



## **NIAF. Syrian Refugee Crisis Discussed on Capitol Hill**

N. I.A.F (November 20, 2015)



Join NIAF, in conjunction with the Italian American Congressional Staff Association,  
for a discussion on

## **"The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Effects and Responses from Italy and the U.S."**

LIVE ON PERISCOPE

Nov 19, 12pm EST at [@niaforg](https://twitter.com/niaforg)



U.S. Representatives David Cicilline and Bill Pascrell Joined Panel of Experts on Italy and Syrian Refugee Crisis \*Forum Livestreamed on NIAF's Facebook at National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) and Twitter [@niaforg](https://twitter.com/niaforg)\*

"The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Effects and Responses in Italy and the United States" was the topic at the National Italian American Foundation — Frank J. Guarini Public Policy Forum at the Rayburn



House Office Building on November 19, 2015. Representatives David Cicilline (RI) and Bill Pascrell (NJ), who championed this issue, were joined by a panel of experts moderated by Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Europe Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Jeffrey Rathke.

NIAF's Government Relations and Public Policy Committee Chair Mark Valente III and Rep. Pascrell welcomed guests to a discussion of this timely topic. They were joined by NIAF's leadership, including Vice Chairman Gabriel A. Battista; Executive Vice President John F. Calvelli, Treasurer Robert E. Carlucci, and members of the Board of Directors Joseph M. Della Ratta and Michael J. Zarrelli.

"We know what evil is and we want to destroy this barbaric organization," Pascrell said of ISIS. "I will not take a back seat about the defense of the United States against foreign and domestic enemies." Rep. Pascrell also congratulated his colleague Rep. Pat Tiberi (OH), who recently was selected to chair the Health Subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Pascrell introduced Rep. Cicilline, who explained that while four million refugees have fled their homeland, only about 2,000 have been resettled in the United States. "Closing doors is misguided," Cicilline said. "If we turn our backs [on these refugees], we will give ISIS a victory."

At the podium, Rathke introduced the panel of experts who presented their perspectives on the issue. Ambassador Marilina Armellini, counsellor at the Embassy of Italy and permanent observer of Italy to the Organization of American States, gave the Italian perspective of the refugee issue. She discussed the importance of human mobility, a megatrend of the 21st century, and Italy's most ambitious challenge. "We need to step up and strengthen the discourse from a panic mode to a planning mode," Armellini said. She also congratulated veteran Italian diplomat Filippo Grandi to his new post of high commissioner for refugees at the United Nations.

Jessica Ashooh, deputy director of the Middle East Strategy Task Force at the Atlantic Council, spoke about root causes of the civil war in Syria and solutions that the United States and international partners need to address. "It's a long term problem, we need to integrate not insulate," Ashooh said.

"We need to look in the mirror at the mistakes we have made in the last 15 years and build a more stable Europe but the opposite has occurred," added Giovanni Faleg, secretary of the Italian Democratic Party (PD) in the District of Columbia and a researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies. Faleg advocated for European countries to stay united not only for the short term but for the long term.

Parallel to Faleg's comments on the need for a united Europe, Matteo Garavoglia, Italy Program fellow at The Brookings Institution, spoke about the dichotomy in Europe that exists between countries with an open arm policy and countries with closed borders.

Following the panel discussion Rathke invited guests to ask questions. After the spirited discussion, Mr. Valente closed the forum and thanked the distinguished panel and guests.

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NIAF is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works closely in Washington, D.C., with the Italian American Congressional Delegation and The White House as a national voice of the Italian American community to promote stronger economic, social and cultural relations between Italy and the United States. Our cornerstone programs include scholarships and cultural grants to support educational and cultural activities at many colleges and universities.



## **Links**

[1] <http://iitaly.org/files/niafsyrian1448589014jpg>