



## REFUGEE ACTION WEEK 2017

### Activist Toolkit

Amnesty International UK and Student Action for Refugees (STAR) have joined forces to tell the government to stop separating child refugees from their families!

This toolkit has been designed to give you all the information you need to organise and run successful weeks of action, you'll find:

- The aims and objectives for Refugee Action Week 2017
- Details on suggested actions and how to order campaign material
- Information on how to keep Amnesty UK & STAR informed on your plans

# WELCOME

*"I can't explain how incredibly thankful I am that we're working on keeping families together! As a young refugee myself, this issue has directly affected me. My family sought asylum in the UK in 2007 but five years later my mother and two younger siblings were forcibly deported. Not too long after, I was granted refugee status, but my family was already torn apart. To this day, I am not allowed to travel to my home country. And they are not allowed to come here.*

*Time and time again children who are forced to flee their home seeking refuge often have to make the sacrifice of leaving their families behind. Children who have literally run away from their own deaths and made an often deadly journey to safety are then further punished by knowing that they may never see their parents and siblings ever again.*

*The UK Government has the power to unite refugee children in the UK with their families - and YOU could be the person who makes this difference! Please join us this Action Week!"*

Shrouk El Attar (Cardiff STAR Campaigns Officer & STAR Trustee)





*“Articles 9 and 10 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) say that “children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests” and that “Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country”. Despite ratifying the UNCRC in 1990, the UK Government is failing to uphold these rights in the face of the largest number of forcibly displaced people since the second world war.*

*Refugee Action Week gives student activists across the country an opportunity to hold the Government to account, drawing attention to the issue of child-family reunion and working together to make sure it is something the Government cannot ignore. We know it can work – we saw it when the Government agreed to participate in search and rescue in Europe and when the Syrian resettlement programme was introduced. Join us this Action Week, and help us send a strong message to the government to stop permanently separating refugee children from their families.”*

Conor Dunwoody (Sheffield University Amnesty Member and Chair of the Amnesty Student Action Network Committee 2016-2017)

# WHAT ARE WE CALLING FOR?

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our aim during this campaign is to ensure children recognised as refugees in the UK are given the right to family reunion. This is part of our larger campaign push to ensure the UK government expands opportunities for more refugees to come to the UK through safe and legal routes, contributing positively to an international environment where the rights of refugees are respected.

## THE PROBLEM

Children are the only refugees in our asylum system denied the right to sponsor family members to join them in the UK. This is known as family reunion.

## THE SOLUTION

The UK government allows children recognised as refugees the right to be joined here by family members. This can be done by the Home Secretary changing the immigration rules – something she can do by simply publishing these changes.

## WHY NOW?

Right now, we have an opportunity to make this an issue for the government. The Home Office and the Department for Education are running a consultation on safeguarding unaccompanied children in the UK. This is a real opportunity to put this issue on the government's agenda and tell them to stop separating refugee families and start helping them stay together.





## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Today, with more people forcibly displaced than at any time since World War 2, the world's shared duty to provide asylum is more important than ever. Yet the international community's response remains grossly inadequate, with low- and middle-income countries hosting 86% of refugees while the wealthy nations host the remaining 14%. The UK is home to less than 1% of the world's refugees. Quite simply, the international community is not sharing responsibility for hosting and assisting refugees. This can and must change.

Family reunion for child refugees is an obvious way in which the UK can do more. It is the provision in UK law that currently allows adult refugees to apply for their immediate family to join them. Family reunion applies only to people who have been granted refugee status, meaning that the government has found they have a well-founded fear of persecution in the country from which they fled and they will be allowed to stay in the UK. Expanding this right to child refugees would enable the children to rebuild their lives in the UK surrounded by the care and support that their family can provide.

Family reunion provides a safe and legal route to the UK, allowing people fleeing persecution to avoid dangerous journeys that profit smugglers and in 2015 led to the deaths of 3,771 people in the Mediterranean. The desire to reunite is a powerful motivation for many people attempting that dangerous journey today.

