedly, there is not just a pincer movement inside Syria, there is also a pincer movement on the people from Syria and from the neighbors.

The second piece of evidence I think is very significant is that the number of people who we anticipate crossing the Aegean during winter we anticipate to be quite high. I was told when I was in Lesvos that the U.N. are actually projecting 20,000 people to cross the Aegean in December, which would be unheard of. And obviously the dangers of hypothermia and other health hazards are very large.

I think if where you are going with your question is do we have to prepare for very, very, very significant numbers leaving Syria and leaving the neighbors in the next year, the answer would be yes. And obviously what is happening in Europe at the moment shows the difficulty of playing catchup on this because Europe has had its eye on the euro crisis. It has had its eye on the Ukraine crisis. It has not had its eye on the refugee crisis. And now desperately trying to play catchup means that it is in a very, very much weaker position. So there is a warning there about what might happen in the next year.

Senator KAINE. I have gone over my time. So thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. If I could, before turning to Senator Risch, just to clear something up. You mentioned—Senator Kaine mentioned the ethnic cleansing that was taking place in Kosovo. For what purpose is Assad barrel bombing civilian populations and clinics and others? There is not a military strategy there. So for what purpose would he be barrel bombing his own citizens?

Mr. MILIBAND. I would be interested in my two colleagues.

I think there are only two ways of seeing this. One is obviously as an assertion of strength and a display of strength, and secondly is that he is engaged in using air power, the only Syrian belligerent with air power, to attack some of the rebel groups. And he is not taking any care as to where the mortars land.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, when you look at this, this is a pretty depressing situation because the solutions that are on the table—as I understand the U.S. policy, is that number one, the policy is to return people back to where they came from. That is the first objective. If that does not work, number two, that they be kept safely in the years where they are housed. And only thirdly do you look at resettlement. Well, if you look at those policies, you wonder if that really works under the present situation. I think the description of this is epic, certainly is an understatement probably.

But these people that now have—the number is about 20 million, as I understand it, worldwide. Is that a fair number that you work with? If you talk about 20 million people who have left their home-

land and essentially people who maybe would not have left under normal circumstances but now have been forced out, and once they have been forced out and they see what the rest of the world is like, they are not inclined to go back as is the number one policy supposedly that we have of seeing that they return to their homeland.

So when you are talking about 20 million people, I mean, that number just is staggering. What troubles me is after this has happened and people have watched this with the Internet that we have now and the communications we have now, what is going to continue to happen in the future to people who look at this migration that has taken place and have said, well, you know, I am tired of living where I am? This is not good here. I am going to move on. And even though they are not forced out, they are going to make that move and, Ms. Lindborg, as you noted, the woman that you talked to said, look, there are only two places to go, the United States and Europe. I mean, this is a challenge of staggering proportions.

What we have now, which most people do not realize, but what I think what is coming in the future when people see that this migration takes place—and you can do it, and you can become a citizen of another country by simply packing up and moving.

How do you see this playing out? I mean, this is a problem that looks to me like it is just going to overwhelm the planet. Anybody want to take a run at that?

Ms. LINDBORG. Actually, and just to make you more depressed, I think the relevant number is 60 million, which is the number of people who are forcibly displaced right now, 20 million as refugees, the rest as displaced within their own countries.

Senator RISCH. But probably subject to the same thought process I just went through.

Ms. LINDBORG. Exactly, absolutely.

Senator RISCH. We have left our home. Why stop here when we can move on?

Ms. LINDBORG. So I think we have talked a lot about some of the urgent shorter term solutions that one might employ in dealing with the roots of the Syria conflict, which is this raw, bleeding conflict that is driving a lot of people through the region.

I would put a couple of other considerations on the table. One is that in Iraq where there is movement right now to clear ISIS, we have the urgent opportunity to help people return where they are able to and where they would like to. And USIP has been working with communities on the ground in places like Tikrit that are cleared of ISIS, but in order for people to go home, you really need to work on a concerted dialogue process that gets rid of the mistrust and rebuilds the social cohesion so they can go home and live side by side with neighbors who might be different from themselves. As we look at investing in our military action in Iraq, we need to ensure that we are commensurately investing in all of those solutions that do enable people to go home so they do not join that migration that you have talked about.

