

Is This the Solution to the Middle Eastern Crisis?

Political responses to crises are often tardy and embarrassingly fad-driven, as with the current global outcry over the image of a 3-year-old Syrian boy washed up on the Turkish shore. He was hardly the first innocent victim of this century's most brutal war. Where has the world been for the last 54 months?

Indeed, the unfolding humanitarian crisis was an entirely foreseeable consequence of Obama's spineless Syria policy, and the Western European leaders who followed it. So, despite Obama's efforts to anesthetize the public, it is understandable if some collective shame for Western failures—driven by tragic images that went viral—has prompted Europe suddenly to announce that it will accept more refugees from the war-torn Middle East.

But how did the West become more responsible for the Mideast refugee crisis than the wealthiest Mideast states (whose funding of Islamist rebels helped to create that crisis)? According to news reports and think tanks, Arab Gulf donors have funneled hundreds of millions of dollars to Syria in recent years, including to ISIS and other groups.

Even if Gulf states weren't at all responsible for aggravating the Syrian refugee crisis by strengthening ISIS, their wealth, proximity and cultural/religious affinities with the refugees should still make these countries far more responsible than Europe is for their welfare. The vast majority of refugees are Muslim Arabs.

They therefore share a common language, religion, culture and ethnicity with the wealthy Gulf countries that have shunned them for reasons of national security (as if the West didn't

have such concerns). Any dialect or denominational differences Mideast refugees may have with Gulf states are nothing compared to the cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious differences between most Middle East refugees and the European countries they hope to enter.

Even more absurd, Gulf countries are bringing in foreign laborers to build up their vast, oil-rich territories. Putting aside their horrific exploitation of those workers (which is a scandal all of its own, even if campus protests, international boycotts and U.N. resolutions never mention it), why aren't they instead accepting Mideast refugees who would happily accept the work that imported labor is now doing? Similarly, why have no Gulf countries granted Palestinian refugees citizenship if they so readily advocate for them at the U.N. out of some purported concern for their welfare? The cynical hypocrisy is staggering.

By contrast, tiny Israel absorbed nearly a million Jews from the Middle East and North Africa who were similarly made homeless when, in the 1940s and 1950s, their survival meant fleeing the Muslim-majority states where they had lived for millennia. Israel has also accepted plenty of non-Jewish refugees, from the Vietnamese boatpeople in the late 1970s to African refugees and migrants in recent years. Israel has provided humanitarian medical assistance to countless Syrians and now Israel's deputy minister of regional affairs (an Arab Druze) has joined the leader of the political opposition in urging Israel to accept Syrian refugees, despite the demographic and strategic risks of doing so.

Yet Europe now tries to hurt Israel's economy by stigmatizing goods from the West Bank, with no similar economic campaigns against any of the Gulf countries, whose human rights records are exponentially worse on every issue (freedom of speech, women's rights, religious freedom, minority rights, gay rights, treatment of guest workers, helping refugees, etc.).

Such double standards will undoubtedly worsen as Europe becomes increasingly Muslim—a trend that will only intensify with the current refugee crisis. But appeasement hasn't kept Europe safe from Islamist attacks, as evidenced by the 2004 Madrid bombings, the 2005 London attacks, the 2014 Belgium attack and this year's attacks in Paris (to name just a few).

Europe clearly failed to integrate Muslim immigrants into its societies, which only reinforces doubts about the wisdom of bringing in more such immigrants.

More importantly, the EU's sudden, politically correct acceptance of refugees addresses the symptoms rather than the root cause: the rise of ISIS—an evil cancer that metastasizes with each day that the world dithers. The longer ISIS survives, the more people are killed, tortured and enslaved, the more Syria's minorities are persecuted under an extreme Sunni Islamic rule, and the more refugees desperately try to flee wherever they can.

Defeating ISIS will have to happen eventually anyway, because ISIS threatens everything that civilized life offers, so the sooner that painful task is accomplished, the sooner the related problems (like the migrant crisis) will be solved.

ISIS took territory from Syria and Iraq that is roughly the size of Indiana (according to this *New York Times* article last July about ISIS' destruction of Mideast Christianity), so there is plenty of land to resettle refugees, once ISIS is defeated.

Notwithstanding the generous island-purchase-offer by an Egyptian billionaire, the best long-term home for these refugees is not some remote Greek island (which only consolidates ISIS's victory). Rather, the refugees should be able to live in security and dignity in the same region from which they fled, which means defeating ISIS and converting the ISIS-liberated territories into mini states that will serve as

safe havens for moderate Sunnis and the various minorities at risk, including Christians, Kurds, Druze, Yazidis and Alawites (who will become the most targeted after Syria's Alawite-led regime falls).

The Kurds—who have fought ISIS with more courage and determination than any other party—have more than proven themselves worthy of a state.

The fact that Christians were once 20 percent of the Middle East and are now safest in the only non-Muslim country in the entire region (Israel), reinforces the need to create a Mideast Christian State. Such a state could exist around Mosul and/or other parts of Iraq/Syria where Christianity has historically existed (Assyria, Antioch, etc.).

The Druze—an ancient religion that has often also suffered persecution—could be given a state in southwest Syria.

There could be yet another, non-religious state that welcomes any other minorities (like the Yazidis) and moderate Sunni Muslims.

Until ISIS is replaced with stable and sane states, the Gulf countries should welcome all Mideast refugees.

To address the Middle East refugee crisis intelligently, the EU should help to defeat ISIS, convert liberated territories into states for the region's persecuted minorities, and pressure Gulf states to absorb all refugees in the interim.

Noah Beck is the author of *The Last Israelis*, an apocalyptic novel about Iranian nukes and other geopolitical issues in the Middle East.