



Mediterranean Refugee Crisis Q&A

Refugee Action, May 2015

What is Refugee Action calling for?

The world is facing the worst refugee crisis since World War II. Thousands of people are being forced to attempt dangerous crossings across the Mediterranean, resulting in a tragic loss of life.

In response to this crisis, and the inadequate response so far from political leaders, we're [launching a petition](#) calling on the next UK government to take a lead within the EU to:

- Create safe and legal routes for refugees to enter the UK, including significantly increasing resettlement programmes
- Tackle longer term the root causes of refugee flight

Haven't these issues now been addressed by the EU?

The conclusions reached by David Cameron and his fellow EU leaders at their recent summit were woefully inadequate and failed to address these issues; action to achieve them is required now.

At their recent summit, EU leaders did include a commitment to treble funding for Frontex, the EU's border control agency. This follows last year's decision to end the Mare Nostrum search and rescue programme, to which the recent loss of life in the Mediterranean can be attributed. The planned increase in funding is welcome, but there is still no explicit commitment within the programme's remit to a search and rescue programme. We believe this is essential – so far, 1,700 people are believed to have lost their lives attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

However, the EU's focus and resources remain heavily weighted towards defending its borders, instead of dealing in a humanitarian way with refugees who will inevitably continue to attempt the crossing.

We want to ensure that a search and rescue focus is in place to ensure lives are saved; and that no-one is returned before having the opportunity to claim asylum. Without this, more lives will be lost and more people entitled to refugee status will be turned away.

Refugee Action believes everyone seeking sanctuary in the UK should be able to live, not just survive. So we make sure people can find the basic support they need and have the chance to rebuild their lives.

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Refugee Action is a registered charity 283660



Why is Refugee Action calling for safe and legal routes?

One of the main reasons for the huge increase in numbers of refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean is the lack of alternative routes into the EU to claim asylum. We believe that these channels must be reopened, including through increased resettlement and family reunion programmes.

The UK currently houses less than 1% of the world's refugees. We believe it is both a moral and legal obligation to increase these numbers.

What is resettlement?

Resettlement is when people recognised as refugees or in need of humanitarian protection by UNHCR are resettled to a third country – because they are unable to return home and their needs cannot be met where they have sought protection.

As part of the UNHCR resettlement programme, the UK currently operates the Gateway Protection programme, for which Refugee Action is the lead provider. However, under Gateway the UK currently only resettles around 750 refugees a year.

What about the resettlement of Syrians?

In addition to the Gateway programme, the UK is participating in the UN's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme, following a government commitment in 2014 to accept 'hundreds' of Syrian refugees.

So far, the UK has resettled just 143 Syrian refugees since the start of the conflict. This is a contrast to Germany's commitment to resettle 30,000 Syrian refugees.

What action on resettlement is Refugee Action calling for?

We believe that the UK should significantly scale up its resettlement of refugees - both within the existing Gateway and Syrian resettlement programmes and potentially in new, additional programmes to address the current crisis.

There is a wide and growing consensus on this: for example, development NGOs have suggested that the UK should be resettling 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of this year; while the UN's Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants recently proposed that the UK should resettle 14,000 Syrians a year for the next five years.

An increase in resettlement numbers must be backed up by a full and funded programme of support and integration for the refugees once they arrive in the UK. And while we're calling

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on the UK to increase its involvement in resettlement, we believe this should take place within a wider, EU-wide effort on increased resettlement.

What other actions are needed?

In addition to resettlement, other safe and legal routes into the UK and the rest of the EU must also be created.

Asylum claims must still be considered from those who arrive via other routes outside of resettlement programmes.

And we believe that family reunification programmes should be expanded. This would allow refugees to be reunited with family members already living in the UK through safe and legal means rather than having to undertake perilous journeys.

What about the longer term?

As well as taking action on search and rescue and safe and legal access, Refugee Action believes it is vital to also address the root causes of this current crisis.

EU leaders have acknowledged this; concerted action is now required.

UK aid and diplomacy both have key roles to play in this; as does the need for countries to sign and respect the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, to ensure that refugees worldwide are able to find safety.

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