



**Address**  
**by**  
**Guðni Th. Jóhannesson**  
**President of Iceland**  
**at the reception of refugees from Syria**  
**to Iceland**

**30 January 2017**

Dear guests

I offer you my heartfelt welcome to Iceland. You had to flee the horrors of war, I hope you will enjoy your new home. We Icelanders cannot rescue the world, we cannot receive all who seek refuge. More powerful states need to secure peace in war-ravaged parts of the world.

Still, we can try to help. We can offer a safe haven and improve our society by demonstrating open-mindedness, charity and compassion. We can derive that sense of duty from the Christian faith which most people adhere to in Iceland. We can also recall the opening article of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Here in Iceland we want to defend indisputable human rights: gender equality, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom to travel and not the least the freedom from fear. “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” the president of the United States said so memorably in 1933. Again, let me welcome you to Iceland with all of my heart.