Even longer term, I would note that among the Syrians who are going to Europe these days, among the 20 million or 60 million, almost everybody is from a country that one would term as fragile,

you know, weak, ineffective, and/or illegitimate in the eyes of its citizens. And these are the countries that have the billion people who are living in poverty. They are the ones that have that mixture of oppression, of violent conflict and poverty that are driving people to seek better lives.

Longer term, we collectively need to refocus how we think about development programs, moving development, humanitarian assistance to work hand in hand with security and diplomacy. We have just had new sustainable development goals passed in New York this week where there was the historic inclusion of something called Goal 16, which basically calls for inclusive democratic societies with accountable justice for all, which sounds very Pollyannaish, but every nation has signed off on this. And it gives us a platform for insisting that we not continue to have these kinds of bleeding sores around the world that create these kind of humanitarian crises and keep so many people in misery and poverty.

Mr. MILIBAND. Can I just briefly address I think a very important point that Senator Risch has made, which is to understand the distinction between someone who is fleeing for economic reasons and someone who is fleeing for reasons of political persecution, which is what defines a refugee? It is a world on the move, and there are 200 million people moving around the world for economic reasons. And I think one of the lessons of this crisis is that it is very, very important, indeed, to maintain the integrity of the status of a refugee, someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution, and the erosion of that status has damaging implications for the politics of this issue and it has damaging implications for the policy of this issue.

The truth is it is harder to reach America as a refugee than any other way short of swimming across the Atlantic. The checks, the vetting, et cetera are far, far tougher to arrive in the United States as a refugee than under any other visa or other regime. And in a way you can understand that because there are rights associated with refugee status that are earned, that if you have a well-founded fear of persecution, that you have rights and the state has obligations to you. And I think it is important that we do not allow that status to be undermined because when it becomes part of a simple migration debate—in honest truth, that is what has happened in Europe. A lot of the problems in Europe are for the confusion of the migration debate with the refugee debate—then it is very, very hard to hold the public, never mind to run the policy.

Senator RISCH. Interesting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Before I turn to Senator Markey, just to put things in context, our staff looked up the numbers relative to the Yugoslav war of a decade, and there were 140,000 people that were killed and 4 million people displaced. So if you look at the scale, this one causes that to pale, and yet, again there is no real action relative to the barrel bombing.

So, Senator Markey.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Miliband, I have been and remain a skeptic of policy recommendations that increase the risk of Americanization or Westernization of the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria. And I

would much rather see us work to influence parties toward internal compromises necessary to end violence and work together to establish governments that fully represent and fairly treat all people.

Most recently, we have heard that U.S. policy may be moving toward the creation of so-called safe zones, long advocated by Turkey. Just last week, retired General Petraeus called for us to create, quote, enclaves in Syria protected by coalition air power where a moderate Sunni force could be supported and where additional forces could be trained. Internally displaced persons could find refuge, and the Syrian opposition could organize.

But on September 16, here in the Foreign Relations Committee, we heard testimony from Michael Bowers of Mercy Corps who told us that such zones cannot be considered safe.

I have been advised that there are three requirements for true, effective humanitarian safe zones. One, parties to the armed conflict must agree to the creation of the zone and to respect it. Two, the zone must be secured by an impartial force with sufficient capability and size, and it is critical that this force not be a party to the conflict or a supporter of any party to the conflict. Three, the zone must be deemed militarized, meaning that it must not be a base for any military activity or operations by parties to the conflict, and this must be rigorously enforced by the impartial security force.

In August, the U.N. Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, completed a round of consultations that the U.N. Security Council has endorsed.

Secretary Miliband, could you provide your perspective on how the P5 and the entire international community can focus diplomatic support for his efforts? More specifically, how might such a process create true humanitarian safe zones in Syria that meet the criteria I just mentioned?

