

Resources for Understanding and Responding to Terrorism and to Related Anti-Muslim Public Speech

~ Compiled in December 2015 by members of the ELCA Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Muslim Relations and their academic and staff colleagues, who acknowledge that this resource will need to be updated periodically and note that the linked articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Panel or of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (For more information, contact ERINFO@elca.org)

Brief Talking Points

- In an open and democratic society in which people seek the common good, all people of faith can benefit from a better understanding of the beliefs and practices of others.
- In the current climate in the United States (and elsewhere in the world), it is especially urgent that we Christians seek a basic knowledge of the faith and practices of Muslims, and especially that we meet and get to know our Muslim neighbors.
- Hate speech by public figures helps fuel violence, even when that speech does not explicitly call for violence. We have seen this again and again in the long history of anti-Judaism in the West. Today in the United States, Muslims' mosques are being vandalized, Muslim school children are being bullied, and a variety of hate crimes are being committed – concurrently with a rise in public speech that makes Muslims, in general, targets of suspicion and fear.
- Any religious tradition can be distorted and misused for non-religious goals, such as gaining and maintaining power.
- When someone who claims to be Christian commits an atrocity, it is not legitimate to condemn all Christians, or the Christian tradition in general, because of it.
- Similarly, when someone who claims to be Muslim commits an atrocity, it is not legitimate to condemn all Muslims, or the Islamic tradition in general, because of it.
- However, it is neither prudent nor helpful to deny that many terrorists use their own perverse interpretations of their religious traditions to motivate and justify their actions.
- Many non-Muslims are unaware of what many Muslims today mean by jihad: e.g., the "greater jihad" of striving for spiritual purity and adherence to God's will, or the "lesser jihad" of defensive war – neither of which legitimizes terrorism.
- It is Muslims who suffer most from terrorist acts around the globe committed by those who call themselves Muslims.
- We citizens of the U.S.A should educate ourselves about the civilian suffering and death, even if unintended, we and our allies are causing as part of the "war on terror" and in the civil wars in Syria and Yemen—and about how that destruction and loss is perceived by the victims "on the ground."

ELCA Resources on Islam and Muslims

An Open Letter to the Muslim American Community from the Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop 11 December 2015

Excerpt: In this season of Advent, we, your Christian neighbors, are preparing to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who commanded that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... [and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31, NRSV).

In our love for you, our Muslim neighbors, we are distressed by the ways in which you are being forced to bear the fears held by many in our nation. Therefore, we renew our commitment to find even more effective ways to protect and defend you from words and actions that assault your safety and well-being. We believe God calls us to resist what is divisive, discriminatory, xenophobic, racist or violent, and we want you to look to us as allies and friends. MORE <http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7803>

Download Talking Points and *Discover Islam* DVD series study guide

http://elca.org/Faith/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Muslim-Relations?_ga=1.125150282.1586236613.1449597027

Order the DVDs at no charge from the Muslim producers <http://www.discoverislam.com/elca/>

Ways to Help

Support and Protect Syrian Refugees through the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

https://secure2.convio.net/lirs/site/Advocacy;jsessionid=24B62B6318A2AE8DA6E458DFC7D625F1.app202a?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=215#.VmmE17w_XUq

LIRS Response to ISIS Attacks and Syrian Refugee Resettlement

<http://lirs.org/press-inquiries/press-room/151116newsrelease/>

Support the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's response to the Middle East and Europe

Refugee Crisis -- A record number of people are fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East in search of a better way of life – especially Syrians. Although they come from different countries, for various reasons, they share a common goal: hope for a brighter future. Many have fled with only the clothes on their backs. With temperatures dropping, the already difficult situation is becoming life-threatening.

Lutheran Disaster Response is currently helping meet basic humanitarian needs and upholding the rights of those who have fled war and crisis. With the winter months upon us, your help is needed to provide warmth and hope to those most vulnerable.

Working with our companion churches and partners, Lutheran Disaster Response is providing food, diapers, blankets, water, health kits, hygiene kits and psychosocial services, in addition to continuing support of refugee camps.

