Private Sponsorship of Refugees - The New Face of Resettlement for the European Union?
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Proposed Research
My proposed research will focus on the utility of private sponsorship programmes for refugees in Europe as an alternative safe and legal way to gain protection. I will use a Case Study Methodology to collect data on temporary programmes that exist (or have existed) in Europe to demonstrate their utility.

My research will include: secondary data collection and comparison of current private sponsorship programmes; sampling of available literature and news articles on political and civil society interest in private sponsorship programmes; and a specific country study, which applies the collected data to demonstrate the possibility of implementing a private sponsorship programme.

Utility of Research
This research aims to demonstrate that private sponsorship programmes are an untapped resource for EU governments to explore as an alternative pathway to protection. It is hoped that the research can be useful in the following ways:

- that a flexible private sponsorship programme can respond to ongoing global resettlement needs
- programmes will build on existing immigration policies, and increase refugee participation in the process
- humanitarianism will increase with diaspora and private sector support
- private sponsorship programmes can provide safe, alternative, legal pathways to the EU for refugees fleeing persecution

Background
Broadening resettlement to the EU through the creation of private sponsorship programmes will establish an alternative safe and legal pathway to protection for refugees.

Owing to skepticism, the voluntary UNHCR resettlement programme has few EU participants, with available spaces being cut by governments amid economic downturns.

Media coverage of the conflict has put a face to persecution, and private sponsorship programmes would encourage civil society to participate directly in refugee resettlement.

Discussion
Opponents argue that resettling refugees is expensive, and private sponsorship programmes risk governments deferring their resettlement responsibility to civil society. Further, EU countries lack established settlement organisations common in Canada and Australia, which may make replicating their successful programmes difficult on an ongoing basis.

There is limited research on this topic, as only a small number of private sponsorship programmes have been implemented. However Canadian studies indicate that privately sponsored refugees are quicker to become self-supporting compared to government sponsored refugees.

References
3. Irish Immigration and Integration Board (2008), Irish Resettlement Admission Programme.

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