

Laila Ikram
Law, Science, and Technology
Due: December 14, 2015

I. Introduction

In October, 2015 I traveled overseas and had the opportunity to speak to Abo Abdo, the head of a Syrian refugee family living and working illegally in Amman, Jordan. In November, 2015, I had the opportunity to speak to Mohamed Halawa and his family of 12, recently resettled in Phoenix, Arizona. The journeys of these two families tracing the Syrian civil war are discussed in Section 1, the timeline of the conflict. The relevant laws and policies are discussed in Section 2. Finally, law and technology recommendations are discussed in Section 3.

II. The Tale of Two Families

Abo Abdo was an English language school teacher in Homs prior to 2011.¹ Mohamed Halawa was a farmer on a multi-generational farm in Idlib.² President Bashar Al-Assad has been President of Syria since July 2000, succeeding his father Hafez Al-Assad who ruled Syria for 29 years.³ The conflict in Syria which led to the refugee crisis began in March, 2011 when security forces shot protestors dead in the southern city of Deraa, triggering violent unrest that spread nationwide over subsequent months.⁴ Two months later, Assad forces entered Deraa, Banyas, and Homs, areas around the capital, Damascus, in an effort to crush anti-regime protests.⁵ At that time, the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) enforced sanctions in an attempt

¹ Interview with Abo Abdo, English Professor, unnamed University, in his house, Amman, Jordan (Oct. 31, 2015).

² Interview with Mohamad Halawa, in his house, Phoenix, Arizona (Nov. 14, 2015).

³ *Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad Facing Down Rebellion*, BBC NEWS (Oct. 21, 2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/10338256>.

⁴ *Syria Profile – Timeline*, BBC NEWS (Dec. 9, 2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>.

⁵ *Id.*

to dissuade President Bashar al-Assad's brutality.⁶ The only concession was President Assad's announcement of amnesty for political prisoners.⁷ By June 2011, the first Syrian refugees were created when security forces sieged a northwestern town and 10,000 people fled to neighboring Turkey,⁸ and another 1,500 fled to Jordan by December.⁹

The next month, President Assad offered another concession when he fired the governor of Hama, a northern town, after there were mass demonstrations there in opposition of the governor, eventually sending in troops to restore order at the cost of scores of lives, in an attempt to meet some of the protestors' demands and quell the uprising.¹⁰ The fighting between the Assad regime and opposition fighters continued to escalate in 2012.¹¹ By late January, over 6,000 Syrian refugees were registered in neighboring Lebanon.¹² This was the point in time when Abo Abdo decided to send his wife and two children to Amman, Jordan via taxi.¹³ By mid-2012, the international community condemned the Assad regime and dismissed Syrian diplomats.¹⁴ In August, 2012 President Obama warned that use of chemical weapons is a red line that the Assad regime cannot cross without suffering undefined consequences.¹⁵ In late 2012, Abo Abdo left his job and joined his family in Amman.¹⁶ His decision was motivated by the sandwiched shelling of his house by Assad forces on one side and rebel forces on the other side.¹⁷ Assad forces used chemical weapons against Syrians a few months later.¹⁸

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Noora Faraj, *Syrian Refugees Flee to Jordan*, AL ARABIYA NEWS (Dec. 14, 2011), <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182645.html>.

¹⁰ *Syria Profile*, *supra* note 4.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Erika Solomon, *As Syria Bleeds, Neighbors Brace for Refugees*, REUTERS (Feb. 10, 2012), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-refugees-idUSTRE81919W20120210#QYhKJ60yyYvDDAG0.97>.

¹³ Interview with Abo Abdo, *supra* note 1.

¹⁴ *Syria Profile*, *supra* note 3.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Interview with Abo Abdo, *supra* note 1.

¹⁷ *Id.*

By that time, the number of refugees escaping Syria reached more than 400,000, mostly fleeing to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and even Iraq.¹⁹ In December, 2013, western nations suspended their support for Syrian rebels after reports Islamists had seized some bases of the Western-backed rebels.²⁰ By August, 2013, the war in Syria was a civil and proxy war, resulting in 100,000 casualties and more than 1.5 million Syrians seeking refuge throughout the Middle East.²¹ That is also the year that Mohamad Halawa's home was bombed a third time and he made the decision to leave Idlib for Turkey, with his pregnant wife, seven children, mother and father.²²

In early 2014, diplomatic attempts to resolve the civil war failed when the Assad regime rejected any discussion of a transitional government.²³ By mid-2014, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, dubbed "ISIS" militants declared the territory from Aleppo to parts of Iraq.²⁴ They continued expanding until the United States (US) and Arab nations launched strikes against ISIS.²⁵ By July, 2015, 4 million refugees had fled Syria to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and EU nations.²⁶

¹⁸ Jack Khoury, *Despite Warnings from West Syrian Rebels Claim Assad Regime Uses Chemical Weapons*, HAARETZ (Dec. 24, 2012), <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/syrian-rebels-claim-assad-regime-uses-chemical-weapons-1.489611>.

¹⁹ UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, *Syria Regional Refugee Response – Regional Overview*, (Sept. 20, 2015), <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

²⁰ *Syria Profile*, *supra* note 4.

²¹ Amir Taheri, *Has the Time Come for Military Intervention in Syria?*, 35 J. NAT'L COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY 217 (2013).

²² Interview with Mohamad Halawa, *supra* note 2.

²³ *Syria Profile*, *supra* note 4.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, *More Than Four Million Syrians Have Now Fled War and Persecution* (Jul. 9, 2015), <http://www.unhcr.org/559d648a9.html>.

