

INSIGHTS + NEWS

LGBTQ Syrian Refugees Are Deemed A Priority

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The White House has confirmed that LGBTQ refugees from Syria will be given priority status in the selection of those who will relocate to the United States.

President Obama has pledged to accommodate approximately 10,000 more Syrian refugees in 2016. People often wonder how the refugees who are allowed into the United States are selected. The answer is that we give priority status to those who are deemed most vulnerable. While it is fair to say that, given the state of destruction and violence in Syria right now, the majority of the entire population is vulnerable, there are those who are up against more than just the hardships of war, those who have been or are being singled out for their minority status in some particular way – race, ethnicity, religion, or as the White House has confirmed, LGBTQ status.

When asked whether there would be a quota set aside for LGBTQ refugees, Press Secretary Josh Earnest said:

When it comes to our refugee resettlement efforts, the United States does not set aside quotas... But what the United States does do, in terms of resettling refugees, is prioritize the cases of those who are deemed to be most vulnerable – those who have been subjected to acts of torture, those who have been singled out because of their minority status in one way or another... whether that's a racial minority or an ethnic minority or a religious minority, or even somebody – an LGBT person."

It has been estimated that IS (ISIS and ISIL) has staged more than 30 public executions of outed gay individuals in recent years. The number of individuals killed because of their LGBTQ status is unknown, but estimated to be far more than those killed in the public executions. The problem for LGBTQ individuals is made more complex, because even if they are able to escape Syria to nearby territories, like Turkey, they are still persecuted, and often by fellow refugees.

It follows that the most vulnerable Syrian refugees are those who are essentially guaranteed death unless they are given asylum in another country. It is clear that LGBTQ refugees from Syria fall into this category.