

Nevermind the comments, here's the Syrians

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Syrian refugee children covered with dust arrive at the Trabeel border, after they crossed into Jordanian territory with her families, near the northeastern Jordanian border with Syria, and Iraq, near the town of Ruwaished, east of Amman September 10, 2015. REUTERS/Muhammad Hamed

OPINION: Click through the comments section on any story detailing the daily misery of Syrians fleeing their homeland and stare into a dark abyss.

The outpouring of public sympathy stirred the Government to action, taking an extra 600 refugees. But it also drew out trolls, unloading hatred and stupidity on the internet. So, here are five refugee myths busted. Please, cut out and stick to the forehead of the nearest asinine key-board warrior.

1. They might be terrorists.

Yeah, and so could any Irish builder arriving to rebuild Christchurch.

The Refugee Council can recall no cases where extremists entered New Zealand as part of the refugee programme. People involved in war crimes, terrorism or violations of international human rights law are excluded from refugee programmes. The security services carry out rigorous security screening. If you don't believe me, ask Ahmed Zaoui.

Chances are those running for their lives from Islamic State won't be sympathetic to the militants' creed.

2. They'll leap-frog Auckland families on state house waiting list

Did you not hear the PM when he said most will be resettled in an existing Syrian community in WELLINGTON?

Refugees are easier to place, because they don't have existing ties or preferences.

The Red Cross (which does the resettling) has been shifting refugees away from Auckland and Christchurch - to ease pressure on housing. Instead they are making a new life in places like Manawatu and Nelson.

Also, Housing NZ doesn't work that way. If a three-bedroom house becomes available it will go to a family rather than a single person or couple.

3. These people are "country-shopping" and could have stopped in safer countries.

Ever been in an refugee camp? Mostly they are cramped, with only basic amenities and no place to make a home. For those living outside of camps on the Syrian border, scratching out a living is a miserable, and often unsafe, existence.

Refugees don't plan - many don't even pack. They take their chances with no idea where they will end up - perhaps Indonesia, Malaysia or Pakistan. Many wait years in camps there before resettlement.

Only 26 countries take part in the UNHCR programme. These are the only places that guarantee refugees the same rights and protection as existing nationals.

4. Muslim countries aren't doing their bit.

The borders of Syria's neighbours are overwhelmed. Turkey is sheltering up to 2 million Syrians, spending \$4bn. One in five people living in Lebanon is a refugee. Jordan is now home to well over 600,000 Syrians, and Egypt 1350,000. Infrastructure in these countries is creaking under the pressure.

5. They are a drain on welfare/steal our jobs.

Certainly, the unemployment rate among new arrivals is higher than average. This is because they are often deeply traumatised and need time to adjust or learn English. Their work experience and qualifications may not be recognised. Long term, experts recognise refugees - who are often entrepreneurial - are anxious to work and return to a normal life.

Yes refugees compete for jobs - but economics 101 - they'll spend money too.

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