By late September, 2015 the EU made plans to take in 120,000 refugees.²⁷ The international community was shaken by the refugee crisis in September 2015 when the image of Aylan Kurdi, fully clothed infant washed ashore in Turkey, made international headlines.²⁸ Within days, the White House shared plans to grant 10,000 Syrian refugees asylum in the US.²⁹ This is also the year the Halawa family caught a boat ride from Turkey to Egypt.³⁰ Having exhausted their resources travelling to from Syria to Turkey to Egypt, the Halawa family sought out a UN refugee agency, who recommended the family for resettlement in the US.³¹ Catholic Charities funded the family's resettlement.³² The Halawas arrived in Phoenix on April 22, 2015.³³

In November 2015, terrorists, including one who entered Europe claiming to be a Syrian refugee, bombed several sites in Paris.³⁴ In reaction, 31 US governors stated they would no longer take Syrian refugees in their states.³⁵ As of late November, 2015, a total of 1800 refugees have been admitted to the US since 2012.³⁶

Presently, Abo Abdo is working illegally teaching English at an unnamed University in Amman.³⁷ Due to abuse suffered at the hands of Assad forces prior to leaving, Mohamed

²⁷ Steven Erlanger & James Kanter, *European Union Ministers Approve Plan to Distribute Refugees*, NEW YORK TIMES (Sept. 22, 2015), <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/world/europe/european-union-ministers-migrants-refugees.html?smid=pl-share>.

²⁸ Anne Barnard & Karam Shoumali, *Image of Drowned Syrian, Aylan Kurdi, 3, Brings Migrant Crisis into Focus*, NEW YORK TIMES (Sept. 3, 2015), <http://nyti.ms/1Up9KCu>.

²⁹ Laura Koran, Elise Labott, et. al., *U.S. to Take At Least 10,000 More Syrians Refugees*, CNN NEWS (Sept. 10, 2015), <http://www.cnn.com/2015/09/10/politics/u-s-take-10000-syrian-refugees/>.

³⁰ Interview with Mohamad Halawa, *supra* note 2.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Stacy Meichtry, Inti Landauro, et. al., *Paris Attacks Leave More than 100 Dead*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (Nov. 14, 2015) <http://www.wsj.com/articles/explosion-shootout-reported-in-paris-1447450450>.

³⁵ Ashley Fantz & Ben Brumfeld, *More than Half of the Nation's Governors say Syrian Refugees not Welcome*, CNN NEWS (Nov. 19, 2015), <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/parisattackssyrianrefugeesbacklash>.

³⁶ Haeyoun Park, *Paris Attacks Intensify Debate Over How Many Syrian Refugees to Allow Into the U.S.*, NEW YORK TIMES (Nov. 19, 2015), <http://nyti.ms/1LL2URY>.

³⁷ Interview with Abo Abdo, *supra* note 1.

Halawa suffers from health issues that limit his movement.³⁸ He has worked 10 days since arriving in America to support his mother, father, wife, and eight children.³⁹

III. Law and Policy: Indigestible Lumps

As noted above, after the Paris bombings, 31 governors called for a ban on Syrian refugees from entering their states.⁴⁰ The front-running Republican presidential candidate for the 2016 presidential election called for a ban on all Muslims entering the US.⁴¹ US immigration history reveals such sentiments towards immigrants are not unprecedented; there have been persistent attempts by former immigrants to keep out subsequent immigrants since the time of the founders.⁴² A 1914 publication noted that “[i]mmigrants who came earlier and their descendants have always tried to keep this country for those who were already here and for their kin folk.”⁴³ Dating back to the 1800s when America had a surge of European immigration, Americans tended to voice restrictive opinions regarding immigration issues.⁴⁴ Dubbed the “drawbridge mentality,” the attitude was first exhibited toward Quakers, Episcopalians, and Catholics, followed by similar sentiments toward the Irish, Germans, then Italians, Jews, and Russians.⁴⁵

³⁸ Interview with Mohamad Halawa, *supra* note 2.

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ Fantz & Brumfeld, *supra* note 34.

⁴¹ Mara Liasson, *Despite Backlash Over Muslim Comments, Supporters Stand by Trump*, NPR (Dec. 11, 2015), <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/10/459169770/supporters-stand-by-trump-after-he-proposes-banning-non-american-muslims-from-u>.

⁴² Thomas J. Esphalanade & Katherine Hempstead, *Contemporary American Attitudes Toward U.S. Immigration*, 30 THE INT’L MIGRATION REV. 535 (1996).

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ Justin Allen Berg, *Explaining Attitudes Toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy: A Review of the Theoretical Literature*, 9 SOC. COMPASS 23, 23–24.

⁴⁵ Esphalanade & Hempstead, *supra* note 41.

Every year, millions of immigrants enter the US, resulting in about 13% of the population.⁴⁶ However, fearful immigration policies first began in this nation around 1870, when negative beliefs about immigrants first gained traction.⁴⁷ An increase in immigration, especially by non-western European immigrants from other parts of Europe, and the economic recession in the early 1880s fueled the first negative attitudes toward those immigrants.⁴⁸ That was the time of birth and growth of theories of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority.⁴⁹ This theory was exemplified when the discovery of gold in California in the mid-1800s created a demand for low-wage workers that was filled by Chinese men who first worked in the mines, and later worked on this countries' railroads, and then agriculture work when railroad work tapered off.⁵⁰ The drawbridge mentality took action when Irishled labor unions lobbied Congress and convinced them that Chinese men were taking jobs away from native-born white men.⁵¹

The successful lobbying led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Act completely stopped all Chinese immigration by the end of 1880s.⁵² Immigration and the demand for low-wage labor did not cease as a result of the act. Instead, Japanese workers replaced the Chinese men in farming jobs. However, the Japanese men were less willing to work for as low wages as the Chinese, and were willing to strike to have their demands met, which then resulted in laws to limit immigration of Japanese men.⁵³ The 1907 Gentlemens Agreement stopped the immigration of Japanese immigrants to America for the next 50 years.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Berg, *supra* note 44.

