

US politicians seize on Paris attacks to promote xenophobia

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Politicians in the United States, the country that bears greatest responsibility for the ongoing refugee crisis by stoking civil war in Syria, have scrambled over each other in recent days to call for further restrictions on the admission of those fleeing disaster in the Middle East.

The goal of the coordinated media blitz, led by a group of semi-fascistic Republican presidential candidates such as Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, is to degrade public opinion and whip up a climate of fear and xenophobia in order to facilitate a further shift to the right in government policy.

This week, the governors of 26 US states declared that they would not allow refugees from Syria to enter their states. Republicans in the US House of Representatives, meanwhile, plan to introduce a bill today that would effectively prevent the federal government from taking in Syrian refugees.

Meanwhile, US politicians have made fascist statements in the national media, calling for the closure of mosques, the exclusion of refugees on the basis of religion, and even the use of concentration camps to hold migrants.

Donald Trump, the billionaire real estate mogul and Republican presidential candidate, declared in an interview Monday, “I would hate to do it [shut down mosques], but it’s something that you’re going to have to strongly consider because some of the ideas and some of the hatred—the absolute hatred—is coming from these areas.”

That same day, New Jersey governor and fellow Republican presidential hopeful Chris Christie said in a radio interview that he would not permit any refugees into the country, including “orphans under age 5.”

Texas senator Ted Cruz, another candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, said Monday he would seek to ban Syrian Muslims from entering the

US, while admitting Christians. “There is no meaningful risk of Christians committing acts of terror.” Cruz said at a news conference at a middle school gymnasium in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

On Tuesday, Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal said he had issued an executive order telling state police to track Syrian refugees. “I issued an executive order telling my agencies to do everything we can.... I’ve ordered the state police to track the ones that are already in Louisiana,” he declared.

Perhaps most provocatively, David A. Bowers, the mayor of Roanoke, Virginia, approvingly invoked America’s shameful history of interning Japanese Americans in concentration camps during the Second World War. “I’m reminded that President Franklin D. Roosevelt felt compelled to sequester Japanese foreign nationals after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and it appears that the threat of harm to America from Isis now is just as real and serious as that from our enemies then,” Bowers wrote in a letter quoted by the *Roanoke Times*.

There are indications that these statements may have already incited violence and threats against Muslim communities. The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) said Monday that it has received documentation in recent days of “vandalism and threats targeting mosques in Texas, Kentucky, Virginia, Nebraska, Tennessee, Ohio, New York, and other states.” It added, “Those incidents fit a pattern of increased hate-motivated crimes and bias incidents nationwide targeting persons and property associated, or perceived to be associated, with Islam and the American Muslim community.”

In response to the statements of Republicans, the Obama administration, which has deported more immigrants than any other presidency in US history and

has slammed the door in the faces of the vast majority of people fleeing Syria, has taken a posture of beneficence toward refugees.

Speaking in Turkey Tuesday, Obama referred to some of the proposals from Republican candidates, declaring, “That’s not American, that is not who we are. We don’t have religious tests to our compassion.” White House officials subsequently said governors did not have the authority to influence federal immigration policy, and added that Obama would veto the Republicans’ bill to restrict the admission of refugees.

In reality, the Obama administration has faced sustained international criticism for its extremely restrictive policy toward Syrian refugees. At least 200,000 people have been killed as a result of the Syrian civil war, while 4.2 million people have been turned into refugees and 7.6 million people are internally displaced within Syria. The US, however, has been admitting only 1,500 Syrian refugees per year, and plans to raise this number to a meager 10,000.

At the same time, the Obama administration, in alliance with the Hollande government in France, is utilizing the Paris attacks as an opportunity to intensify its bombing campaign in Syria and expand its efforts to control the entire region through military force.



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