



The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, as American citizens and people of faith, affirms in the strongest possible terms our responsibility to welcome Syrian refugees and other victims of terror who are seeking asylum in our greater Chicago community. We understand the temptation, in a time of grief and alarm at the recent atrocities inflicted on innocent victims, to respond with fear and urgent measures. We also appreciate and affirm the need in the present context to carefully screen refugees applying for entrance into the United States, as our federal government has in fact been doing. However, we believe that the impulse to fail to give support and protection to the very victims of terror unwittingly plays into the heinous aims of those who perpetrate such criminal acts in order to create fear and divisions within our own communities. We therefore contest the proposal of Governor Rauner to impose a “pause” on the welcome of refugees to our community. We also reject as contrary to our American values and shared religious convictions the call to impose a religious criterion in accepting refugees by opening our doors to Christian refugees while refusing those who are Muslim. This, too, only encourages those who seek to scapegoat members of our community based solely on their religious affiliation.

As representatives of more than 35 religious traditions we implore our civic leaders and fellow citizens to act in accord with our enduring religious and civic tradition that welcomes and gives comfort and shelter to our fellow human beings in jeopardy and opposes the forces of fear and discrimination.

Chicago, November 19, 2015