⁴⁷ Esphalanade & Hempstead, *supra* note 42.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ *Id.*

By the end of the 1800s the movement to keep immigrants out was established and organized.⁵⁵ US Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was a leader of the anti-immigration cause in the US Senate, and an Immigration Restriction League was formed in the northeast for the sole purpose of limiting the number of immigrants who could come to America.⁵⁶ A Saturday Evening Post written by a Kenneth Roberts in 1920 wrote along the lines of the anti-immigrant sentiments of that time, saying “[I]f the United States is the melting pot, something is wrong with the heating system, for an inconveniently large portion of the new immigration floats around in unsightly indigestible lumps.”⁵⁷ Less nation-focused, and broader restrictions on US immigration were passed in the 1920s when Congress imposed the national-origin quota system that favored northern and western European immigrants.⁵⁸

After World War II the percentage of immigrants in America was low, and as a result, attitudes towards immigration became comparatively open.⁵⁹ Americans adopted a more welcoming outlook to immigration after World War II, as demonstrated by small surveys of people who stated they felt that U.S. immigration should not be reduced.⁶⁰ This less restrictive sentiment lasted from the 1950s through the 1960s, and was reflected in the 1965 amendments to the system of allocating visas to immigrants of non- north and western European nations.⁶¹ Some of the factors that spurred the relaxation of restrictive attitudes towards immigrations include a realization and acceptance of America’s new role as a global superpower which required a responsibility to the world’s refugees, a growing economy which lends itself to generosity and hospitality, and a decline in race-based and religion-based prejudice broadly and among the

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Berg, *supra* note 41.

⁶⁰ Esphalanade & Hempstead, *supra* note 41.

⁶¹ *Id.*

better educated members of society.⁶² In 1965, the Hart-Celler Act, also known as the Immigration and Nationality Act, replaced the national origins quota system, and instead focused more on family reunification and employment-based immigration. As a result, many immigrants who were not white and not from Europe were able to immigrate to the US.⁶³ In the decades thereafter, as the immigrant demographics fluctuated, national attitudes towards immigrant populations fluctuated, but tended to be more restrictive in general.⁶⁴

Those sentiments and laws passed in those prior decades shape the attitudes, laws and proposed laws regarding refugee immigration to the US today. A 1951 convention on the status of refugees was hosted on the international stage, which resulted in the passage of the Optional Protocol of 1967 and Article 14(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which reads “[e]veryone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”⁶⁵ The convention established a definition of a refugee and the principle of not returning a victim to their persecution as well as recognizing rights to those granted refugee status.⁶⁶

Applying the principles of the international convention, America resettled hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees in 1975 through a temporary task force and through temporary funding.⁶⁷ As a result of the experience with those refugees, Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which incorporated the Declaration of Human Rights definition of a refugee and standardized the resettlement process and services for all refugees admitted to the US. The current law governing refugee resettlement is still the Refugee Act of 1980, which provides the President can admit refugees who face “persecution or a well-founded fear of

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ Berg, *supra* note 41.

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ Regina Germain, *Seeking Refuge: The U.S. Asylum Process*, 35 COLO. LAW. 71, 75–76 (2006).

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ *History of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program*, Refugee Council USA, <http://www.rcusa.org/history>.

persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” into the US, and the President’s power to do so is particularly robust if the he determines that there is an “unforeseen emergency refugee situation.”⁶⁸

IV. Recommendations:

Despite the different cities, education levels, and present circumstances of Abo Abdo and Mohamad Halawa, both men rely on television, internet, GPS, cell phones, and cell phone apps such as Viper and Whatsapp to carry out their lives, however both mistrust the content received through technology. The reliance on technology is primarily to keep in touch with dislocated family members and for daily functions such as getting from place to place in their new places of residence.

Regardless of this mistrust, there are three ways technology may be used to improve the lives of Syrian refugees including the families of Abo Abdo and Mohamed Halawa. First, technology can be used to change public perceptions, which as noted in the law and policy discussion, *supra*, leads to changes in acceptance of various populations. Technology can accomplish this through the sharing of information about Syrian refugees. Second, technology can make the transition to America easier for those refugees by technologizing the orientation process once asylees are here. Third, technology can be used to share actual resources with refugees. This can help make them independent once here, and also provide resources to refugees abroad that may quell the desperate situations that forces Syrians to seek asylum.

⁶⁸ Pub. L. No. 96-212, 94 Stat. 102 (1980) (codified as amended in scattered sections of 8 U.S.C.).

(1) Tech to Change Public Perception

In order to overcome the “drawbridge mentality” as it relates to Syrian refugees, technology should be mobilized to demonstrate that by banning refugees, ISIS exerts power via violence that kills innocent Syrians and Europeans, but also by influencing policy. As much as Aylan Kurdi spurred the White House to accept 10,000 refugees, public pressure influences policy. In fact, America has accepted a total of three quarters of a million refugees since September 11, 2001. Since then, only three refugees have been arrested for planning terrorist activities, two of the arrestees were not planning an attack in the US, and the plans of the third were not as credible, with none of the plans ever being completed.⁶⁹ The White House has expressed its intent to take 10,000 refugees over several years; however, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, a charitable nonprofit that provides assistance to refugees in the process of resettlement, proposes a more appropriate target of 100,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.⁷⁰ That figure would not be out of line with what has been done in the past.⁷¹ Besides the Vietnamese, the US took in more than a million Cubans.⁷² America has also accepted more than 300,000 from the Soviet Union after 1988.⁷³ Today, Americans do not necessarily recall these influxes because they had no obvious negative consequences.⁷⁴ While the Syrian refugee crisis sparks fears of Islamic terrorism in light of the Paris attacks, Mohamad Halawa drove and walked hundreds of miles to arrive to Turkey. He then crammed his family of twelve onto a raft for an ocean voyage to Egypt. His objective was to escape the third bombing

⁶⁹ Kathleen Newland, *The U.S. Record Shows Refugees Are Not a Threat*, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE (Oct. 7, 2015), <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/us-record-shows-refugees-are-not-threat>.

