

University of Regina Faculty of Social Work Statement on Canada Accepting Refugees from Syria – December 2015

Article 14 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR, 1948) specifically requires signatory countries such as Canada to recognize that everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy asylum from persecution. The UDHR gave impetus to the creation of the *United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) which is the centrepiece of international refugee protection today. The Convention was amended by the *1967 Protocol* to include refugees from around the world.

As a signatory member of the UDHR, the Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, Canada has an international obligation to accept refugees. Canada established its own international 'legal' obligation to refugees in the 1978 *Immigration Act* which introduced "refugees" as a distinct class of immigrants, and the creation of a formal refugee system. Canada's current *Immigration and Refugee Act* states that one of the objectives of this Act with respect to refugees is, "(b) to fulfill Canada's international legal obligations with respect to refugees and affirm Canada's commitment to international efforts to provide assistance to those in need of resettlement".

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the refugee system in Canada is driven by the humanitarian values of compassion and fairness. As of December 2015 there are now just under 4.3 million Syrian refugees registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) creating a tremendous strain on neighbouring countries and creating conditions of human tragedy for those seeking refuge from violence.

The Faculty of Social Work, University of Regina is charged with educating social workers, a profession whose international definition highlights that it is driven by the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities. We therefore wish to state that we give full support to Canada fulfilling its legal obligations by expediting the acceptance of Syrian refugees as soon as judiciously possible. We wish to join our voice with many other organizations and individuals in Canada and the province of Saskatchewan in welcoming and supporting the Syrian refugees.