Family reunion is good for refugees, good for host communities and good for governments. Yet the UK government has long refused family reunion rights to child refugees. The government is essentially separating child refugees in the UK from their immediate family overseas, should they ever be located. The children are given one choice: go back and join their family in a country that the government has agreed is unsafe, or never see their family again.

We need to send a strong message to the government to stop permanently separating refugee children from their families.



# GET LETTER-WRITING!

Everyone likes receiving post, right? If you really want to get your point across to the Ministers in question, why not send them a letter letting them know what you think?

Mass letter writing is a tactic campaigning organisations have been using for years, as a way of forcing decision makers to stop and hear their demands.

In order to build more interest for this action, why not consider hosting an all-night letter-writing marathon or putting on a pizza night to attract members?

Signed letters need to be returned alongside your petitions to Ruth Taylor at the [Amnesty UK office](#) by **17 March 2017**.

Mr Edward Timpson MP  
Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families

Mr Robert Goodwill MP  
Minister of State for Immigration

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to you, as I am concerned about child refugees here in the UK. I welcome your commitment to publishing a strategy on safeguarding unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children.

I believe the separation of families can have a devastating impact on the lives of child refugees, including their rehabilitation from experiences of trauma, and their integration and development in their country of asylum.

Today, with more people forcibly displaced than at any time since World War 2, the world's shared duty to provide asylum is more important than ever. Family reunion provides a safe and legal route allowing people fleeing persecution to avoid dangerous journeys, which profit smugglers and others ready to exploit people in need of finding safety with their family.

However, children are the only refugees in our system denied the right to family reunion. This is despite the fact they have been through an asylum process in the same way as an adult and have as much right to international protection and to respect for their rights as refugees as any adult.

Given your department will be considering how to act in the best interests of unaccompanied children, I am writing to ask that the Department for Education and the Home Office work together to look again at the issue of child family reunion and allow children recognised as refugees the right to be reunited with their immediate family members.

You can find a template letter [here](#) that you can use for inspiration.





## GET CREATIVE!

### Why and what?

Action Week is about reuniting children with their families, so we thought what better way to create a visual representation of our support than by making a massive paper chain of families. But we can't do this without you!

We're asking your group to make as many family paper chains as possible, which we will join together and take to the Home Office for a spot of direct action as we hand in the petitions. More information on this coming soon!

We're hoping to stretch the chain all the way between the [Home Office](#) and [the Department for Education](#) - a total of 240 metres. To achieve this, each Amnesty and STAR group will need to make just over 2 metres of paper chain each - but we can do better than that! It would be amazing if we could create a kilometre-long paper chain! There's also a prize up for grabs for the groups who manage to make the most paper chains...

Read on to see some of our suggestions on where to hold your action, as well as instructions on how to make your paper chains. A template paper chain will be included in the campaign material pack which can be [ordered here](#).

## Where?

There are all sorts of options for where to make your family paper chains. It does not have to be a stand-alone event; it can be a great addition to any meeting, event, social or stall you might be hosting during the week.



### 1. At a stall

Holding a craft stall can be lots of fun and very straightforward to organise. People passing by could stop and make paper chains, and you could even offer prizes for the longest or most creative. Make sure you book a stall asap, and read STAR's guide on [the perfect stall](#). Remember, a stall provides a great opportunity to get petition signatures too!

### 2. At an event

Are you holding a pub quiz, a [film night](#), a [speaker event](#) or a [music event](#) during Action Week? If so, get all your attendees involved with making paper chains! You could put on a pub quiz with a bonus round in which whoever makes the best family paper chain gets extra points, or why not reserve 10 minutes at the end of a speaker event or film night for the audience to make chains? To save time, hand out pre-cut chains for people to write messages on.

### 3. During a meeting or a social

Having a creative action at a meeting or social can make it a really fun event and can help new members feel at ease. The action could appeal to people that wouldn't otherwise be interested in the issue, so advertise lots!