Mr. MILIBAND. Thank you, Senator. I would say two things.

First of all, your skepticism about military engagement is widely shared. And I know that you have not been a skeptic about engagement internationally generally. And I think the greater the skepticism about the military side, the greater the responsibility to act on the humanitarian and the political.

Secondly, I said earlier that I thought that in the debate about safe zones, no-fly zones, it was important to move from slogans to details, which is what you have done, and also learn the lessons of history because all of us—actually my colleagues here with far more personal experience than me can speak to the different ways in which different tactics for the establishment of safe zones have worked or have not worked.

Where I can comment—and the well known example of the Kurds in 1991 who were protected versus the Srebrenica example—in a way one of my frustrations is that we have got to go beyond just using those two examples as clubs with which to beat the argument. We need to get right underneath the details because the truth to my mind is that the situation in Syria and Iraq at the moment is unlike anything else that we have seen before, and we need to learn from history but not be imprisoned by it.

You asked about the diplomatic and political engagement. I said in my opening statement that it is extraordinary to look not just

at the numbers of people affected by this crisis but the absence of political engagement either from the great powers or from the regional powers on the political front. The Staffan de Mistura mission does not have the active ongoing engaged backing on a day-to-day basis of the nations who voted for the establishment of his office. And that contrasts with the situation in the Balkans where there were successive contact groups and other formations of the P5, the permanent members of the Security Council, and others to try to put political and diplomatic muscle behind the attempts.

Now, many times those attempts failed to resolve the Balkans crisis, but nonetheless there was the effort. And I think I would argue for as inclusive a process as possible because that reflects the realities on the ground and for a process as structured and urgent as possible, secondly; and thirdly, for a process that does not leave the humanitarian situation last because often in these diplomatic—I do not like to say "games," but diplomatic enterprises, the humanitarian situation seems an add-on, whereas to my mind it may well be that the humanitarian situation provides the way in for a contact group rather than the conclusion of a contact group. And it is in that light that I suggested that this notion of humanitarian envoys appointed by the P5 heads of state but also by the regional powers to start with what should be unbreakable rules. And that seems to me to be at least a plausible hypothesis about a way an international effort could begin.

Ms. LINDBORG. If I could just underscore two points.

I would, first of all, emphasize that now that this crisis has reached the shores of Europe, it does catalyze a renewed focus, and the humanitarian crisis is an important way in. It is now the leading edge of this crisis as it presents globally.

Secondly, it is very dangerous to conflate military approaches with civilian protection. Any approach that conflates those goals I think is a perilous way forward.

Senator MARKEY. So you agree more with the three-point program that I laid out. Do you each agree with that? That is a better approach?

Ms. LINDBORG. Yes, although I would fully subscribe to David's advice that we have a detailed conversation based on particulars. But, yes.

Senator MARKEY. No, no. I appreciate that. But in principle, the sanctuary for the refugees can also be the military base.

Ms. LINDBORG. Correct.

Senator MARKEY. You all agree with that. So I think that is a contract with General Petraeus, and I think it is important for us to put that out here on the table because that is, I think, central to this issue.

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to ask an additional question about Yemen.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure.

Senator MARKEY. But I can wait. Is that all right?

The CHAIRMAN. Just out of curiosity, since I understand your point of view and I think David Miliband does too, are you saying on the other hand that you would support U.S. intervention to stop the barrel bombing if it was not about military activity taking place within that safe zone but protection of civilians?

Senator MARKEY. Are you asking——

The CHAIRMAN. No. I am asking you that, just out of curiosity. I just heard you all. Because that would be a breakthrough.

Senator MARKEY. I think the breakthrough honestly has to be Obama and Putin sitting down and reaching an agreement on this. Okay? And I think that is the only way it is going to happen. I think any other intervention is not going to be effective in the long run. I think we need a political resolution of this, and we need everything on the table. And we need the major powers to get this back out of the cold war framework, which it is back into. So that is my view.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. MILIBAND. Just for the record, Mr. Chairman, before I get or my organization gets signed up to——

Senator MARKEY. No, no. Can I say this? You did not answer.