<http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response/Our-Impact/Middle-East-and-Europe-Refugee>

Representative Responses from Lutheran Organizations and Leaders and Ecumenical Partners

Strategies to counter terrorism engender more violence

Excerpts: GENEVA, 10 December 2015 (LWI) - The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) marks Human Rights Day today by denouncing both the recent "vicious" terrorist attacks "in many cities on many continents" and the "unacceptably high death toll" in actions to counter terrorism in Syria....

While terrorism must be countered and its root causes addressed, military power alone will not resolve terrorism's vicious cycle of violence, the LWF leaders [President Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan and General Secretary Rev. Dr. Martin Junge] say.... "There is a duty to counter terrorism and to bring it to a halt; there is a grave risk that current strategies will achieve the opposite," Younan and Junge conclude.

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/strategies-counter-terrorism-engender-more-violence>

Lutheran leaders condemn attacks in Beirut, Paris <http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7795>

ELCA presiding bishop encourages the support of refugee resettlement

Excerpt: We are not naive about possible new threats of terrorism, but denying refuge to thousands of desperate people is not who we are as Christians, nor will it guarantee our security. The United States is a welcoming country with a religiously diverse society, and our refugee resettlement program should continue to reflect this. We must redouble our efforts to work for a more secure world – one with less hate and more understanding. Doing less than that only feeds into the terrorist propaganda.

<http://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/7797>

People of God must stand up for vulnerable refugees

By Jessica Crist, bishop of the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Excerpt: As a Christian, I find this whole conversation in the weeks leading up to Christmas to be poignant. Christians worship a God who became human, and experienced what it was to be a refugee. We worship a God whose angels always bring us the message, "Do not be afraid." We worship a God who risked everything for us, so that we might risk for others.

Right now there are more migrants across the globe than ever before in history. Some of them we see on the front pages of our newspapers, others are almost invisible to the rest of us. Each of these migrants, each of these refugees is a beloved child of God, made in God's image.

http://billingsgazette.com/news/opinion/guest/people-of-god-must-stand-up-for-vulnerable-refugees/article_d9b7ea35-a049-5ce4-b704-75e4be455acc.html

Facebook post by Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin, bishop of the Southwest California Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Excerpt: So I will just say what I think it is appropriate for me, as a bishop of the church, to say: it is wrong to discriminate against an entire group of people simply because of their religion. To suggest that should be done is to challenge people of every faith to resist--for there is not one of our faith communities that could not be (or has not been) victimized in the same way.

I stand in solidarity with Muslims of good will throughout the world, and I do not fear them. As I believe Jesus teaches me to do, I love them as my neighbors. What I fear is intolerance and human weakness--and those who would exploit such fear and ignorance for short-term gain.

And I pray for open hearts and minds, and for mutual respect to prevail.

<https://www.facebook.com/bishopguyerwin/posts/440970502768784>

A message from Dr. Michael Shelley, Director, A Center of Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Conclusion: We stand in solidarity with our Muslim friends and neighbors during these anxious days. We urge fellow Christians, indeed all U.S. citizens, to engage in dialogue with people of all faiths, but in particular with Muslims, in order to learn from and deepen our understanding of one another, and to explore ways to prevent further violence. <http://centers.lstc.edu/ccme/>

Reflecting on Beirut and Paris...by David Grafton, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Excerpt: These terrorist incidents are not simply an example of a barbaric Islamic East versus a free Christian West, or of an inevitable clash of civilizations. (We should not conveniently forget the number of those innocents killed at schools and theaters by guns in our own communities.) The first innocents to suffer from the violence [in the attacks in Beirut and Paris]...were Lebanese Shi'a Muslims. Some of the first responses came from Muslim scholars and organizations living in Europe and North America who articulated their own denunciations of such acts. This is not just about Islam, but about radicalist Muslims belonging to a political organization with an apocalyptic piety who have vowed to pass judgment on all. As one Muslim journalist has noted, "It's all of us versus ISIS." <http://ltsp.edu/reflecting-on-beirut-and-paris/>