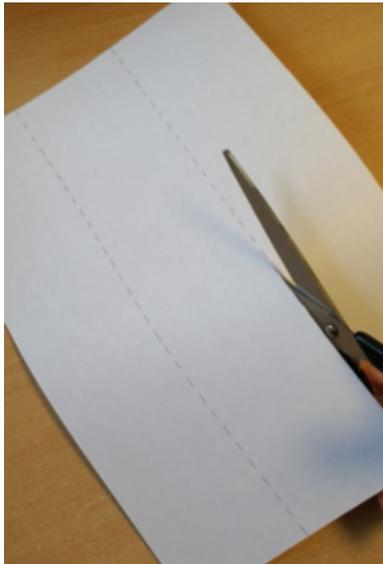
### 4. Don't forget other societies, local community projects and other university groups

Why not find out if there are other societies on campus that would like to get involved, such as a craft society? Also find out if any local organisations might like to take part. The more people there are working on the action, the bigger an impact we will make!

## How?

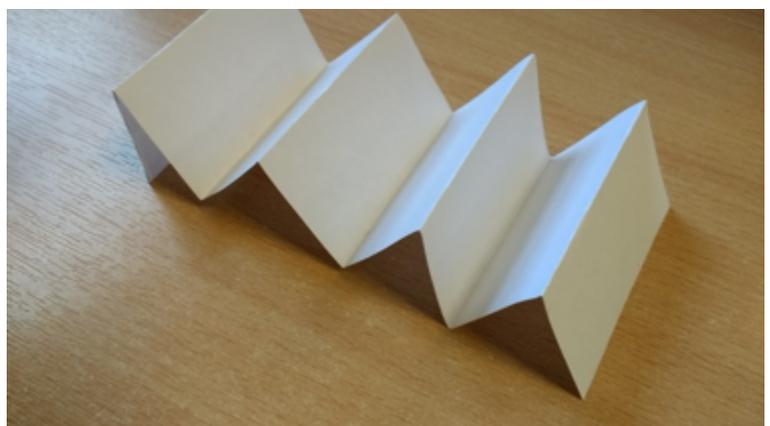
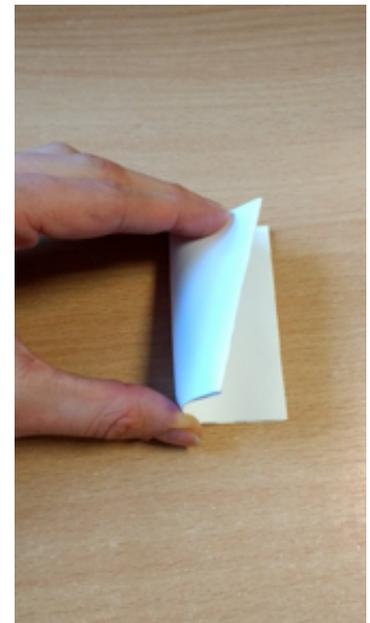
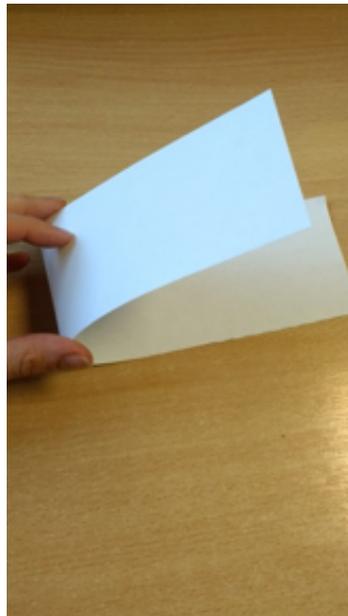
### 1. Cut a long strip of paper.

Tip: An A4 sheet can be cut into 3 strips that are each 7cm wide. If you want bigger paper chain people cut it into 2.



### 2. Fold the paper accordion-style into a rectangle.

- Make the folds as even as possible.
- A handy trick to make them even is to fold the original piece of paper in half multiple times. When you get to the desired rectangle size, unfold the paper. Using the creases made from the folding, fold it accordion-style.



