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### **BISHOP LIBASCI'S STATEMENT ON THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

Here in New Hampshire, we are far away from the violence of the Middle East. The images we see do not capture the enormity of the refugee crisis, the more than 4.2 million people who have fled Syria, and the estimated 7.6 million who are displaced within their own country. Many observers, including Pope Francis, have said that this is the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II.

One week ago today, innocent victims in Paris were terrorized by violent extremists. I continue to offer my prayers and support for the people of France. The crisis continues and so does our heartfelt concern for all those coping in the aftermath of these terrorist attacks.

In our shrinking world, events many miles away do impact us here in New Hampshire. In reaction to the Paris attacks, many political leaders have called for the United States to deny entry to those seeking refuge from religious persecution and brutal violence in Syria. The questions and concerns that have been raised are understandable because we all want to keep our nation, our families safe. And for reasons of security, it is necessary to continue to carefully screen those seeking asylum. But we also are called to respond with compassion to those who are resettled in the United States. The Catholic Church in New Hampshire, through Catholic Charities New Hampshire and other ministries, stands ready to offer our assistance to refugees who may come to the Granite State seeking asylum from Syria. I ask the people of New Hampshire to consider the stories of the persecution these poor souls have suffered and to learn more about the existing security screening required before refugees may resettle in the United States.

I urge our elected officials, the Catholics of the Diocese of Manchester, and all people of good will to welcome those who travel here fleeing persecution in other countries, including refugees seeking asylum from Syria. We can continue to be a country that resettles refugees of all faiths while continuing to ensure the safety of our nation and its citizens. We are not required to choose, and we can do both.

Even though we as individuals cannot stop what is happening in Iraq and Syria, we can help. Through individual acts of mercy we can, in the words of Thomas Merton, "leaven the mass of human misery with the charity and mercy of Christ" and in the aggregate we can overcome evil by doing good. I pray that the perfect love of God, as expressed in the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ, may inspire in our leaders and ourselves a generous response to those fleeing the violence in the Middle East.