

# GUIDANCE FOR ACTIVISTS

## Assessing the risk to refugees of public association with Amnesty International in the UK

Amnesty International UK has a long and productive tradition of working with refugees living in the UK. Refugees are sometimes members of local Amnesty groups, or they are invited to participate in private or public events. They tell their stories, sometimes in public or to the media. Amnesty members offer various kinds of support to refugees as well. The current global refugee campaign encourages even more of this productive engagement with refugees.

To ensure that our cooperation with refugees is responsible and beneficial to the refugees themselves, we need to carefully consider risk assessment and informed consent:

- We need to assess whether our relationship with a refugee or their activities with us may put them, or their families or colleagues, in danger.
- We need to be sure that the refugees who work with us are fully aware of how Amnesty International UK will use their actions and stories.

This guidance will help you conduct an initial risk assessment.

### CONSIDER THE RISKS

#### Legal risks for asylum seekers

If someone has an active asylum claim that has not been settled, making public any information about their situation could undermine their claim. Avoid public collaboration with asylum seekers, whether at events or using their stories in publications or with the media.

You must not give any type of legal advice to asylum seekers, as UK law prohibits any third parties, other than their lawyers, from giving legal advice.

#### Legal risks for refugees trying to bring family members into the UK

As with asylum cases, these claims can be undermined by publicity. You must avoid giving legal advice and you should communicate with your regular Amnesty staff contact before discussing any joint activity.

#### Security risks in the country of origin for the family members and associates of refugees

If a refugee's public activism in the UK is resented by the government or other powerful entity in the country of origin, there is a possibility of retaliation against their family or colleagues. Whether this is a real or only hypothetical threat will vary considerably, depending on the individual and the country. The list at the end of this document shows the level of risk in some countries.

Raise this issue with the refugee and discuss these questions:

- A. Does the refugee have family members or close associates still living in the country of origin who might be endangered by his or her actions?
- B. Is the planned collaboration likely to involve public action, publicity, media coverage or visibility on social media? Has the refugee had any prior exposure of this sort in the UK?
- C. Does the refugee's country of origin conduct surveillance of refugees or the diaspora population (either in the UK through its embassy and intelligence services, or via electronic or internet surveillance)?
- D. Is there any history of reprisals or harassment of the family or colleagues of outspoken refugees or migrants from the country of origin?
- E. Is there any other evidence to suggest risk to a refugee's family or associates? For example:
  - a. Does the refugee have associations with controversial or threatened organisations in their country?
  - b. Does the refugee come from a particularly dangerous place?
  - c. Is the refugee too recently arrived in the UK to be able to judge the implications of activism?
- F. Are the refugee's family members or associates aware of their plans to work with Amnesty International UK? If so, do they have any concerns about reprisals? If not, is it possible to ask them?

For questions C,D and E above, you should seek advice from your regular Amnesty staff point of contact, or the relevant country coordinator at [www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-country-coordinators](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/contact-country-coordinators). These advisers may seek further input from the country expert at Amnesty's International Secretariat (IS).

If the answers to these initial questions yield any risks, you and the refugee, with assistance from Amnesty staff if necessary, should embark on a more thorough risk assessment following the Guidance for Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation for AIUK's contact with vulnerable individuals. You can obtain this guidance from your staff point of contact or the relevant country coordinator.

If, at any point in the initial discussion or during a more thorough risk assessment, the refugee feels that the risk is too great, you must accept this judgement and not proceed further. In no circumstances does Amnesty encourage or push anyone to take a risk if they are reluctant to take it. It is not our job to 'talk them into it' and it would be unethical and dangerous to try.

If you have no answer to question F above, and no direct contact with the family or associates in the country of origin, you need to consider whether you feel confident in the second-hand judgment of the refugee. Take into account their level of information, their analysis and their objectivity. If you are unsure that the needs and safety of their family or associates are being represented adequately, you should not proceed.

### Other risks inside the UK

Consider, together with the refugee, any risk of harassment or other negative reactions from community members, other refugees, or political groups in the UK that might result from the refugee's public association with AIUK.

## COUNTRY RISK LIST

The list below was compiled following a survey of selected IS research teams and country coordinators to assess the risks facing family members of refugees in certain countries. Conclusions are by country, based on data received as of April 25, 2017.

Please note that this was a partial survey. If a country is not included in this list, it may still be a high risk country. If you have any concerns about a country not on this list, please contact your regular Amnesty staff contact or the relevant country coordinator.

<b>Afghanistan</b>	Risk level is HIGH. Proceed only after consulting the IS research team.
<b>Albania</b>	Risk is LOW
<b>Eritrea</b>	Risk level is VERY HIGH. Proceed with extreme caution and only after consulting the IS research team.
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Risk level is HIGH. Proceed with caution and only after consultation and risk assessment with the IS research team.
<b>Iran</b>	Risk level is VERY HIGH. Proceed with extreme caution, if at all, and only after consulting the IS research team.
<b>Iraq</b>	Risk level is MEDIUM. Individuals in Iraq associated with Amnesty may be at risk. But there is no evidence of surveillance of the diaspora and refugee communities. Nor are there any reported incidents of reprisals against family members.
<b>Pakistan</b>	Risk level is HIGH. Proceed with extreme caution and only after consulting the IS Pakistan team.
<b>Sudan</b>	Risk level for families of UK-based refugees is MEDIUM. Surveillance occurs, especially in countries near Sudan. Inside Sudan there is substantial repression of human rights defenders, but there is no evidence of retaliation against families for activities of family members in Western Europe. Proceed with caution and after consulting the IS research team.
<b>Syria</b>	Risk level is MEDIUM. There is reason to expect that individuals in Syria perceived as linked to Amnesty would be at risk. However, to date there is no evidence of surveillance of the diaspora or retaliation against family members. Proceed with caution and after consulting the IS research team. The team recommends anonymity for Syrian contacts.