### What you will need:

- Paper. *A4 is fine, but the bigger the paper the longer your chains will be.*
- A few pairs of scissors.
- Glue or tape. *You could stick them together to make one long one.*
- Colouring pencils or pens.
- Other decorations. *Glitter? Sequins? Everything welcome!*

**3. Draw half a person on one edge of the rectangle, and the second on the other.**

- The person's torso and head will be on the edge. The arm will extend out to *exactly the middle of the paper*.
- Be creative! You can design the person how you'd like – are they wearing a hat? Or maybe a dress? Is your person an adult or a child?
- The second person can be different. To make it look like a family, try switching between adults and children. Remember families come in all shapes and sizes, and don't necessarily have one mum and one dad.



**4. Cut out the figures and unfold your paper chain - as you cut them out, make sure the hands stay connected!**



**5. Write messages on them about why family is important.** This will be a lot easier with bigger people, so make some bigger ones too!



**6. Share on social media** using #ReuniteRefugeeFamilies and tweet @AIUKStudents and @STARNational so we can see what you've been up to.

**7. Collect them carefully and send them to us.**

- Envelopes will be in the materials pack which can be ordered here.
- Please send them to [Amnesty UK office](#) by **17 March 2017**.



## GET SHOWCASING!

### Photography Exhibition

This 'exhibition in an envelope' is a compact version of Amnesty's *I Welcome* open-air exhibition which first went on show on London's Southbank in 2016.

Presented by Amnesty UK in partnership with the famous photographer collective Magnum, the photos highlight refugee crises since the mass displacements of people at the end of the Second World War, 70 years ago.

In each of the 30 photographs we glimpse something of what it means to be a refugee, to face danger, upheaval, and death, to be forced to flee in a bid to find some place of safety, sometimes having to leave homes, belongings and even family behind.

Spanning the decades, the powerful images offer an historical context to the current refugee crisis in Europe, illustrating why so many are forced to flee. It shows the destruction caused by armed conflict which leads to mass displacement, and the long and perilous journeys people undertake to escape danger and persecution and rebuild shattered lives. It also shows the resilience of human beings who endeavour to live normal day-to-day lives even in dire circumstances.

The exhibition reminds us that this is not a new problem - and that it is the world's shared duty to provide asylum, and safe and legal routes for those who need it.

We're offering all Amnesty and STAR groups the chance of hosting their own *I Welcome* photography exhibition. To order the materials, please complete [this form](#).

## **When to put on your exhibition**

There are a few things you should consider when deciding when to hold your exhibition. Of course, you need to think about how long you need to plan your event, but also consider the best times for your chosen audience. Is there a day on campus which works best for students? Would you rather hold your event on a Friday when your MP is more likely to be in your constituency? Is there another event already planned which you could partner with?

## **Where to hold your exhibition**

You want a venue that's in a central location, has a relaxed atmosphere and is able to display up to 30 A3 photographs. If you can't showcase all the images, don't worry! Simply choose the images you want to showcase from the ones provided in the materials pack. As well as copies of all the photographs, you'll also receive information on using the accompanying audio guide. In terms of possible venues think of any social spaces on campus where you could display the exhibition, such as hallways, lounge areas, restaurants or the student bar. You could even look into showing it in lecture theatres, or ask an on-campus cafeteria if they'd be willing to put up the photos. There are lots of opportunities off-campus too; think town halls, community centres, local galleries, theatres, cinemas, book shops and cafes – especially if you want to take your exhibition to a wider audience than just your student community.

## **Promoting your event**

Any student activist knows that there is a million and one ways to promote an event! You could create your own flyers or posters to distribute; contact your local and student paper, TV and radio station; get your event listed on the University website or student portal; promote via social media and email all your networks directly, inviting them to attend. Why not also consider reaching out to other activist groups or organisations based near you who might be interested in coming along?



## GET SHARING!

Social media is a brilliant way to spread the message! Closer to Action Week, you can expect infographics and suggested social media posts to be circulated to all groups, so make sure you keep an eye out for those.

## ORDER CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

To help you with your campaigning, Amnesty UK and STAR have created some materials for you to use. These materials are free to order. All you need to do is complete [this form](#) by **Wednesday 8th February**.

Each pack will contain:

- A copy of the *I Welcome* Exhibition, including A3 photographs and instructions on using the audio guide.
- A family paper chain template.
- A STAR and Amnesty UK *Refugees Welcome* placard.
- A freepost addressed envelope which you can use to return your letters, petitions and paper chains. You don't need to add a stamp.