⁷⁰ Steve Chapman, *Why We Should take More Syrian Refugees*, CHICAGO TRIBUNE (Sept. 11, 2015), <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/chapman/ct-syria-refugees-migrants-asylum-bush-obama-iraq-war-perspec-0913-jm-20150911-column.html>.

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ *Id.*

of his house, and the brutality he experienced when he was beaten by Assad forces. He did not escape with objectives of militancy and extremism. Rather, he simply sought escape.

The US is equipped to address security concerns about Syrian refugees, as the US has already given asylum to more than 100,000 Iraqi refugees.⁷⁵ An asylum-seeker arriving in the US is confronted by a myriad of procedural and legal obstacles to gaining asylum in the country.⁷⁶ The applicant must file within one year of entry, must show that he or she meets the definition of refugee and must also show that none of the bars to asylum are applicable.⁷⁷ A November 20, 2015 White House blog post details the many steps refugees must go through from beginning to end. First, Many refugee applicants identify themselves to the United Nations committee to address refugees, UNHCR.⁷⁸ UNHCR, then collects identifying documentation and performs initial assessments, collects the names, addresses, birthdays, places of birth, and collects iris scans. UNHCR then interviews applicants to confirm their status as refugees and their need for any resettlement, as well as double checking the initial information.⁷⁹ Only those applicants that are strong candidates for resettlement move to the next step, which amounts to less than 1% of world's refugee population.⁸⁰ Then, applicants are received by a federally-funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC).⁸¹ They collect identifying documents, create an applicant file, compile information to conduct biographic security checks.⁸² This biographic security checks starts with enhanced interagency security checks. The candidate is subject to

⁷⁵ Chapman, *supra* note 70.

⁷⁶ Germain, *supra* note 65.

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ WHITE HOUSE, INFOGRAPHIC: THE SCREENING PROCESS FOR REFUGEE ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES (Nov. 20, 2015), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/11/20/infographic-screening-process-refugee-entry-united-states>. [hereinafter *Infographic*].

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER ON REFUGEES, A NEW BEGINNING IN A THIRD COUNTRY, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html>.

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² *Id.*

checks by the National Counterterrorism Center/Intelligence Community, FBI, Department of Homeland Security and State Department.⁸³ The agencies look for any information regarding security risks, including connections to known bad actors, and outstanding warrants, and immigration or criminal issues.⁸⁴ DHS conducts an enhanced review of Syrian cases, which may be referred to USCIS for review. Research conducted by the interviewing officer informs questions about the applicant's eligibility for asylum.⁸⁵ Included in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/USCIS screening are interviews conducted by specially trained USCIS Officers, fingerprint biometric checks, and re-interviews if fingerprint results or new information raises questions.⁸⁶ If new information about the applicant is uncovered by USCIS, additional security checks on the information are conducted. This step can include USCIS placing a hold on any additional research into the application.⁸⁷ Otherwise, the process continues with another biometric security check.⁸⁸ Applicant's fingerprints are taken and screened against the FBI, Department of Defense, and DHS biometrics and fingerprint databases, and any previous watch-list and immigration information.⁸⁹ If the process reaches this stage, that is the end of security concerns. Otherwise, the process continues, screening the refugees for medical issues, providing them with cultural orientation and assigning them to their new homes. International organizations book their travel to the US.⁹⁰ Finally, once here,

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ *Infographic, supra* note 78.

⁹⁰ *Id.*

refugees are required to apply for permanent residency within one year of arriving, a comprehensive process that triggers its own security protocols.⁹¹

Although the White House, and several of the executive agencies listed above have issued press releases detailing the rigor of the asylum process, Facebook also provides a platform for changing public perceptions at the grassroots. Facebook page “Humans of New York” has 16 million followers.⁹² The page’s founder, Brandon, travelled to Turkey to meet Syrian families awaiting asylum.⁹³ As of December 13, 2015, he has shared 50 photographs with brief quotes from the subjects of his photographs, and counting.⁹⁴ One of the most popular photographs received approximately 400,000 “likes” on Facebook, and elicited a Facebook comment from President Obama, *see Figure 1*.⁹⁵ The subject is an architect and scientist who lost his wife, his town that he designed, had his kids forced out of graduate school, and was stricken with cancer. He was granted asylum in Troy, Michigan.



⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² Humans of New York, *The Syrian Americans*, FACEBOOK (Dec. 2, 2015), <https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork>.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.*

⁹⁵ *Id.*

Figure 1

President Obama responded that he found the man to be an inspiration, and that the people of Michigan and America welcome and support him, *see Figure 2*.⁹⁶ Obama's response to the post was "liked" by 170,000 people.



Figure 2

Images and stories such as those from Humans of New York appeal to the goodness and hospitality of Americans and lead to a lowering of the "drawbridge."

(2) Tech to make transition easier, educating the refugees once relocated.

A technology developer or company in the US could develop technology to make the logistics of living in America easier on refugee families. Designers in Europe made a phone app specially designed to help Syrian refugees after they arrived in Germany in the hopes it would

⁹⁶ *Id.*

make life easier in transitioning to their new homes.⁹⁷ The app can provide instructions in German, English, and Arabic, the language native to Syrians. The owner of the app decided it was needed after realizing that a lot of the concerns were answers to rudimentary questions necessary for everyday life such as who to call if there is an emergency, where to learn the native language, how to complete immigration documents, where and how the process works, and who to ask if they had additional questions. The app gave Syrian refugees in Germany the control over basic necessities. A similar app could reduce uncertainties for refugees coming to America, including where the closest hospital is, or the closest grocery store. There is no reason the nation that invented the internet cannot create a comparable app to make culture, laws, and customs accessible to refugees.

