

## **I Welcome - Families Together campaign**

Refugee families, separated by war and persecution, are being kept apart by restrictive UK rules on family reunion. On Friday 16 March 2018, MPs will debate an important bill to improve these rules and reunite refugee families. We need at least 100 MPs to turn up and vote on 16 March to change these unfair rules that keep refugees in UK apart from those they love. To win this vote we need MPs' constituents (YOU) to tell them you support refugee family reunion.

### **THE PROBLEM**

Under the current family reunion rules adult refugees can sponsor only their very closest relatives to join them – their partners and children under 18 years old. Child refugees in the UK have no family reunion rights so they can't bring their parents to join them here.

The lack of opportunities for refugees to reunite with family members in the UK not only forces people to turn to smugglers, but also exacerbates the humanitarian crises in Southern Europe, where displaced people arrive by sea in an attempt to join their families and instead end up trapped, living in squalid conditions and unable to exercise their rights.

For refugees already living safely in the UK, the enforced separation from their families and constant anxiety about their wellbeing can be devastating, preventing them from rebuilding their lives and undermining their successful integration into their new communities.

### **THE SOLUTION**

In 2017 Amnesty International UK, the British Red Cross, the Refugee Council, Oxfam, UNHCR and Student Action for Refugees joined together to campaign for improved family reunion rules. The coalition worked with Angus MacNeil, the Scottish National Party, MP to secure a debate in Parliament on 16 March that could change the refugee rules, but at least 100 MPs need to attend and vote to allow refugees in the UK to be joined by their families.

We are asking for:

- 1 Child refugees in the UK to have the right to sponsor their close family, so they can rebuild their lives together and help them integrate in their new community
- 2 An expansion of who qualifies as a family, so that young people who have turned 18 and elderly parents can live in safety with their families in the UK
- 3 The reintroduction of legal aid, so refugees who have lost everything have the support they need to afford and navigate the complicated process of being reunited with their families.

### **TAKE ACTION**

As a group the most important thing you can do is to contact your MP and ask them to attend the debate on 16 March.

There are a range of ways to lobby your MP – see four options below, so you should decide the method that suits your group the best.

1. Meet your MP
2. Call your MP's office

3. Write to your MP

4. Email your MP

### **MEET YOUR MP**

The most effective way of lobbying your MP is to arrange a face-to-face meeting with them to talk to them about the vote in Parliament on 16 March.

MPs are in their constituency office most Fridays, so this is the best day to arrange your meeting for. The 23 February will be a mass lobbying day, so it would be great if you can arrange your meeting for then. If your MP can't meet on 23 February, any time before 16 March still works. The earlier the you hold your meeting the better to ensure they put the date of the debate in their diary.

To arrange your meeting, you just need to call your MP's office and see if they are available.

When you meet your MP you will need to explain what's happening on 16 March, and why you want them to attend and vote. Don't worry – your MP won't expect you to be an expert. They just want to know why you care.

If your MP is supportive ask them to take a photo with our pledge which you can [download here](#).

Even if they can't make the vote on 16 March, taking a photo with the pledge is a great way for them to show support. You can also ask your MP to write to the Minister for Immigration, requesting they make the changes included in the Refugee Family Reunion Private Members Bill.

We know it can be daunting to meet your MP, especially for the first time, but they're usually very friendly and open to meeting you, their constituents. Remember, you have a right to meet your MP, regardless of whether you voted for them. [Check out this guide for some great hints and tips](#).

To arrange your meeting, you just need to call your MP's office and see if they are available.

**Try to arrange your meeting as soon as possible.**

You can find the name of your MP at [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

### **PHONE YOUR MP**

You can call your MP's constituency office to request they attend and support the Second Reading of the Refugee Family Reunion Private Members Bill, on 16 March 2018.

### **WRITE TO YOUR MP** (if you have not already done so)

The most effective letters are written in your own words, but here are some points it would be good to include:

- Separation of refugee families can have a devastating impact on their lives.
- You would like to see the UK government change restrictive rules that keep refugee families apart.
- You recognise that Friday is an important day for MPs to be in their constituency. However, as

a constituent you would like them to make an exception and support the Refugee Family Reunion Bill in Westminster.

- Will they commit to attending the Second Reading of the Refugee Family Reunion Bill on Friday 16 March 2018 and vote in favour of the bill?

If you're stuck for time or what to say, you can [download our template letter](#).

Why not organise an event or stall where people can write their letters? You can take your group's letters to your meeting with your MP or post them in advance.

### **EMAIL YOUR MP**

You can email your MP via the Amnesty International UK website at:  
[www.amnesty.org.uk/FamiliesTogether](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/FamiliesTogether)

### **GET YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED**

We want as many MPs across the country to hear from as many different people as possible, about why they should attend the vote on 16 March. Your family can be crucial to this.

Please speak to your family and ask them if they would email, write to or meet their MP about the issue.

Currently refugees in the UK are kept apart from the ones they love. Speak to your family about why family is important to you – how would you or they feel if you were kept apart?

Your family can use the template letter or better still write their own.

### **GET IN TOUCH!**

If you want any help preparing to meet your MP, or if you need any materials, please get in touch.

**It's really important that we know which MPs are planning to attend the debate on the 16 March.**

**Please share the response from your MP, particularly if they said they would attend, they ruled out attending, or they expressed interest.**

Please send your feedback to [parliament@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:parliament@amnesty.org.uk) or call 020 7033 1557

*Together we can reunite families torn apart by war and persecution, if our MPs vote to change the unfair rules that keep refugees in the UK apart from those they love.*