

UN Refugee Agency Slams Trump's Rhetoric on Refugees



Geneva, December 9 (RHC)-- The UN refugee agency has warned that campaign rhetoric in the United States against refugees and Muslims is harming the country's resettlement program for Syrian and other refugees.

Republican U.S. presidential front-runner Donald Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the United States in the most provocative response to last week's terrorist attacks in San Bernardino, California, which left 14 people dead and 21 injured.

UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming told a news briefing in Geneva that "what (Trump) was speaking of was an entire population but this also impacts the refugee program." She said: "Because our refugee program is religion-blind, our resettlement program selects the people who are the most in need."

The United States has resettled only about 1,500 Syrian refugees since 2011, when the conflict began in Syria. The Obama administration plans to bring 10,000 Syrian refugees to the country this year. The figure, announced in September, was for the U.S. fiscal year that began in October.

Fleming expressed concern that up to 40 US governors were against the resettlement program. "We are concerned that the rhetoric that is being used in the election campaign is putting an incredibly important resettlement program at risk that is meant for the most vulnerable people - the victims of the wars that the

world is unable to stop," she said.

The UN refugee agency is asking the US to accept 75,000 refugees from the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere this year.

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