From the National Council of Churches

1) NCC Urges Hospitality, Care Toward Refugees

Opening: "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

-Deuteronomy 10:19, NRSV As Scripture is clear about our responsibility to care for refugees, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA supports the extension of hospitality by the United States to those who are fleeing the turmoil and violence of recent years in Syria.

http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/news/2015-11_Syrian_Refugees.php

2) Keep our Elections Free from Hateful Rhetoric

Excerpt: The National Council of Churches calls on all candidates for office to refrain from utilizing speech that reflects hatred of others and results in the division of society as a way to promote their candidacies. We similarly call on media outlets covering the candidates and their campaigns, debates, and addresses to exercise care not to sensationalize such rhetoric at a time when we should be lifting up our best values, living out the democratic process.

http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/news/2015-11_Campaign_Rhetoric.php

3) Recent Middle East Violence and Acts of Terrorism

Conclusion: We witness to this hope for peace with our fellow Christians in the region. We stand together with our Muslim and Jewish and other sisters and brothers of goodwill who seek peace there. As the National Council of Churches, we will continue to encourage our churches and congregations to support a renewed peace settlement as the only option. And we call upon the United States government and the United Nations to enforce previous commitments towards a just peace and do everything to ensure that a just peace has a chance to emerge from today's chaos and destruction.

http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/news/2015-11_Recent_ME_Violence.php

Statements from the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

On the vilification of Muslims

http://www.globalministries.org/ucc_doc_statement_on_vilification_of_muslims

On refugees http://www.globalministries.org/not_terrorists_not_tourists_refugees_are_human_beings

On France and Lebanon

http://www.globalministries.org/global_ministries_statement_on_france_and_lebanon

Presiding Bishop addresses Syrian refugee crisis: 'Be not afraid!' by Presiding Bishop and Primate Michael B. Curry of The Episcopal Church -- Excerpt: The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, through its Episcopal Migration Ministries service, works with dioceses and congregations, and the United States government, to settle refugees in communities across this great country. The Episcopal Church has been engaged in this ministry for more than 75 years...carrying out the words of Jesus who told us to be a neighbor to those in need. <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/ens/2015/11/18/presiding-bishop-michael-b-curry-addresses-syrian-refugee-crisis-be-not-afraid/>

Background Information

Cavanaugh, William T. *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict*. Oxford University Press, 2009

Gopin, Marc, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*. Oxford University Press, 2002

Kimball, Charles, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. HarperOne, 2008

_____. *When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Jossey-Bass, 2011

Maalouf, Amin, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. Penguin, 2003

Huffington Post collection of articles on Islamist extremism

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/islamic-extremism/>

The Words That Killed Medieval Jews by Sara Lipton

Excerpts: Do harsh words lead to violent acts? At a moment when hate speech seems to be proliferating, it's a question worth asking.... The experience of Jews in medieval Europe offers a sobering example. Official Christian theology and policy toward Jews remained largely unchanged in the Middle Ages. Over roughly 1,000 years, Christianity condemned the major tenets of Judaism and held "the Jews" responsible for the death of Jesus. But the terms in which these ideas were expressed changed radically.... Today's purveyors of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, anti-police and anti-abortion rhetoric and imagery may not for a moment intend to provoke violence against Muslims, immigrants, police officers and health care providers. But in the light of history, they should not be shocked when that violence comes to pass.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/opinion/the-words-that-killed-medieval-jews.html?ref=opinion>

The Rise of Hate Search by Evan Soltas and Seth Stephens-Davidowitz

Excerpts: When Islamophobic searches are at their highest levels, such as during the controversy over the "ground zero mosque" in 2010 or around the anniversary of 9/11, hate crimes tend to be at their highest levels, too.

In 2014, according to the F.B.I., anti-Muslim hate crimes represented 16.3 percent of the total of 1,092 reported offenses. Anti-Semitism still led the way as a motive for hate crimes, at 58.2 percent.

