

Refugees, Reactions and World Response

Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events



iStock

Topic Summary

Refugees from Syria have been leaving their homes in search of safety and assistance since the country's civil war began in 2011. The refugees have been fleeing civil war, persecution and poverty—traveling at great lengths and great risk to survive. As of September 2015, it is estimated that over 200,000 Syrians have been killed, 7.6 million people have been internally displaced within the country and another 4.1 million have dispersed across the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands have also made their way to Europe, often through a dangerous boat trip on the Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece, which has

resulted in thousands of deaths. Further, people fleeing other parts of the Middle East and Africa due to instability and poverty have added to the large number of refugees. Referred to as the “largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II,” this catastrophe made international headlines recently when a photograph of a drowned three-year old Syrian boy went viral. The image of Aylan Kurdi’s dead body on the shores of Turkey seems to have awakened our collective sense of urgency.

In response, the recent arrival of refugees into Europe, some countries have accepted or agreed to take in refugees and some have not. The United States provides humanitarian assistance and recently agreed to take in more refugees (100,000 by 2017) but many believe more should be done.

Age

12 and up

Questions to Start the Conversation

- How do you feel about what you know about the Refugee Crisis?
- Why do you think some countries are taking in refugees and others are not?
- What are some of the challenges for countries that are taking in and resettling refugees?
- What do you think it might be like to have to leave your home and go to another country that might or might not welcome you?
- How do you think European countries and other nations should help in this crisis?

Questions to Dig Deeper

- Why are Syrians and people in other countries leaving their country; what is the root cause of this?

- For people living in refugee camps, what do you think everyday life and their hopes for the future are like?
- What is the difference between a migrant and refugee and why is this distinction controversial?

(See the Additional Resources section for articles and information that address these questions.)

Ideas for Taking Action

Ask: What can we do to help? What actions might make a difference?

- Educate others about what's happening by sharing information on social media, having individual conversations or organizing an educational event in the school or community.
- Donate money or organize a fundraiser to support organizations that are helping refugees such as: [Multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees](#), [Jewish Coalition for Syrian Refugees](#), [HIAS](#) or [USA for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#).
- Write a letter to President Obama (or local Congressperson) to encourage them to increase aid or take in more refugees.

Additional Resources

- [Refugee Crisis in Europe: How Should the World Respond?](#) (ADL Current Events Classroom lesson, grades 9-12)
- [The Syrian refugee crisis won't be solved with small gestures](#) (MSNBC)
- [Europe's Refugee Crisis, Explained](#) (Vox)
- [Syria: The Story of the Conflict](#) (BBC News)
- [Border Challenges: Responding to the Global Migration Crisis](#) (The New York Times Learning Network)