

114TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2708

To provide for the admission to the United States of up to 10,000 Syrian religious minorities as refugees of special humanitarian concern in each of the fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 17, 2016

Mr. COTTON introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To provide for the admission to the United States of up to 10,000 Syrian religious minorities as refugees of special humanitarian concern in each of the fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Religious Persecution
5 Relief Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. UNITED STATES REFUGEE PROGRAM PROCESSING**
2 **PRIORITIES.**

3 (a) CLASSIFICATION OF SYRIAN RELIGIOUS MINORI-
4 TIES.—Syrian nationals who are religious minorities in
5 their country of origin (as described in section
6 599D(b)(1)(D) of the Foreign Operations, Export Financ-
7 ing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1990)
8 (Public Law 101–167; 8 U.S.C. 1157 note)—

9 (1) shall be classified as refugees of special hu-
10 manitarian concern;

11 (2) shall be eligible for Priority 2 processing
12 under the refugee resettlement priority system; and

13 (3) may apply directly to the United States
14 Refugee Admissions Program for admission to the
15 United States.

16 (b) PROCESSING MECHANISMS.—The Secretary of
17 State, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Se-
18 curity, shall establish or use existing refugee processing
19 mechanisms in countries in which individuals described in
20 subsection (a) are residing to provide such individuals with
21 the opportunity to apply and interview for admission to
22 the United States as refugees.

23 **SEC. 3. ANNUAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT QUOTA.**

24 Section 207(b) of the Immigration and Nationality
25 Act (8 U.S.C. 1157(b)) is amended—

1 (1) by striking “If the President” and inserting
2 the following:

3 “(1) IN GENERAL.—If the President”; and

4 (2) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(2) SYRIAN RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.—In addi-
6 tion to the number of refugees authorized to be ad-
7 mitted to the United States under paragraph (1)
8 and subsection (a), there are authorized to be admit-
9 ted up to 10,000 aliens described in section
10 599D(b)(1)(D) of the Foreign Operations, Export
11 Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations
12 Act, 1990 (Public Law 101–167; 8 U.S.C. 1157
13 note) for each of the fiscal years 2016 through
14 2020.”.

15 **SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW CATEGORY OF REFUGEE**
16 **OF SPECIAL HUMANITARIAN CONCERN.**

17 Section 599D of the Foreign Operations, Export Fi-
18 nancing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1990
19 (Public Law 101–167; 8 U.S.C. 1157 note) is amended—

20 (1) in subsection (b)(1)—

21 (A) in subparagraph (B), by striking
22 “and” at the end;

23 (B) in subparagraph (C), by striking the
24 period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

25 (C) by adding at the end the following:

1 “(D) one or more categories of aliens
2 who—

3 “(i) are or were nationals and resi-
4 dents of the Syrian Arab Republic;

5 “(ii) as members of a religious minor-
6 ity in Syria, share common characteristics
7 that identify them as targets of persecu-
8 tion in that state on account of religion,
9 creed, or ethnicity; and

10 “(iii) have been underrepresented in
11 the United States refugee resettlement
12 program during the 5-year period ending
13 on September 30, 2015, when compared to
14 their representation in the Syrian popu-
15 lation as a whole.”; and

16 (2) in subsection (e)—

17 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “Sub-
18 sections (a) and (b)” and inserting “Except as
19 provided in paragraph (4), subsections (a) and
20 (b)”;

21 (B) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(4) An alien described in subsection (b)(1)(D)
23 may establish a well-founded fear of persecution
24 under subsection (a) by asserting such fear in an ap-
25 plication for admission as a refugee under section

1 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
2 U.S.C. 1157) that is filed during the period begin-
3 ning on the date of the enactment of this section
4 and ending on September 30, 2020.”.

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