The frightening thing is this: If our model is right, Islamophobia and thus anti-Muslim hate crimes are currently higher than at any time since the immediate aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/opinion/sunday/the-rise-of-hate-search.html?ref=opinion>

A Jihadism Anti-Primer from the Middle East Research and Information Project by Darrell Li

Excerpt: The US national security state has for the past quarter-century been preoccupied with something it has called "jihadism." What follows is an anti-primer of sorts on jihadism. Unlike innumerable works, it does not purport to tell readers everything they need to know about the different groups whose exotic names and acronyms animate excited "national security" debates. Instead it is an attempt to help readers think through this issue beyond the fashionable threat of the day, to clarify what is and is not known so far, and to better weigh the issues at stake. http://merip.org/mer/mer276/jihadism-anti-primer?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign&utm_term=%2AMideast%20Brief

Top Seven Myths about Muslims by Baher Kamal

Excerpts: Some "key facts about Muslims that large media, in particular the Western information tools, often neglect or ignore": Not all Muslims are Arabs....Not all Arabs are Muslims.... Major Muslim countries are in Asia....Muslims do not have their own God

<http://www.juancole.com/2015/12/myths-about-muslims.html>

Top Ten Ways Islamic Law forbids Terrorism by Juan Cole

Excerpts: Terrorism is above all murder. Murder is strictly forbidden in the Qur'an. 5:53 says, "... whoso kills a soul, unless it be for murder or for wreaking corruption in the land, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and he who saves a life, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind, "Qur'an 6:151 says," and do not kill a soul that God has made sacrosanct, save lawfully." (i.e. murder is forbidden but the death penalty imposed by the state for a crime is permitted)....

The killing of innocent non-combatants is forbidden.

<http://www.juancole.com/2015/11/ten-ways-islamic-forbids-terrorism.html>

What's in a Name: What's Wrong With "Radical Islamic Extremism" by Vernon Schubel

Conclusion: Muslim terrorists are no more representative of "radical Islamic extremism" than Robert Dear is a representative of "radical Christian extremism." Unless we wish to associate all people of faith with these kinds of violence, we should stop using this terminology.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vernon-schubel/whats-in-a-name-whats-wro_b_8782396.html

The Atlantic essay and two responses: What ISIS Really Wants by Graeme Wood

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

1) The Phony Islam of ISIS by Caner K. Dagli

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/02/what-muslims-really-want-isis-atlantic/386156/>

2) What The Atlantic Gets Dangerously Wrong About ISIS And Islam by Jack Jenkins

<http://thinkprogress.org/world/2015/02/18/3624121/atlantic-gets-dangerously-wrong-isis-islam/>

What Americans really think about Muslims and Islam by Shibley Telhami

Results of a poll conducted Nov 4-10, 2015

Excerpts: First, Americans differentiate between the "Muslim people" and the "Muslim religion," and they view Islam more unfavorably than they do Muslims.

Second, views of both the Muslim people and the Muslim religion are divided across party lines....

Seventh, majorities of those who know some Muslims—even if not well—have favorable views of Muslims; this holds across the political spectrum.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/12/09-what-americans-think-of-muslims-and-islam-telhami>

The fascinating history of how Jefferson and other Founding Fathers defended Muslim rights by

Elahe Izadi; Excerpt: A number of the Founding Fathers explicitly mentioned Muslims — along with other believers outside the prevailing Protestant mainstream — as they outlined the parameters of religious freedom and equal protection.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/11/how-thomas-jefferson-and-other-founding-fathers-defended-muslim-rights/?hpid=hp_no-name_hp-in-the-news%3Apage%2Fin-the-news

Responses from Muslims

A Common Word between Us and You, the 2007 open letter of engagement to Christians from global Muslim scholars and religious leaders—and a website with many educational resources, including responses from Jews and Christians, **Opening:** Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians.

The basis for this peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbour. These principles are found over and over again in the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. The Unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbour is thus the common ground between Islam and Christianity.

<http://www.acommonword.com/index.php?lang=en&page=option1>

American Muslims trump hate with love by Morgan Shoaff

Excerpt: "This united American Muslim campaign aims to reclaim our faith from extremists by responding to evil with good, by rebuilding what they destroy," El-Messidi said in a press release. "We wish to respond to evil with good, as our faith instructs us, and send a powerful message of compassion through action." 100% of the funds they raise will go to the families of the San Bernardino victims.

