

Background on UN Summit

What is currently happening and what the UK can do?

According to the UN there are more than 60 million forcibly displaced people in the world today, twenty million of whom are refugees, and the number is rising. More than one million refugees urgently need resettlement, yet global resettlement commitments are just over 100,000 per year. With ongoing conflict in countries such as Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan, the international community's response to one of the largest movements of refugees in the post-World War II era has been grossly inadequate. Wealthy states and the international community as a whole have failed to equitably share responsibility for managing the ongoing global refugee crisis. Such responsibility lies disproportionately with poorer countries, with 86% of the world's refugees being hosted in developing nations.

What the government is currently doing

The UK Government has taken an important lead through its overseas development budget, particularly for supporting refugees and host communities in the Syria region; and the decision in late April 2015 to join a European search and rescue mission in the Central Mediterranean has saved many lives. But the Government's commitment to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees – more recently enhanced by a commitment to resettle up to 3,000 children and their families – from the conflict region is very modest and extremely slow when set against the scale of forced displacement including now within Europe. And save for the financial assistance it is giving, each of these commitments have followed immense public pressure on the government following tragic events and public outcry.

Why that isn't working and what we are calling on them to do

The key lesson that European Governments – including the UK – are not learning, is that refusing or failing to share responsibility for refugees, through both financial contributions and expanded safe and legal routes for refugees such as resettlement, family reunion and humanitarian visas, leaves people who are desperate to escape conflict and persecution with no option but to turn to smugglers.

Why now, with reference to the UN Summit

This September, world leaders will meet to discuss the refugee crisis at two crucial summits. This is the biggest opportunity of 2016 to show the UK government that this is the time to show leadership and that the UK is ready to welcome more refugees.

At these meetings, Amnesty is calling on the international community to urgently take the measures needed to respond to the current refugee crisis by making and immediately implementing pledges to:

- Resettle all refugees who are identified by UNHCR to be in need of resettlement;
- Establish or increase safe and legal routes ("alternative pathways") for the admission of refugees;
- Significantly increase their contribution to humanitarian financing, including to the full financing of UN humanitarian appeals.