(3) Tech to provide resources to Syrians.

The popular social media site, Twitter, now also has developed a way for NGOs to raise funds remotely.⁹⁸ As part of the sharing economy, the home sharing app, Airbnb provides free credits and matches donations for refugee aid workers to stay in Airbnb locations in Europe and Turkey.⁹⁹ The website InterAction's "Hope for Syria" campaign collects donations and distributes aid among nine reputable organizations providing relief and care to Syrian refugees.¹⁰⁰ The Instacart App allows customers to shop for groceries online while simultaneously sending food to Syrian refugees around the world.¹⁰¹ Customers who use Instacart to buy their groceries get an option at checkout to also buy groceries for Syrian

⁹⁷ 'Welcome to Germany' says new app for Syrian refugees, EURONEWS (Nov. 5, 2015),

<http://www.euronews.com/2015/11/05/welcome-to-germany-says-new-app-for-syrian-refugees>.

⁹⁸ WHITE HOUSE, #AidRefugees (Nov. 20, 2015), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/campaign/aidrefugees>.

⁹⁹ AIRBNB, *Join the Airbnb community in supporting relief organizations on the front lines of the refugee crisis*, <https://www.airbnb.com/support-refugees>.

¹⁰⁰ *Hope for Syria*, KINTERA.COM,

<http://www.kintera.org/site/c.afLIINPoF6KSF/b.9351703/k.BD62/Home.htm#organizations>.

¹⁰¹ INSTACART.COM, <https://www.instacart.com/store/donate/unhcr>.

refugees.¹⁰² The United Nations also launched a meal sharing app in November, 2015, to allow people to virtually “share” a meal they are consuming with a Syrian refugee.¹⁰³ Like the other sharing apps, the sharing economy and technology are transforming the way society connects to those in need.¹⁰⁴ The UN calls the app “ShareTheMeal,” and users of the app can send half a dollar or more to the World Food Program (WFP) from their smartphone, thus providing a Syrian child in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan with at least one day’s worth of food.¹⁰⁵ Approximately 80,000 people, half of whom are children, live in the Zaatari camp, a camp which sprawls across the Jordanian desert, a few miles across the Jordanian border.¹⁰⁶ Every family at Zataari camp and hundreds of thousands of other displaced Syrians depend on depend on WFP for food.¹⁰⁷ This is particularly helpful in light of the December 2014 cut of 1.7 million Euros by the WFP to Syrian refugees as it struggled to meet the demands of millions of people, and the July 2015 cut after a lull in media interest led to a drop in donations.¹⁰⁸ The refugee crisis in Europe, the closeness of the horrors of the Syrian conflict and the images of Aylan Kurdi renewed French interest in helping Syrians.¹⁰⁹ With tens of millions of smartphone users around the globe, microfinancing makes the possibility of feeding every child accessible with the touch of a button. During a short trial in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, 120,000 people downloaded the app, and raised about \$850,000 for school children.¹¹⁰ The test run closed the hunger gap for every single one of the country’s 1.7 million children in

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ Sophie Pilgrim, *UN Launches App to Help Feed Syrian Refugee Children*, FRANCE24 (Dec. 11, 2015), <http://www.france24.com/en/20151112-share-meal-syrian-refugees-zaatari-camp-un-wfp-app>.

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

Lesotho.¹¹¹ The feeding apps are doubly helpful when they feed children because if children are not being fed, the parents become desperate for money and food and are more likely to send the children out to work thus depriving them of crucial years of learning.¹¹² In this way, food and education are interrelated. The more likely the children are to be in school, the more likely the next generation will return to a safe Syria to rebuild the nation. This is the primary goal of both Abo Abdo and Mohamad Halawa. In distributing resources, Facebook can also play a continued role for the refugees once they are here. For example, a local woman decided the children of several refugee families in Phoenix should have gifts of their choices for the holiday season. She photographed the children, handwrote their wish on the picture, and uploaded it to a Facebook event. Coincidentally, one of the families was the Halawa family, *see Figures 3-10* [images removed from this public document for privacy reasons].

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.*

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

V. Conclusion

As explained at the outset, in October, 2015 I traveled to and had the opportunity to speak to Abo Abdo in Amman, Jordan. In November, 2015, I had the opportunity to speak to Mohamed Halawa and his family of 12, recently resettled in Phoenix, Arizona. The lives of these families are discussed in Section 1 of this paper along with the timeline of the conflict. The relevant laws and policies are discussed in Section 2. Finally, my law and technology recommendations are discussed in Section 3. First, technology should be used to change public perceptions, which leads to changes in acceptance of various populations. Second, technology can make the transition to America easier for refugees by technologizing the orientation process once here. Third, technology can be used to share resources with refugees.

Sharing the information and resources opens the drawbridge between admitted Americans and aspiring Americans. Despite the varying sentiments towards immigration, the US has been a haven and generous host to hundreds of thousands seeking a safe home. The immigration mechanisms continue to be equipped to handle the processing of refugees to screen for security concerns. The 10,000 refugees to be admitted in 2016 provide an opportunity to demonstrate the fitness of the asylum process, technological mobilization for charitable causes, and the American dream.