Mr. MILIBAND. I just wanted to say that Nancy's point about details really matters. So let us just take the example of a demilitarized zone. A demilitarized in an area in a country which is flooded with arms of all kinds is a nice aspiration but does not speak to the detail of the situation on the ground. I would suggest that the imperative is to look at what a detailed proposal actually is and then measure it against the situation on the ground and the objectives that are set for it because in the end, it is the application of the principles that is going to matter. And frankly, the devil is in the detail, and my goodness, we have seen that in the last few years in Syria.

Senator MARKEY. Just quickly, Ms. Lindborg, looking back to last winter and spring, it seems that we were on autopilot to reflexively support a Saudi decision to intervene in Yemen without a full examination of alternatives. What are your thoughts on this? What do we need to do to assess what we might have done differently last winter and spring, particularly diplomatically in the run-up to outside military intervention in Yemen?

Ms. LINDBORG. I would answer it this way. We are seeing where the military intervention is preventing humanitarian assistance from reaching populations that were very, very vulnerable to begin with, and we are already seeing the beginning of pockets of famine in Yemen. And if there is not an ability to provide assistance on a more regular basis, including the ability of ships to dock because Yemen is deeply dependent upon imports of fuel and critical food supplies—it is also running critically short of water, as we know—there will be massive widespread famine. And I think there is an important conversation to be had with both Saudi Arabia and Iran as to whether their military objectives are worth that kind of broad-spread humanitarian crisis.

Senator MARKEY. What can we do to help to deescalate the violence so we can get the humanitarian aid into those who need it? What would you recommend that we do? What is the policy?

Ms. LINDBORG. I would increase the pressure to, at a minimum, create a regular cycle of humanitarian pauses so that there can be a regularized ability to get assistance in, including ships that can get in and regularly offload and onload. There is clearly a need for the bigger diplomatic resolution of the conflict, but in the absence

of that, there needs to be a way to keep the country from tipping into famine.

Senator MARKEY. Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, Secretary Miliband was the leading voice in Great Britain on climate change, and I know how he knows how it interacts with food and water crises that then further exacerbates all these problems. But I know my time has run out, but I just wanted to thank you publicly for all the work you have done in your career, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. MILIBAND. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Any additional comments?

I want to thank you and thank all three of you for your testimony, for the service that you provide to so many people around the world. Certainly the world would be a very different place if you and the organizations you represent were not doing the things that you are doing. So we thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate the honest assessment you have given us on topics maybe outside of what you actually came here to necessarily talk about. It is much appreciated.

And if you would, there will be additional questions, I know, and comments from others. I would say to the committee if we could have those in by close of business by Thursday, and if you could respond fairly quickly, we would appreciate that. But again, thank you for your service. Thank you for helping us understand the magnitude and some of the details relative to the problem.

And with that, this meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSE OF DAVID MILIBAND TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TIM KAINE

Question. During the hearing, you spoke of the need to "move from slogans to a discussion of the details" of humanitarian safe zones. You also noted that international NGOs should have an important voice in that discussion given their particular experience and knowledge of the current situation on the ground and what has worked in the past and what has not. At the same time, you acknowledged that prior examples of safe zones in Kosovo and Kurdish Iraq are not perfect precedents for a situation as unique and complex as the current situation in Syria.

- Given that, from your perspective at the International Rescue Committee, what are the specific recommendations and what lessons learned would you offer policymakers on the details of a feasible and effective safe zone to address the humanitarian needs of Syrian civilians?
- What coordination, operational and diplomatic modalities would be essential for such a zone to be successful?

Answer. Thank you Senator Kaine for your question at the hearing and your deep interest in responding to the crisis in Syria.

There is a healthy debate around the topic of civilian protection mechanisms and no definitive guidelines for the best course of action, reflecting the great variance in context between conflicts. There are, however, key considerations that the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and other humanitarian actors would put forward to policymakers to address in their calculus on civilian protection options. It is by exploring these questions (and others) that we can begin the process of "moving from slogans to details" as I noted at the hearing.

