

# MARK KRİKORIAN

**IMPACT:** Mark Krikorian is the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), an anti-immigration research organization that advocates lower immigration levels. He is a regular contributor to the National Review online, and has been cited in a number of media outlets, including the Washington Post, the New York Times, Fox News, and CNN. Krikorian frequently amplifies anti-Muslim rhetoric—stoking fears about mass Muslim immigration, condemning immigrant enclaves as safe havens for potential terrorists, and expressing discontent with the number of Muslim Syrian refugees entering the United States. He has also made statements critical of asylum seekers, defended the condition of immigration detention centers where children were separated from parents, and questioned why older and disabled individuals need to become citizens.

- Mark Krikorian is an American anti-immigration advocate. He is author of [The New Case Against Immigration, Both Legal and Illegal](#), [How Obama Is Transforming America Through Immigration](#), and co-author of [Open Immigration: Yea & Nay](#). **He has been described in the Washington Post as one of the “intellectual architects of the movement to slow immigration to a trickle.”** The grandchild of Armenian immigrants to the United States, Krikorian has [stated](#) that his childhood growing up in Armenian immigration communities is why he doesn’t have “a romantic or sentimentalist view about [immigration].”
- In 1988, Krikorian [accepted](#) a job at the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), an anti-immigration organization founded by eugenicist, nativist, and anti-immigration activist [John Tanton](#). In 1995, Krikorian [became](#) executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), an anti-immigration research organization which [shares](#) endorsements from anti-Muslim figures such as [Frank Gaffney](#) and [Jeff Sessions](#). **The organization’s research has also been invoked by anti-immigration media outlets and politicians in their calls for immigration reform, including Donald Trump. Members of CIS have argued for a revision of policy on birthright citizenship, expressed support for public charge rules, and rejected the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), sanctuary city jurisdictions, and family-based immigration, referred to as “chain migration.”**
- Krikorian has attempted to distance himself and his organization from Tanton. In an email to the Southern Law Poverty Center’s (SLPC) Intelligence Report, Krikorian [wrote](#) that Tanton has “never been on our board or served as an employee, he’s never even been in our offices.” However, the SPLC [explains](#) that Tanton was instrumental in founding both CIS and FAIR. In a July 1995 [letter](#)<sup>1</sup> to Krikorian, Tanton urged CIS to consider the emotional element of the immigration debate, in addition to a fact-based approach: “For sometime, I have been saying that in the immigration debate, feelings overwhelm facts, and ethics will eventually trump economics. I’m not saying this is the way it should be; rather the way I think it will be. With that in view, I believe it will become important for all of us to begin to study, analyze and understand the emotional factors and the ethical systems that are brought to bear on immigration policy.”
- **Krikorian endorses lowering immigration numbers across the United States, and has made statements critical of asylum seekers.** In February 2019 on C-SPAN, Krikorian [claimed](#) that the “vast majority” of Central American immigrants making claims for asylum in the United States were only doing so in order to fraudulently gain entrance into the country. He has also outlined his opposition to refugee resettlement in the United States. **In August 2018, Krikorian stated that “large-scale refugee resettlement is immoral” and argued that refugees are a burden to the American economy.** These arguments have been [dismissed](#) by the Brookings Institute, which maintains that refugees act as key factors in the economy through their role in the labor force and their propensity for entrepreneurship.
- **Krikorian has also been critical of the Fourteenth Amendment, referring to the policy of birthright citizenship as “archaic” and arguing, “What matters is that automatic citizenship for anyone and everyone born on our soil is a policy that has outlived its usefulness.”**
- **In November 2015, Krikorian testified in front of the U.S. Congressional Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, expressing his discontent with the number of Muslim Syrian refugees entering the country:** “And indeed, there currently seems to be a policy of discrimination

<sup>1</sup> John Tanton Archive, University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, Boxes 1 - 14, as reproduced by IREHR

# MARK KRİKORIAN

against Christian refugees; Muslims are overrepresented among the Syrians whom we have resettled, perhaps in part because the UN selects refugees for us from its camps, and Christian refugees fear going to camps, lest the Muslims kill them.” According to the [Center for Migration Studies](#), the religious disparity is partly due to support of the Syrian regime: “Most Syrian Christians did not rebel against the Syrian regime, and most live in regime-controlled areas. Therefore, far fewer Christians have sought resettlement. In Syria, the majority Sunni population supports the rebels and opposes President Bashar al-Assad. As a result, this population produces the largest percentage of Syrian refugees.” Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) “prioritizes refugees for resettlement based on ‘basic human needs,’ regardless of religion or race” and Syrian Christian refugees also represent a minority in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.

