

Barack Obama orders US to take in 10,000 Syrian refugees

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Washington: US President Barack Obama ordered the government to begin preparations to accept at least 10,000 Syrian refugees during the new fiscal year beginning on October 1, the White House announced on Thursday.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest made the announcement at his daily press conference one day after Secretary of State John Kerry said that the country was committed to taking in more Syrian refugees to respond to the immigration crisis that was affecting Europe, reports Efe.

Earnest noted that, to be able to admit the 10,000 refugees during Fiscal 2016, it would be necessary to raise the annual quota of refugees that the US may take in from the current annual figure of 70,000, which has been in place since 2013.

Specifically to get that accomplished, on Wednesday Kerry met with a group of lawmakers to establish the quota of refugees the US might take in from all over the world in Fiscal 2016.

Kerry gave no figures to reporters after the meeting and said only that the US was committed to receiving more Syrian refugees.

Officials present at that meeting told the media later that the government's proposal was to increase the total figure of refugees for Fiscal 2016 to at least 75,000 and Kerry mentioned the figure of 100,000.

Since the start of the civil war in Syria more than four years ago, the US has taken in just 1,500 refugees from that country, most of them in recent months, and another 300 are scheduled to arrive this month.

The specific commitments announced in recent days by countries such as Germany and France have increased the pressure on Washington to involve itself in the crisis created in Europe by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the conflicts in the Middle East, especially in Syria.

The US was "the biggest" donor of aid to Syria and, since the outbreak of the conflict there, it has contributed more than \$4 billion in humanitarian assistance, according to the White House.

Of that aid, some \$1.9 billion has gone directly to support Syrian refugees in countries bordering on Syria.

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