



WHAT READERS THINK

Oct. 13: Next week, Tuesday morning. Plus other letters to the editor

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Asylum denied

As someone who has worked with refugees as an aid worker, public servant, volunteer, researcher and professor for 20 years, I'm appalled by revelations of selection criteria for Syrian refugees (Tories Apply Specific Criteria For Refugees – Oct. 9).

Canada has an international obligation to uphold people's fundamental right to asylum. The fact that our government delayed the realization of that right for thousands of refugee claimants in order to undertake immigration-style selection criteria undermines the letter and spirit of the 1951 UN convention on refugees. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees had already determined that the Syrians they were referring for resettlement were refugees and were not excluded from this status on security grounds.

Recognizing that eligible refugees greatly exceeded the number of resettlement places, the UN refugee agency had also prioritized cases on the basis of "international vulnerability criteria." Instead, the government delayed the process of resettlement by screening for non-humanitarian "areas of focus," such as "people who have run a business."

The government has repeatedly claimed Canada's refugee policy is "generous." We are far from generous; we are seeking to gain economically from human tragedy.

Christina Clark-Kazak, director, Centre for Refugee Studies, Glendon College, York University

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