- Krikorian has frequently amplified anti-Muslim rhetoric. **Writing for the National Review in April 2011, he suggested that Muslims were naturally inclined towards violence, explaining, “In the Islamic world democracy faces the problem of a vicious people, one where the desire for freedom is indeed written in every human heart, but the freedom to do evil.”**
- In a December 2015 [interview](#) at the National Security Summit, Krikorian expressed his reservations regarding Muslims’ ability to assimilate into American society, posing the question, “How do we ensure the successful and full Americanization of the roughly 3 million Muslims that are already here?” He responded, “That will require reductions overall in immigration.”
- **In August 2016, Krikorian implied that 9/11 was a day of celebration for Muslims.** In response to a New York Times headline announcement that Eid-al-Adha would fall on 9/11, Krikorian [tweeted](#), “Am I a bad person for thinking it was already a holiday?”
- Krikorian has [appeared](#) numerous times on [Gaffney’s Secure Free Radio Podcast](#). **Gaffney has previously voiced his belief that the Muslim Brotherhood is attempting to intervene in American civil and political institutions, and argued for “a new and improved counterpart to the Cold War-Era’s House Un-American Activities Committee” in order to root out Muslim insurgency in the United States.** Krikorian shares Gaffney’s suspicions about Muslims, and has [advocated](#) for increased border control as an essential part of the “struggle against militant Islam.”
- **Krikorian has condemned immigrant communities as safe havens for potential terrorists. In 2003, Krikorian claimed that “immigrant enclaves” play an essential role in both shielding and recruiting terrorists.** Citing a December 2001 Washington Post [article](#), he implied that the Muslim community in San Diego purposely aided 9/11 hijackers Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid Almihdhar: “Alhazmi and Almihdhar repeatedly enlisted help from San Diego’s mosques and established members of its Islamic community.” However, Krikorian failed to mention that members of San Diego’s Muslim community unwittingly accepted Alhazmi and Almihdhar into their community as new immigrants. According to the same Washington Post [article](#), the community “[was] relatively devoid of radicalism [and] of anti-Western feeling” and “investigators believe[d] that the community’s very openness, [and] its relaxed and diverse nature, made this city ... hospitable terrain” for the two hijackers.
- **In September 2013, Krikorian argued, “Large, constantly refreshed and poorly assimilated immigrant communities serve as cover and incubators for our enemies, even though — obviously — most of the people in them are not included among the ranks of those enemies.”** He further wrote, “It’s tedious but necessary to point out that most Mexicans in Chicago aren’t drug dealers and most Somalis in Minneapolis aren’t terrorists. But continuing to permit high levels of immigration prevents assimilation from draining the water of these communities, as it were, allowing these criminals to continue to swim among their compatriots.”
- After the Haitian earthquake in 2010, Krikorian [stated](#), “Haiti’s so screwed up because it wasn’t colonized long enough ... But, unlike Jamaicans and Bajans and Guadeloupeans, et al., after experiencing the worst of tropical colonial slavery, the Haitians didn’t stick around long enough to benefit from it. (Haiti became independent in 1804.) And by benefit I mean develop a local culture significantly shaped by the more-advanced civilization of the colonizers.” ThinkProgress [rejected](#) Krikorian’s statements and called attention

# MARK KRİKORIAN

to his arguments of cultural inferiority: “Haiti’s revolution inspired the fights for independence across Latin America and ushered in the end of slavery in the New World. Meanwhile, a never-ending sphere of Western influence and self-serving intervention probably offers a better explanation for why Haiti is as ‘screwed-up’ as it is ... Ultimately, Krikorian’s assessment of what’s wrong with Haiti is based in the same perception of the relative cultural inferiority of non-Western nations that guides many of CIS’ immigration positions.”

