



The next “20,000”



Brief on African Refugee policy by the African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes

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Summary:

The success of the Federal Syrian Refugee initiative shows that Canadians are willing to welcome newcomers fleeing civil war and oppression. The next 20,000 newcomers should come from Africa, where refugees have been in camps around the continent for decades before the Syrian conflict began.

Issue:

- There are 2.5 million refugees waiting to be resettled in camps in Africa today.
- African refugee camps have been in place since well before the Syrian conflict, some for decades.
- Many refugee camps have been in existence for so long they larger than Canadian cities (Dadaab Camp in Kenya is home to over 220,000 people, Dollo Ado in Ethiopia to over 200,000, Kakuma in Kenya to over 100,000).
- Civil wars and dictatorships continue to displace hundreds of thousands of people in Africa every year.

Background:

- The Trudeau government won tremendous public support when they declared a commitment to settle 25,000 Syrian refugees by Christmas of 2015.

Rationale:

- African refugees were waiting, and suffering, long before the Syrian conflict emerged, but Canada has only accepted 2-3000 refugees from Africa per year.
- Unlike the Syrian refugees, Africans refugees to Canada have had to repay their settlement expenses.
- To ignore the suffering in Africa may be construed as favoritism to one region, and may diminish the Syrian settlement program as an election gimmick to temporarily win the sympathy of voters.
- The Federal government plans to take in 300,000 new Canadians this year, and 20,000 African will help the Immigration and Citizenship achieve that number.

Recommendation:

Parliament should initiate a plan to settle 20,000 refugees from camps in Africa in a manner similar to Syrian refugee program of 2015-16. This should be accomplished with the same urgency, timeline, and budgetary commitments as the Syrian refugee program.

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