

**Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia
Statement on the Syrian Refugee Crisis
Adopted on December 4, 2015**



We are religious leaders representing 32 faith communities and more than two million constituents in the greater Philadelphia area, and we are united in our call to protect the refugee and the immigrant. When we look within our religious traditions, many of us find the inspiration – if not the moral mandate – to address this humanitarian crisis: whether from the biblical commandment not to ignore the suffering of a neighbor, the spiritual understanding of oneness with all those who suffer, or a theological commitment to welcoming the stranger.

We agree with Pennsylvania’s Governor, Tom Wolf, in wanting Pennsylvania “to continue to build on its rich history of accepting immigrants and refugees from around the world.”

We offer our strong support to public officials and faith communities who have answered the call to take in refugees. Each generation faces an opportunity to live up to the moral principles that have made our nation great. At times we have succeeded, and at times we have failed. The current debate about whether to welcome persecuted Syrian asylum seekers whose lives are in danger is a historic test. We pray that our leaders will meet the challenge of this day with generosity and courage.

The Religious Leaders Council, founded and staffed by the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, represents more than 30 religious traditions and denominations within our community. It is led by Co-Conveners Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, Rabbi David Straus, Imam Anwar Muhaimin, and Bishop Claire Schenot Burkat.

The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

Co-Conveners:

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput - Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Bishop Claire Schenot Burkat - Southeastern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
Imam Anwar Muhaimin - Quba Masjid
Rabbi David Straus - Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Phila.

Members:

Rabbi David Ackerman - Rabbinical Assembly, Philadelphia Region
Lt. Colonels Janet & Stephen Banfield - Salvation Army of Eastern Pennsylvania & Delaware
Rev. Luis A. Cortés, Jr. - Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity
Bishop Clifton Daniel - Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania
Christie Duncan-Tessmer - Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell - Delaware Valley Association of Reform Rabbis
Dr. Gity Etemad - Philadelphia Baha'i Community
Rabbi Albert E. Gabbai - Congregation Mikveh Israel
Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. - Philadelphia Leadership Foundation
Rev. Terrence D. Griffith - Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity
Bishop Peter Hwang - Council of Korean Churches of Greater Philadelphia
Bishop Gregory G.M. Ingram - African Methodist Episcopal Church
Bishop Peggy Johnson - Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church
President Bokin Kim - Won Institute of Graduate Studies
Elder Milan Kunz - The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints
Rev. Steven B. Lawrence - Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia
Rabbi Jill Maderer - Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia
Imam Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Miller - Mosque of Shaikh M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen
Father Mina Mina - St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church
Kavneet Singh Pannu - Philadelphia Sikh Society
Father Emmanuel Pratsinakis - Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey
Rev. David Pyle - Joseph Priestley District, Unitarian Universalist Association
Imam Asim Abdur-Rashid - Majlis Ash-Shura of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley
Rev. Ruth Faith Santana-Grace - Presbytery of Philadelphia, Presbyterian Church USA
Imam Mohamed Shehata - Al-Aqsa Islamic Society
Archbishop Stefan Soroka – Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Rabbi Elyse Wechterman - Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Rev. William Paul Worley - PA Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ
In Formation