<http://www.upworthy.com/american-muslims-trump-hate-with-love-raising-173k-for-san-bernardino-victims-in-6-days?c=ufb1>

In nations with significant Muslim populations, much disdain for ISIS by Pew Research Center

Conclusion: General concern about Islamic extremism has been growing in many Western and predominantly Muslim nations surveyed since earlier in the decade. And as a reaction to this threat, there was widespread support for U.S. military actions against ISIS in Iraq and Syria from most of the countries surveyed in the spring, including majorities in Israel (84%), France (81%), the U.S. (80%), Lebanon (78%), Jordan (77%), the UK (66%) and Germany (62%).

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/>

Encourage and Support a 'Big Tent Citizen' Islam by Eboo Patel, president of *Interfaith Youth Core*

Conclusion: American Islam is a thriving part of the broader success story that is American religious pluralism. America is at its best when it welcomes the contributions of all communities, and people who know they have a place and a role in their society look to build it up, not tear it down.

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/12/06/how-can-america-counter-the-appeal-of-isis/encourage-and-support-a-big-tent-citizen-islam?smid=tw-share>

Muslims Hate ISIS Most of All by Dean Obeidallah

Before the Paris horror, ISIS was killing Muslims on a daily basis. We Muslims despise these crazy people more than anyone else does.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/11/16/muslims-hate-isis-most-of-all.html>

World's Largest Islamic Organization Tells ISIS To Get Lost by *The Huffington Post*

A 50-million strong Sunni movement in Indonesia just launched a global anti-extremism campaign.

Opening: Each time the Islamic State, al Qaeda or another terrorist group commits violence in the name of Islam, a familiar refrain arises: What's the Muslim world doing about it?

In fact, anti-extremism efforts abound in the global Muslim community: Muslim leaders and scholars have denounced the Islamic State group, the U.K.'s Muslim Youth League has declared "ideological holy war" against extremism, and YouTube has even tried to recruit American Muslims to counter extremist content. And in Indonesia, home of the world's largest Muslim population, a massive anti-extremism movement is underway. <http://www.mintpressnews.com/worlds-largest-islamic-organization-tells-isis-to-get-lost/211809/>

Resources from the Council on American-Islamic Relation <http://www.cair.com>

Resources from the Muslim Public Affairs Council <http://www.mpac.org>

"Is All Morality Gone? Condemning ISIS, and Beyond, in a World of Suffering" by Omid Safi

Excerpt: I wonder what it means to be responsible in a world of ISIS, in a world of American Empire, in a world of one-fifth of humanity living in extreme poverty, in a world of sound bites where "if it bleeds it leads." I wonder if we can have a response more principled than simply saying that "the actions of ISIS do not really represent the vast majority of Muslims around the world." True, but not enough. I wonder if we can conceive of a response that begins with the welfare, dignity, and honor of "the least of God's children"(echoing the 25th chapter of Matthew), rather than covering the collective behinds of a Muslim North American population. I wonder if we could have a response to ISIS, to Israeli bombings, to Hamas rockets, to American drones that would begin by looking at life from the vantage point of families being bombed instead of the reputation of a community thousands of miles away.

<http://www.onbeing.org/blog/is-all-morality-gone-condemning-isis-and-beyond-in-a-world-of-suffering/6910>

The Crisis of ISIS: A Prophetic Prediction | Sermon by Hamza Yusuf

Excerpt: I am mindful of the fact that much of the Islamophobic discourse of today holds Muslims in the West accountable for atrocities of ISIS. In that context, it makes a fundamental mistake: Heschel's bold proposition is that few (ISIS) are guilty, *all* [human beings] are responsible. The Islamophobic attacks (Bill Maher, Sam Harris) say: few (ISIS) are guilty, all (Muslims) are responsible. The Islamophobic comments of Maher and others fail to realize that in the prophetic tradition of Heschel, King, and Muhammad it's not that Muslims are responsible, but rather that we — *all of us* — are all responsible. Yes, few are guilty, and yes Muslims have a Qur'anic responsibility to begin by addressing questions of justice first and foremost to our own community before addressing anyone else. But in the prophetic tradition, all are responsible. We are all responsible. All of us, Muslims and Jews and Christians and Hindus and Buddhists and people of no faith and people of occasional faith, we are all responsible. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJo4B-yaxfk>