Consent of all parties: The ideal, in order for a zone to be deemed "safe," is that parties to the conflict agree to the terms. Without this consent—civilians can and will continue to be targeted. In fact the creation of the safe zone can concentrate civilians and make them easier targets. This occurred in the case of the six safe zones that were declared through United Nations Security Council Resolution

(UNSCR) 819 in Bosnia in 1993. Bosnian Serbs did not consent to the creation of the safe havens or recognize the areas as neutral spaces. As a result, they moved in and proceeded to slaughter Bosnian Muslim men and boys, including 8,000 in Srebrenica alone. Hence, there is some skepticism about "safe zones." That consent, which may lure civilians into a false sense of security, may also change over time. Such was the case in Sri Lanka, where civilians were encouraged to move into "no fire zones" in 2009 for their own protection as the government pursued the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in the final months of that country's decades-long civil war. The zones ultimately were bombed and an estimated 40,000 civilians were killed.

Given the sheer numbers of parties to the conflict in Syria—many of which have shown blatant disregard to international humanitarian law and the lives of innocent civilians—and their fractious, ever-evolving nature, ensuring this consent and maintaining adherence to it would be extremely challenging.

Defense of safe zone: Without such agreement, safe zones can still be established. However, they will require some form of defense—including the deployment of ground forces under a proactive mandate and clear rules of engagement—to ensure the protection of the civilians within them. The U.N. Security Council is authorized to act to restore international peace and security when it determines the existence of a threat, including through establishing safe zones, even when all parties do not consent. Such was the case in the situation of UNSCR 891 on Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, as we so painfully learned, the peacekeeping presence protecting the six cities deemed safe zones was not enough (only 7,500 strong). Furthermore, the U.N. Protection Force (UNPFOR) in Bosnia only had a standard peacekeeping mandate that allowed for the use of force only in the case of self-defense (not to proactively protect civilians).

While we are not likely to see a U.N. peacekeeping force in Syria, the point remains that safe zones without the consent (and sometimes with) the agreement of all relevant parties to the conflict must be actively protected and attacks deterred. Introducing another military force (whether backed by the U.N. Security Council or otherwise) into the equation amounts to creating a new party to the conflict. That can (and is intended to) alter the conflict dynamics.

The defense of a safe zone may be required not over a period of months, but years. As the no-fly zone (NFZ) instituted in northern Iraq in 1991 shows, protection may be needed for a decade or more. This NFZ is widely viewed as a successful effort to protect civilians, but evolved over the course of 12 years from Operation Comfort to Operation Comfort II to Operation Northern Watch. Without a definitive change in the dynamics threatening the population, it is not possible to define what the time dimensions and the commitment involved to provide continual protection to them in a safe zone will be.

Demilitarization: In order for a "safe zone" to truly be a space where people are protected and which is off limits to armed actors, it would have to be demilitarized. To the extent that parties to a conflict agree with the concept, their continued support may largely hinge on the fact that establishing a safe zone is not to the benefit of any actor. This means ensuring that it is not a space for fighters to organize or launch attacks. Certainly, the recent introduction of Russian forces into the theater of conflict complicates demilitarization, and must be considered very carefully.

It is also critical for humanitarian organizations providing assistance in such a safe zone to not be involved in a situation where their actions benefit a party to the conflict by assisting them as they continue to perpetrate violence—which is in contravention of the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality.

The establishment of safe zones in 1994 through UNSCR 929 in southwest Rwanda demonstrates this dynamic well. An estimated 1.2 million people ended up living in safe zones protected by a temporary multinational force through Operation Turquoise. However, it was widely understood that Hutu genocidaires were not all disarmed and continued to perpetrate the genocide from within the safe zone. The protection and humanitarian assistance that was afforded to Rwandans fleeing violence was partly undercut by the ability of armed actors to continue killing people from the safe zones. In an environment like Syria where arms are circulating freely among a panoply of fighting forces, serious efforts would need to be made to ensure the civilian and demilitarized nature of a safe zone.