Addendum 1 – Interview of Abo Abdo

Interview of Abo Abdo

1. Introduction:

When I arrived in Jordan I had many avenues to explore to contact Syrians living in Jordan: camp contacts, family members' contacts and Syrians around town in Syrian neighborhoods. Most people knew Jordanians and I was even invited to attend a wedding between a Syrian and Palestinian. The Director of the Zaatari camp granted me permission to come to his camp, however I needed to permission from the Jordanian Ministry of the Interior to enter the camp. The Ministry of the Interior never responded to my request. There are also smaller less official camps that were more distant from the Syrian border, however, family members informed me that they were not safe to visit. Refugees at those camps have allegedly formed small organized crime rings to sustain them as they have very small rations from the camps and are not permitted to work in Jordan. I was able to get a hold of one Syrian man in Amman. However, he is working illegally which is how he is able to live in Amman. As a result, he did not want to share specific demographic information such as name and age. He only wanted to be identified by his nickname "Abo Abdo." He also did not want to be photographed or recorded, but at my insistence allowed me to take a picture of his hands and the coffee we shared at his apartment. Below is a translated summary of the notes I took during the interview. We spoke both Arabic and English throughout the interview. Because he would often answer in examples and anecdotes, I went a bit off script with questioning.

The interview was on Saturday October 31, 2015 at around 2pm Amman time. The interview was in his 2 bedroom apartment. His wife served us coffee during the interview which lasted a few hours. I gave them a bag of mixed American chocolates at the end of the interview to thank them for their time. He was wearing a traditional long white dress, thob and his wife was in all black hijab and abaya. She sat with us but did not speak. His children were home but did not come out and speak with me. My uncle accompanied me to make the meeting culturally appropriate. Although I asked him questions chronologically, he preferred to answer questions with stories. I share his stories below.

2. About Abo Abdo, Generally

Abo Abdo is a Sunni, married man over 40 years of age originally from Homs, Syria. He lives in Jordan with his wife and two children. He has a higher degree in English and worked as a teacher in Syria before coming to Jordan. This enabled him to find work as an English professor at a university in Jordan where he works illegally. He sent his wife and kids to Jordan in 2012 and he joined them later that year.

3. Interview

Rebels Information – From 2011 onwards, what technologies were at play?

[Before we spoke about technology the rebels used he wanted to give me background information about the conflict and about life in Homs before 2011.]

Before 2011, Alawites and Sunnis in Syria got along well. Homs was 80% Sunni and 20% Alawite. The Alawites were in more lucrative and powerful positions in government and held most government positions, resulting in worse treatment of Sunnis generally, but the Sunnis and Alawites got along “perfectly” according to Abo Abdo. The protests began in Homs in 2011 because of the corruption of the governor of Homs. It was widely known among the residents of Homs that the governor took a cut from all the deals and businesses in Homs and the people were frustrated. This governor [Ghassan Mustafa Abdul-Aal] was an Alawite and was also very close friends with Bashar Al-Assad.

As to technology, we did not learn about the rebels from Facebook, twitter, or television. The kids used Facebook and YouTube and the government used the TV. But I knew it was happening because I’m a teacher. I learned it from the people. Students would tell me and their parents would tell me what was happening. The TV and the internet are not reliable.

From 2011 onwards did you receive any messages from the Assad opposition?

Yes they would call us from the streets. As they would go to demonstrations in 2011 they would shout out to the people to come and protest. They were not really “opposition” they were just “the people.” Before 2011 the people just wanted small changes. They wanted a different governor or for their governor to stop his corruption. That’s what they were protesting for.

And the protests were really not that serious. The Alawites and the Sunnis would be out protesting on opposite sides during the day, but then they would go and have tea or dinner with each other. No one thought that it would escalate like it did. A Syrian is a Syrian no matter what sect.

I believe the Iranians wanted to escalate this. Syrians wouldn’t want to destroy their country and kill other Syrians. In 2012, after I sent my wife and kids to Jordan I was detained by Alawite soldiers. They didn’t tell me what I had done wrong. I wasn’t a part of any protests or anything. They covered my face and kept me in a room for 24 hours. There was a man who would come in and rather than talk to me he would just walk around the room and shout “Oh Ali, what should I do with this man? Should I let him live oh Ali?” It was like he wanted me to hate Shias and hate Alawites.

They wanted to make it sectarian. For example [in January 2012] what happened in Baba Amr. It was a beautiful city. But the Shiites went in and slaughtered whole families of only Sunnis. [He seemed uncomfortable and did not want to elaborate].¹¹³

[This is the Wikipedia excerpt on that event: On 27 January a brutal attack took place against Sunni Muslims in Homs killing at least 30 people. Firstly, the Syrian government fired heavy mortar rounds on the Karm al-Zeitoun neighborhood of Homs, killing at least 16 people. Then Pro-Assad militia called “shabiba” entered a building in the neighborhood, and killed 14 members of a Sunni family. The Bahader family was found shot and hacked to death, the dead included 8 children under the age of 9. YouTube video footage was taken by activists, showing

¹¹³ One such family, the Bahader family, is described in this news report:
<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/27/190862.html>

the family members' dead bodies, with wounds to the head and neck. There was no comment from the Syrian authorities, but a doctor in Homs said "Alawites who had remained in Karm al-Zeitoun mysteriously left four days ago, and the rumor was that they did so on orders by the authorities. Today we know why. We also have seventy people wounded. Field hospitals themselves are coming under mortar fire."]

Was that the only way you learned of the goings on of the people?

No, the three primary ways were over the phone when family and friends would call and tell us. The other was word of mouth from people at the masjid. And third is the people shouting. You could get in trouble for the phones and masjid, so people shouting was mostly how I knew protests were happening.

Once, after the protests started, I went to pray afternoon prayer at the masjid. I said salam to another man who was already there. That is your duty as a Muslim to say salam to another Muslim. I didn't know him, but I said salam as a good Muslim. As I was leaving, a policeman stopped me to ask my relationship to that man. I said I didn't know him. But after that I didn't go to the masjid anymore.