Responses From Inter-Religious Leaders and Organizations and Academic Institutions

From the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, of which the ELCA is a founding member and active participant <http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org>

Grief, Solidarity, And Hope In The Wake Of Paris, Beirut, And Baghdad

Excerpt: In the wake of these violent events, Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign Director Catherine Orsborn said, "This is a moment of tragedy for all humanity—a tragedy that transcends religious and national communities—as we feel so deeply today the violence and pain that extremism and hate can bring about. In

these moments, we must resist efforts to divide us against one another. It is a second wave of tragedy when American Muslims, South Asians, Arabs, and others, so many of whom have been victims of extremist violence themselves, are the targets of violent rhetoric and backlash attacks in the aftermath of such events. The religious organizations that make up Shoulder to Shoulder stand with American Muslims in their condemnation this heinous violence, as we stand in solidarity with each other everyday.”

<http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org/2015/11/14/grief-solidarity-and-hope-in-the-wake-of-paris-beirut-and-baghdad/>

Resources, including short videos <http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org/resources/>

Member organizations <http://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org/members/>

Before We Condemn Islam, Let's Consider Our Own Faiths by John Backman

Excerpt: Owning up to the difficulties in our own tradition can inspire a trait truly required for peace: humility -- a crystal-clear gaze into the belief systems that occupy an important place in our hearts. When we can admit to the warts and obstacles of our own tradition, it becomes easier to empathize with people of other traditions and the obstacles they face. Rather than hear news accounts of ISIS and conclude that all Muslims follow a violent religion, we can empathize with them, because we know the challenges of drawing wisdom from a book that can be difficult, even maddening.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-backman/before-we-condemn-islam_b_8682504.html

University of St. Thomas (MN) Statement of Solidarity with Muslims in our Community from President Julie Sullivan

Excerpt: At a time of deeply troubling anti-Muslim political rhetoric in American society, we at the University of St. Thomas reiterate our welcome to Muslims as members of our community, our gratitude for the many contributions that Muslims make to our community, and our unwavering support especially for our many Muslim students. <http://www.stthomas.edu/mission/inclusionstatement/>

A Statement on Recent Anti-Muslim Rhetoric from Union Theological Seminary

Opening: Fear-mongering based on anti-Muslim hate is at its most visible, with recent calls by political candidates for a ban on Muslim immigration, for closings of mosques, and for the registration of Muslim Americans. This is a dangerous moment in America and we pray that this isn't the turn towards fascism it appears to be. <https://utsnyc.edu/a-statement-on-anti-muslim-rhetoric/>

Reform Movement Rejects Calls for New Limits on Syrian Refugees

Excerpt by Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

These attacks echo the kind of terrible violence that the Syrian people have lived with for the past several years, buffeted between the brutality of President Assad and the barbarism of ISIS. As such, now is the time to ensure the U.S. refugee system remains open to those fleeing Syria and who wish to contribute to and strengthen our nation. Calls to impose new limits on Syrian refugees, to impose a religious test on refugees, or to close our doors altogether ignore the reality that the lengthy and rigorous vetting of refugee applications helps ensure our national security while upholding our historic role as a place of refuge.

We cannot allow the violence wrought by ISIS and its allies to overshadow our values as Americans and as Reform Jews. As Jewish tradition teaches, "and each shall sit under their vine and fig tree, and none shall make them afraid"(Micah 4:4). We can ensure our security and fulfill our highest aspirations as a nation rooted in compassion and commitment to religious liberty. We call on members of Congress to oppose any effort to limit the acceptance of Syrian refugees, just as we urge public officials and figures across the U.S. to reject divisive and inflammatory statements that do not reflect our history as a nation founded by descendants of those who fled persecution in search of freedom

<http://www.rac.org/reform-movement-rejects-calls-new-limits-syrian-refugees>

Ways to give and more information <http://www.rac.org/refugee-crisis-response>