Incentive to close asylum space: Some people argue that the creation of safe zones may provide an incentive for the countries of asylum surrounding Syria—Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq—to close their doors to refugees fleeing to safety. As I detailed in my testimony, the social and economic impact of hosting 4 million Syrian refugees is profound in these countries. Despite the generosity that has been extended to refugees, this impact has begun to translate into tightening asylum space, the closing of border crossings and an increased desire to see displaced Syrians

remain inside Syria. These troubling developments are documented in a report the IRC and Norwegian Refugee Council published last year called "No Escape: Civilians in Syria Struggle to Find Safety across Borders."

The recent debate (and seeming confusion) between the U.S. and Turkey about the purpose of the buffer zone being established north of Aleppo along the border with Turkey highlights this concern. While it has now been made clear that this zone is not considered a protected zone by the U.S. Government, there were initial indications that the Turkish Government hoped such a zone—one from which attacks to defeat ISIL would be launched—could also serve as a haven for the millions of Syrians who have fled into Turkey. Beyond the further tightening of the border for Syrians fleeing, there is concern that establishing a safe zone may actually result in Syrians being sent back into Syria from the countries where they have sought safety, under the guise that they no longer need international protection.

Pull Factors: Establishing safe zones could create pull factors for people to move from the areas where they are currently located and, as a result, possibly put themselves at extensive risk to reach them. Without a mechanism to protect civilians on their way to safe zones, this may increase the danger they face. In the case of Syria, civilians face a gauntlet of security challenges across the country and, if they are able to actually escape the areas where they face threats (as many as 422,000 people are estimated to be besieged), they face a mosaic of armed actors, check points and indiscriminate attacks of all varieties as they move through the country on to safety.

Protection outside of the safe zone: Finally, creating safe zones somehow indicates that the rest of the country is not safe and that efforts are not being extended beyond these particular geographies to protect civilians. While safe zones established with the correct contextual planning could offer protection to some civilians, it may detract from the urgency of protecting all civilians in Syria. In a conflict where there has already been shockingly little progress toward any semblance of a political solution—let alone agreements to stop targeting civilians directly or ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it—the establishment of a safe zone may provide a false sense of resolution. Establishing safe zones in a conflict characterized by massive and widespread violations of international humanitarian law must be looked to as one step to provide protection for some people in need, but not a silver bullet. The creation of any zone must not become an excuse to further political inertia on an urgent and unparalleled challenge of our time.

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HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST

Written Statement for

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The U.S. Role and Strategy in the Middle East: The Humanitarian Crisis

September 29, 2015

We are pleased to submit this statement on behalf of Human Rights First. Human Rights First works in the United States and abroad to promote a secure and humane world by advancing justice, human dignity, and respect for the rule of law. Human Rights First is an independent advocacy organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals. We are a non-profit, nonpartisan international human rights organization with offices in New York, Washington D.C., and Houston, Texas.

For over 30 years, we've built bipartisan coalitions and teamed up with frontline activists and lawyers to tackle issues that demand American leadership, including protecting the rights of refugees who flee persecution. Protecting the persecuted is a core American value. Reflecting this country's deep-seated commitment to liberty and human dignity, as well as its pledge under the 1951 Refugee Convention's Protocol, the United States has long led efforts to protect those who flee from political, religious, and other persecutions.

The world is facing the largest refugee crisis since World War II. Globally, about 60 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Over 4 million Syrians have fled their country, and many have been stranded for years in neighboring countries where they can't work, cannot support their families, have little access to education, and face shortages in food and other assistance due to massive underfunding of UN humanitarian aid appeals. Syria's neighbors, faced with overwhelming refugee numbers and inadequate international support, have made it more difficult for refugees to enter to seek protection or extend their stays. Meanwhile, the fighting and violence within Syria has intensified, leaving refugees with little hope that they will be able to safely return.