- **In April 2012, Krikorian wrote a [blog post denouncing exceptions to the English and civics tests granted to prospective citizens of old age, with mental impairments, and with physical or developmental disabilities](#):** “I get that certain older or disabled people are not going to be able to pass the citizenship tests — but then why should they become citizens? It’s not like they’re going to be thrown out of the country if they don’t get naturalized — we’ve already awarded them green cards and so they can live here undisturbed with their families or whoever for the rest of their lives.” He further suggested that the exceptions could be used “to generate Democrat voters” and “to expand welfare eligibility.”
- **In July 2012, Krikorian wrote an [article on the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act mocking “dubious” sorts of disabilities listed by the Census Bureau](#):** “Heck, with such broad eligibility for being ‘disabled’ and such lucrative benefits, I’m surprised it’s only 19 percent of the population — what’s wrong with the rest of you? Get with the program and become ‘disabled’ — someone will pay for it. Right?”
- In a March 2018 Time magazine [article on family separation](#) at the U.S.-Mexico border, Krikorian was quoted as stating: “Look, when it does happen, it’s not a great situation. I’m not delighted to see it ... But it’s not our problem. These immigrants are adults; they have to be responsible for their actions. Kids sometimes suffer from the bad decisions their parents make.” **In May 2018, Krikorian defended the condition of immigration detention centers where minors were separated from parents: “And those detention centers are not dog kennels. They’ve got cable from Central America. They’ve got—hey take them on outings and field trips. I’m not saying it’s the greatest thing in the world but frankly it might actually be better than Honduras, where they’re coming from.”** In a June 2018 [article](#) in The Hill, Krikorian wrote that the “policy of prosecuting all border-jumpers — including those bringing children with them — is a much-needed deterrent.”
- In response to an April 2019 Reuters [report](#) that the Pentagon was “identify[ing] places to potentially house up to 5,000 unaccompanied migrant children,” Krikorian [tweeted](#), “Why not Guantanamo? It’s a big place.”
- In April 2018, Krikorian released a [tweet](#) stating “Hispanic transgender illegal aliens -- if only they were also Muslim & handicapped, they’d be the Left’s ideal immigrants!” According to MSNBC [reporting](#), Krikorian also tracks and highlights “every poll or news story that indicates Latinos are to the left of the general public.” These tweets are often [accompanied](#) with a mocking ‘Natural conservatives!’”
- **During the novel coronavirus pandemic, Krikorian continued to call for less immigration, specifically for foreign guest workers.** In an April 2020 Washington Times [article](#), Krikorian is quoted as stating, “Situations like this require all of us to pull together, and that’s a lot harder to do when so many people living here are interlopers, who either infiltrated our borders or lied about leaving when their lawful visits were over.” In an April 2020 Washington Post [article](#) on the [29,000 health-care workers](#) enrolled in DACA, Krikorian is quoted as stating, “I love my dental assistant, but that has nothing to do with the virus ... This is just another example of advocates taking advantage of a crisis to pursue their political objectives.”
- **Krikorian has previously used disease as an excuse to advance anti-immigrant policy positions. In October 2014, Krikorian [spoke](#) on Fox News “to repeat unverified claims of West African migrants, primarily from countries affected by Ebola, entering the U.S. illegally through the U.S.-Mexico border.”** During the interview, he [suggested](#) that there were “[a] significant number of people from these Ebola infected countries illegally crossing and being caught by Border Patrol.” Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, [rejected](#) claims that Ebola was being brought in across the border, claiming that “the possibility of immigrants coming across the border with the disease is ‘hypothetical’ and ‘very far-fetched.’” In an additional October 2014 CNN segment on Ebola, Krikorian [stated](#), “There’s simply no excuse for not having stopped travel from Liberia, Sierra Leone,

# MARK KRIKORIAN

and Guinea.” Defending his position, he further claimed, “What’s the risk here? These are three small countries. It’s really basically no skin off our nose prohibiting travel.”

Bridge Initiative Factsheet