Did you attend any of the protests?

No. My son is [a teenager] and he went to the protests with everyone from his school. I tried to convince him not to but the opposition runs in his blood. My father protested against Hafez Al-Assad, I previously protested against Bashar and was kicked out of the country for it so I avoided all the protests this time, but my son wanted to go. He was the most frustrated. There was a bombing at a restaurant near his school. The army showed up and started shooting up the entire school. After that, I pulled my kids out of school.

Did you receive any information from the Assad regime? If so, how did you receive that information?

Every time you turned on the television you get news from Assad. You can never trust the news in Syria. The national channels were always pro-Bashar, and AlJazeera and Al-Arabiya were always against Bashar. So I prefer them, but I never trusted the news. I only trusted things if I could see it, hear it, or feel it. You never know who to trust. There was a Christian man in our neighborhood who used to type up reports and would call and give these reports to the security forces.

For example, one time in 2011 there was an ad in a local newspaper. It said it was by the "Assad Electronic Army." The article said they would give money and arms to protestors. People went to the location they said and got the arms and money. The next day Bashar's people came and gathered everyone they gave arms to and claimed they arrested terrorists.

Did you ever see, hear, or communicate with ISIS/DAISH?

To answer your question, yes. I saw them. You should know that Bashar is probably working with ISIS. The only people that really suffer from ISIS and Assad are the people, they don't go after each other. But to answer your question, yes, I saw ISIS. They came in 2011 and I saw

them around town. I knew they were terrorists. They were large light skinned bearded men. They couldn't speak Arabic. Their beards were very large and unkempt. They didn't speak to anyone but everyone knew to avoid them.

After I left and the fighting became worse, whenever the security forces would leave a town, the next day ISIS would come in. It was like they were coordinating with each other. These men are probably Iranian. There were men like them in Iraq after the Iranians and Iraqis swapped prisoners.¹¹⁴

Why and how did you leave Syria?

I sent my wife and children ahead of me in 2012. I stayed because I needed to work to support them. I decided to leave when one day the security forces were on one side of my building and the people were on the other side of my building. They were having a fire fight, but my apartment was in the middle. The whole building was sprayed with bullets on both sides. I stayed as long as possible to work but I left too after the security forces detained me for one day.

Why did you choose Jordan? How did you keep in touch with your family? How did you arrive here?

My family took a taxi, and I took a taxi when I came too. We drove across the border. I just used regular cell phones to talk to them. That's interesting question about why Jordan. First of all, my wife is a Jordanian citizen. So even though I'm working illegally, sometimes the authorities here give me a pass when I tell them I'm working to support my Jordanian wife. I had the option to go to Lebanon too, but I'm frightened of the Shias there. I didn't want to go to Turkey because I don't know anyone there. And anyways here in Jordan there are a lot of Palestinians and they feel sympathetic for the Syrians because of their situation. I didn't want to go to Europe because we've heard stories and we've seen the news about the people who do go.

What technologies do you use now that you're here?

We watch Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera from our TV here. We still use our cell phones and we use the VIPER app to talk to family in Syria and those in Belgium. We've used both of those to talk to people for last 2 years now.

How would you describe your situation now?

Well I'm very lucky. The Syrians in the camps have become criminals to avoid starving. There are crime lords who hoard all the resources and force others to agree to their will. The camps are dangerous. My kids are in school now. I'm borrowing money to send them to school again. Money from my job goes to rent. It's risky working, but it's worth it.

What are your plans for the future?

If I could leave Jordan, I would go to Scotland.

¹¹⁴ This article is the closest support I could find for his proposition that ISIS fighters were radical shia Iranians: <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/412975/swapping-prisoners-terrorists-andrew-c-mccarthy>

Why is that?

I've heard they have good immigration laws. And they are less racist to Muslims than other Western countries. Also, no one has thought of it, so it's probably more available.

What is your ideal situation?

I would love to return to Homs.

Do you believe America or Middle Eastern countries should be doing more?

No this doesn't concern them. Americans are good, they try to help, but they don't understand what is happening. Jordan has been a good host. But what more can they do? We just need the fighting to stop so we can go home. I will keep working so my son and daughter can finish high school. I will just worry about taking care of my family for now and hope that Syria will be restored. Other countries will do what they will.

Addendum II – Interview of Mohamad Halawa

I. Introduction

On Saturday November 14, 2015 I went to visit Mohamed Halawa at his home in Central Phoenix. I obtained his phone number from a contact in Arizona who previously requested donations for the family. The house is a small ranch style house. The house has a large American flag flying outside. There was also a “Free Syria” bumper sticker on their older model Dodge Caravan. My husband came with me, partially to help me carry groceries, partially to alleviate any cultural concerns the family may have in case I would be alone with Mr. Halawa. Based on previous information of their situation, I decided to take lamb, chicken, bread, rice, and candy with me. As we pulled into the driveway around 2pm Mr. Halawa, his mother, and his wife all came outside into the front yard to greet us. Inside, the entire family was waiting for us. Living with Mr. Halawa are his mother, father, wife, and eight children. They served us pepsis and a banana, and I informed him of my research and he was eager to tell me about his experiences. Mr. Halawa does not speak English. He preferred to give anecdotal stories. And I adapted the questions based on his stories. Mr. Halawa is 43 years old and arrived with his family of 12 to Phoenix on April 22, 2015.

II. Interview:

Can you tell me about the Rebels and what technologies were at play?