## KEEP US UP TO DATE

Let us know what amazing actions you've been organising on your campuses and in your communities to mark Refugee Action Week 2017 by completing [this form](#).

Filling out forms might be a tad boring, but it's so, SO important that Amnesty UK and STAR understand what activity is happening across the country to ensure we are able to adequately measure the impact we are having.



# Factsheet

## Definitions

**Refugee:** A person who is forced to leave their country of origin and seek protection in another country because of “...a well-founded fear of persecution... for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”

*The 1951 UN Convention on Refugees*

**Asylum Seeker:** A person who has fled to another country, has made an application for protection as a refugee and is waiting for that country to decide if they will be recognised as a refugee.

**Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child:** anyone under 18 years of age who is in the UK, separated from both parents and without an adult caring for her or him, and is seeking asylum.

**Family reunion:** The provision in UK law that allows adult refugees to apply for their immediate family (partner and children) to join them.

## How many refugees are there in the world?

There were 21.3 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2015. In 2015 Syria became the world's top source of refugees. Before this Afghanistan had been the biggest source country for refugees for 32 years. (These figures do not take account of Palestinian refugees, who are not the responsibility of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.)

## How many refugees are there in the UK?

The UK hosts less than 1% of the world's refugees. At the end of 2015, the population of refugees, people with pending asylum cases and stateless persons made up just 0.26% of the population of the UK. 32,414 people applied for asylum in the UK in 2015 - the top five countries of origin were Eritrea, Iran, Sudan, Syria and Pakistan. 3,253 of these applications were made by unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

## **What happens to asylum seekers in the UK?**

Adults and children who claim asylum must go through a complex application process during which the Home Office interviews them and decides whether they meet the convention definition of a refugee. If they do they will be granted permission to stay as refugees ('refugee leave'). Of the decisions made on unaccompanied children's claims in 2015, 22% were of refugee leave.

## **What do refugees in the UK receive?**

People with refugee leave are allowed to work and have access to the same health, education, housing and welfare benefits as British citizens. Adult refugees have the right to ask for their immediate family to join them, child refugees do not.

## **How many people would a change in the child family reunion rules affect?**

In 2015, the Home Office granted asylum to 375 unaccompanied children. (357 were granted refugee leave, 18 humanitarian protection.) We do not know how many of them had parents (and siblings) alive that could have been located to join them. Data on appeals is not broken down by age.

## **Why are we focusing on this issue?**

The right to maintain family unity is a vital right for children and for refugees. It is an appalling denial of their rights that separated child refugees are not permitted the opportunity for this in the UK. Family reunion is also a vital means by which refugees (including the parents and siblings of children here) should be able to safely reach safety. Denying this to these children's parents either risks permanently separating child and her or his immediate family or encouraging those family members to attempt life-threatening journeys to be reunited.

## How likely is it that this campaign will be successful?

There is significantly greater recognition of the plight of children fleeing persecution in the world today because of the events of the last couple of years. But this is a longstanding policy position of the Home Office. This is no easy win, but with a lot of recent attention on child refugees and with a government consultation on safeguarding unaccompanied children, now is the time to press the Government on their appalling treatment of these children. With your efforts a win could be possible.

## Would this change encourage parents to send their children alone to the UK?

This is what the Home Office say. Time and again they have been asked to provide evidence of this, and they have produced none. Other countries in Europe provide family reunion rights for unaccompanied children recognised as refugees – including France. Many children still come here. Given the decision to grant refugee leave is both a recognition that the particular child is the responsibility of the UK and has been forced to flee to escape persecution, there is really nothing in this argument. Children who are not entitled to refugee status won't get family reunion rights, because they won't get refugee leave, so there would be no incentive for parents to send them.

## Do other countries give refugee children the right to family reunion?

Yes. European Union regulations require provision of family reunion rights to unaccompanied child refugees. The UK and Denmark are the only countries to have an exemption.





Have a great Refugee Action  
Week 2017.

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**star**



Student Action  
For Refugees

SUPPORTING REFUGEES EVERYWHERE