

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

By Joe Jenkins

Late last week, [Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton withdrew his lawsuit against the U.S. government](#) in a move that may signal the end of the states resistance to the federal refugee resettlement program.

The lawsuit sat on appeal in the 5th circuit after Dallas-based judge Richard Godbey [dismissed the states initial filing over the summer](#). Paxton and other Texas brass [joined a group of more than 30 state -level leaders](#) who sought to [bar Syrians from being resettled in Texas](#), in part in reaction to the devastating terror attacks in Paris (none of the attackers were Syrians or refugees, however).

Paxtons withdrawal comes just after another federal court [shut down a similar anti-refugee policy in Indiana](#). That decision, handed down by 7th Circuit judge Richard Posner, issued a harsh reprimand of Indiana Governor Mike Pence, calling his attempt to block Syrian refugee resettlement due to alleged security concerns mere [nightmare speculation](#).

Undoubtedly fearful of a similar rebuke, Texas officials retreated from their quest to bar Syrians from resettling there, yet held fast to Governor Gregg Abbotts plan to [remove the state from the federal refugee program](#) entirely. Though the Texas government will no longer play a role in the program, refugees, including Syrians, will continue to be resettled in the state by private organizations.

Since 2011, Texas has become home to over 1000 Syrian refugees, and none have lived up to any nightmare speculation. In fact, no Syrian refugee has ever been accused of plotting terrorism in the United States. Rather, the new Texans have largely been [model citizens](#).

This information seems unconvincing to Texas lawmakers, who still have reservations about the refugee security screening process despite the analysis of our [top national security experts](#) and [military leadership](#). That process, which includes [a dizzying series of personal interviews, rigorous background checks, and biometric data screening](#), takes place before refugees step foot on American soil, making refugees the most vetted individuals to ever enter the country.

Breaking with their top leaders, many Texans have instead chosen to [welcome refugees with their famous southern hospitality](#). Joining them last week was former ambassador to Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan Ryan Crocker and dean of the George W. Bush School of Government at Texas A&M.

A sad result of this heated and confusing campaign season is that Syrian refugees have become mingled in peoples minds with their oppressors. [Crocker told the Houston Chronicle](#). Syrians, along with Iraqis, are the primary victims of ISIS. As a former ambassador to Syria, I know the country well . . . Syrians are precisely the kind of people Id want living in my community and attending my childs schools.

For Crocker and countless other Texans, the importance of welcoming refugees is clear. Now, its up to the states leadership to heed the advice of national experts and the compassionate calls of its own citizens and make Texas a leader, rather than a barrier, in solving the worlds refugee crisis.

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