Before the war, Syria was just like any other country. Everyone had computers, televisions. Now it's like we went back to before my grandfather's grandfather's time and your grandfather's grandfather's time. People just go to sleep at night because there isn't light. No one has electricity. We should start with how it all happened to understand how you get the jewel in the Arab world to the stone age:

Back in 2011, a lot of kids had seen what was happening in Tunisia and Libya on the television. Some kids from Daraa, Syria on the border of Jordan of Syria thought were being kids and copied what they saw. There were 12 kids who wrote on a wall “The people want a change of Policy.” But then Bashar's people collected those kids and tortured them. We heard stories about the kids nails being peeled and other horrific things. One of the kids was so frightened he died, Hamzah AlKhatib.¹¹⁵

Once, I was driving on a damaged one way road in Syria after this all started. There was a car stopped on the other side, so I went ahead and drove. When I got the other side it was security forces. They said I tried to drive them off the road and they started to beat me up and do other unspeakable things. They didn't shoot me but I wish they had.

¹¹⁵ Washington Post reports the story in (graphic) detail in this 2011 article: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/torture-of-boy-reinvigorates-syrias-protest-movement/2011/05/29/AGPwIREH_story.html Chillingly, the author writes in 2011, “It is too early to tell whether the boy's death will trigger the kind of critical mass that brought down the regimes in Egypt and Tunisia earlier this year and that the Syrian protests have lacked.”

How did you hear about all the events happening around the country?

We are from a town called Idlib, we lived on a multigenerational farm. We all knew each other and people shared news. We also saw everything that was happening on Al-Arabiya. Everyone was sad about what happened to the kids, but it wasn't something new. We all know that Bashar and his father have unfair reactions. But it became real for everyone after what happened in Homs. The people there were protesting and saying "The people want a change of Governor." They had a very corrupt governor who was making life very hard. He wouldn't allow contracts to go through without increasing the cost of it so he could take a cut of it. This made the governor wealthy and made everything too expensive for the people. But then Bashar's people started attacking the women of Homs in early 2012. They were beating them, raping them, we heard if they saw a pregnant woman they would kick her in the stomach. After that the protestors started saying "The people demand a removal of the government." But Bashar's people were vicious.

After that, everything just got worse and worse. You ask about technology. To give you an idea, by end of 2012 to start of 2013 we no longer had power. We had to use radios like from my father's time to hear news. There was no water, no electricity. We were trying to collect herbs from among the weeds on our land for food. We didn't just go back a thousand years in time, but maybe two thousand years. By the time we got to Egypt we had no money left, and no food, and no idea what would happen next. We never heard from DAISH or Security Forces, we only heard the news on the radios. They were using walkie talkies but never to talk to us. We just relied on each other and the radios.

They made this war. The soldiers who were making trouble had badges on their arm that said "Oh Ali." Bashar is making this sectarian to get Iran to support him. Before this, Syrians were never, never, sectarian. There were never poor people in Syria, so no one ever had envy. Everyone was just Syrian and just happy. That's why DAISH and Bashar are working together to kill Syrians. That's Bashar's way to hold power. Saddam was killed a few hours after they found him, and Ghaddafi even faster. But not Bashar. He's using religion to destroy Syria and keep himself alive.

Can you tell me more about how you got to Egypt and why there? And how you got to America from there?

Well, the only person who was taking Syrians in 2013 was Erdogan. I don't know a lot about Erdogan, but he is a noble man. He took Syrians in without asking questions. When we left Idlib I took all our family money in bags and we paid for rides to Turkey. And there, we paid for a boat ride to Egypt.¹¹⁶ My youngest son was crying when we got to Egypt that he was hungry. But I had spent all my money to go to Egypt and I couldn't do anything else. We went to a UN refugee camp, and all thanks to God we were able to get relocated to America. We are some of the lucky ones. My brother is living illegally in Egypt now. And Sisi is the same as Bashar, but he especially hates Syrians.

¹¹⁶ He did not say they were smugglers, and I didn't push. But that is likely how they got from Idlib to Egypt.

Do you have other family? How do you stay in touch? Where are they?

I have the one brother and 3 sisters. We don't know where my sisters are. I've heard rumors that one of them is in Lebanon and one in Turkey. I don't know where the third one is. [His mother sitting beside him began crying as he shared this]. We have no way to get in touch with them. We use cell phones and sometimes WhatsApp to talk to my brother.

What technologies are at play now?

For us, we have cell phones, television, same as before the war. In Syria now though, they've been living without water or power for 4 years now. When they want to make a phone call ten families will pool their resources to buy fuel for a generator to use a phone. There's no technology left in the country. When people's houses are destroyed they started to build them from mud. There's one woman who did that and they bombed that mud house and she built a new mud house. But yes, there is nothing left of technology there now.

Do you think America or other countries should do more?

The Syrian children are dying. If anyone does something they don't need to give guns, they need to give food and vaccines and books for the children. Our children had no school for 5 years. I haven't been able to work because my sickness for 8 months. But that's nothing compared to when I was scared of my children starving because we had run out of money by the time we got to Egypt. They need to protect the next generation. I don't know what will happen to the next generation of Syrians. Is that all for now?

Yes, just one more, I've taken a lot of your time, thank you for hosting me. What are your plans for the future? What is your ideal situation?

The ideal situation would be for us to return home. I would build a mud house if it was safe to go home. It's impossible. Probably will never happen. I can't even pay back the cost of my plane ticket here. The UN is sending us bills for our plane ticket here. They want \$13,000 from us. The kids will never know their land, their family, their culture. We are so lucky to be here and be alive. But the first apartment we were in was so small and dark and filled with roaches we were scared this was what all of America was like. But we were lucky to be able to move to this house. And now we are some of the luckiest Syrians in the world. [His wife interjected here:] If they want to make it safe, they need to get rid of ISIS and get rid of Bashar and then the people will return.

[His mother got up to hug me goodbye and was crying:] If you are a lawyer, if you can help me bring my son from Egypt. He is living illegally and all I want is to have him here with us. And if you know any jobs for my son he will do anything but he needs work. Please.