Many are turning to dangerous routes to reach places of safety where they can rebuild their lives. Thousands have embarked on risky journeys in an attempt to reach Europe.

This is a defining moment for the world, and the United States. Faced with the largest refugee crisis since World War II, how will the United States respond? Will it exercise leadership by truly sharing in the responsibility of hosting more of Syria's refugees or will it provide refuge to only a token or minimal number?

How the United States addresses this refugee crisis will be a critical test for U.S. leadership. The United States has played a leading role in providing humanitarian assistance, giving over $4 billion to relief efforts both within Syria and in neighboring countries. This is consistent both with U.S. leadership on humanitarian relief and its strategic interest in preventing further destabilization of the region. But the U.S. government can and should do more, including by using its unique position as a global leader to champion the protection of refugees trying to flee from Syria and to launch a meaningful resettlement initiative. The United States has not launched a significant resettlement initiative that would demonstrate to Syria's neighbors a real commitment to share in hosting at least some of Syria's refugees and would encourage other resettlement states to follow suit. A meaningful resettlement initiative, in addition to providing a future to the individual refugees and families it would directly assist, should be seen as part of a broader effort to increase the protection space available to Syrian refugees in the region and globally.

The United States has long been a leader in protecting refugees and has typically resettled about half of the refugees identified as in need of resettlement each year. The United States has only resettled about 1,300 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2015 through August 31, and has only committed so far to resettle at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2016. Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon are hosting about 4 million Syrian refugees. Meanwhile Germany has announced it can host 800,000. This level of U.S. response falls far short of global leadership, and our resettlement process is much too slow, often taking two years or longer.

The United States must lead, and lead by example. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is strategically smart. In addition to supporting Europe, a stronger refugee response will promote the stability of states bordering Syria including key U.S. allies in the region, such as Jordan.

In light of this global emergency situation, we urge the United States to lead a comprehensive global initiative in partnership with European and other states to improve access to protection for refugees. We urge the United States government led by the President and the Secretary of State to:

1. **Increase Resettlement and other Routes to Protection**. The United States should lead a global initiative that includes many countries to resettle or provide other admission to 1 to 1.5 million Syrian refugees. The United States should increase its own resettlement commitment to 100,000 Syrian refugees for fiscal year 2016 and implement more expeditious routes to protection for Syrian refugees with family in the United States and other at-risk refugees. In the next month, the administration should appoint a high-level coordinator in the White House to oversee the refugee response. This official should be tasked with securing significant improvements in the pace of the U.S. resettlement program. The U.S. should press other countries to sharply increase resettlement or other admission routes, and call on the European Union to create safe and legal ways for refugees to reach Europe. Over the next six months, the United States should review and reform its delay-plagued resettlement process to be more timely and effective without compromising security.

2. **Meet humanitarian assistance goal.** The United States should lead a global push to secure 100% funding of the UN's humanitarian appeal for the Syria crisis, set a strong example by further stepping up its contribution to cover a higher percentage of the appeal, significantly increase development funding for refugee-hosting countries, press wealthy states to increase contributions and develop longer term strategies for meeting the front-line needs of refugees and hosting communities.

3. **Champion protection for refugees**. The United States should encourage states in the region neighboring Syria – and in Europe and beyond - to respect the human rights of refugees and migrants, including to allow refugees to work to support their families, to educate children, to facilitate access to higher education, and to respect obligations to protect people from arbitrary detention and return to persecution.

4. **Redouble efforts to find effective multilateral solutions to the political and security crisis** in Syria and to address the human rights abuses causing so many people to flee in search of protection.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, leading Jewish groups, major faith-based groups, and even the Pope have called on the United States to respond to this refugee crisis. Human Rights First and other leading organizations focused on refugee protection and refugee resettlement have called on the administration to resettle at least 100,000 Syrian refugees in fiscal year 2016.

Refugee Council USA

Various National Security Professionals

18 U.S. Mayors

The United States has always led in times of international crisis. This country should continue to be a beacon on human rights. Human Rights First believes that America is strongest when our policies and values match our actions.

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