

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA  
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

EXODUS REFUGEE IMMIGRATION, INC.,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 1:15-cv-1858-TWP-DKL
	)	
MIKE PENCE, in his official capacity as	)	
Governor of the State of Indiana,	)	
JOHN WERNERT, M.D., in his official capacity	)	
as the Secretary of the Indiana Family and Social	)	
Services Administration,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

**DECLARATION OF DORIS MEISSNER**

I, DORIS MEISSNER, hereby declare as follows:

1. From 1993-2000, I served as the Commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), which was then a bureau in the U.S. Department of Justice.
2. During this time, my responsibilities included oversight of the U.S. refugee resettlement interview and vetting processes for refugees.
3. As Commissioner, I gained first-hand knowledge of the refugee resettlement screening process. Since leaving the INS, I have been a Senior Fellow at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), where I direct MPI's U.S. Immigration Policy Program. I have kept current on changes in U.S. immigration law and policy, including the refugee resettlement screening process and changes made to it since September 11, 2001.
4. I have reviewed the defendants' memorandum in this case expressing the concerns of the state of Indiana that the admission of Syrian refugees to the United States, and their resettlement in Indiana, may endanger the safety of the people of the state. As set forth below, the refugee selection process involves the most rigorous screening of any program

governing admission of noncitizens to the United States. Indiana's concerns are unfounded and its objections to the resettlement of Syrian refugees will ultimately undermine the foreign policy and national security interests of our country which have historically been advanced by our government's refugee policies.

5. The U.S. government's screening of refugees for U.S. resettlement – especially for those from Syria and the Middle East - is an intensive process involving the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the relevant national intelligence agencies.
6. Indeed, the vetting process for refugee resettlement is the most rigorous conducted for any group that comes to the United States. It is more rigorous than what the U.S. requires to admit lawful permanent residents (Green card holders) or grant U.S. citizenship. The United States is known for having the most rigorous refugee screening process in the world.
7. It takes approximately 18 to 24 months to complete and re-check the checks for candidates for refugee resettlement to the United States, with a waiver available for any of the screening steps only in extremely limited cases which are carefully carved out to ensure that they do not pose a security risk.
8. First, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) initiates the resettlement screening process, by identifying qualified refugees for U.S. resettlement. Only individuals UNHCR identifies as the most vulnerable – particularly survivors of violence and torture, those with medical conditions, and women and children – are considered for admission to the United States. The UNHCR collects identification documents, biographical data, and biometrics (including iris scans for Syrians and other refugee populations in the Middle East) and interviews applicants to confirm their refugee status and the need for resettlement. Only applicants who are strong candidates for resettlement move forward (less than 1 percent of the global refugee population). Thirty-five to forty percent of those resettled in the U.S. are children; in the case of Syrians, the percentage is half.

9. Once candidates are selected for possible resettlement to the United States, they are subject to biographic and biometric security reviews based on the most current intelligence from DHS, the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the Department of State, and the Department of Defense. This screening focuses on identifying key risk indicators, such as connections to known bad-actors, any outstanding warrants/immigration or criminal violations, or other information that the individual is a security risk. Syrian cases are subject to an enhanced review by DHS, and can be referred to the USCIS Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate for additional review.
10. Candidates who pass these background and national security checks are then interviewed by DHS' specially trained United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) refugee officers to ensure they are qualified for admission to the U.S. At every stage people can be and are rejected. Fingerprints are collected and submitted for a biometric check against the FBI's biometric database, which contains watch-list information and previous immigration encounters in the United States and overseas; and the U.S. Department of Defense biometric database, which includes fingerprint records captured in Iraq and other locations. Applicants are subject to re-interviews if fingerprint results or new information raise questions. Moreover, if new biographic information is identified by refugee officers from the interview, additional security checks on the information are conducted. At any point in the process, USCIS may place a case on hold to do additional research or investigation. Applicants are subjected to recurrent vetting up to the point of departure with another interview at the border before being admitted into the United States.
11. This thorough and robust process has been carefully designed and is regularly enhanced, as new capabilities and information arise, to allow the United States to safely admit the most vulnerable refugees while protecting the American people.
12. The United States plays a central role in the global response to the Syrian refugee crisis, and our participation in resettlement of these refugees is an important part of the traditionally strong American reaction to global crises.

13. The United States has provided safety and new lives to refugees from Burma, Cuba, Vietnam, Sudan and many other places where people are targeted for persecution because of who they are or what they believe. The commitment to protecting refugees who have fled political, religious and other forms of persecution reflects this nation's core values. When I was Commissioner, the United States was resettling refugees in significant numbers from Cambodia, Laos, Russia, and Vietnam as well as from other countries, including Iran, for example.
14. Not only does refugee resettlement reflect this country's commitment under law to protecting the persecuted, it also provides vital support to refugee-hosting countries struggling under the strain of providing asylum to large numbers of refugees. By supporting the stability of key states like Jordan and Lebanon, the United States advances its own foreign policy and national security interests abroad.
15. Currently, the 2016 refugee ceiling of 85,000 – of which up to 10,000 are expected to be Syrian refugees - is modest when compared to other times in recent U.S. history or to other countries. The United States refugee ceiling was 231,000 in 1980 and 140,000 in 1993. Up to one million asylum-seekers are projected to have sought safety in Germany during 2015.

I hereby declare that the foregoing is true and correct under penalty of perjury pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746.

Executed at Washington, D.C. this 27 day of January, 2016.



Doris Meissner