



THE UK AND THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

A GREEN RESPONSE

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The UK is home to less than 1% of the world's refugees. The vast majority of refugees stay in their region of displacement – 86% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries.¹

Almost 3.9 million refugees have fled the conflict in Syria, including over 1 million during 2014. Only 2,081 of these people applied for asylum in the UK in 2014.²

Countries bordering Syria are under extreme pressure. Lebanon, hosts almost 1.1 million Syrian refugees and has, along with Jordan, the largest per capita refugee population in the world – refugees now make up around a third of the Lebanese population and its social infrastructure is at breaking point. Lebanon is more than 100 times smaller than the EU and has already taken in more than 50 times as many refugees as the EU will even consider resettling in the future.³ Turkey is currently hosting more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees.

In Jordan a staggering 25% of the state budget is spent on helping refugees.⁴ A 2010 study conducted for the European Parliament found that the overall cost of the EU's asylum system is modest, in that it amounted to less than UK citizens' expenditure on pets and pet food.⁵

The UK is the 2nd largest financial donor after America to the humanitarian relief effort to assist Syrian refugees in the region via bodies such as the World Food Programme



Glossary

Refugee – Someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country

Asylum seeker – A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

Resettlement – The transfer of a non-EU national or stateless person who has been identified as in need of international protection to an EU state (or other country in the world) where they are admitted either on humanitarian grounds or with the status of refugee.

Unaccompanied minor – Foreign nationals or stateless persons below the age of 18, who arrive on the territory of a state unaccompanied by a responsible adult, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into care of such a person

Relocation – The distribution among Member States of persons in clear need of international protection.

The Dublin Regulation establishes a hierarchy of criteria for identifying the Member State responsible for the examination of an asylum claim in Europe

EASO – European Asylum Support Office

Europol – EU law enforcement agency

and UNICEF – and is significantly ahead at the EU level. The EU is one of the world's richest regions – **Greens call upon other Member States and the European Commission to increase funding to deal with the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the region and to fulfil financial pledges made to Turkey and Africa.**

However, **Greens** are clear that financial assistance to the region is not a substitute to playing its part in welcoming refugees to Britain. **Greens call upon the British Government to increase resettlement places so that people in need of protection can travel legally and safely to the UK** – the government's commitment to take 20,000 Syrian refugees through the 'vulnerable persons relocation initiative' over the next five years is not enough, and the UK continues to refuse to welcome refugees who have already made it to EU soil.

SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER EU MEMBER STATES?

In 2015, EU+ countries⁶ received a total of 1,349,638 asylum applications.⁷

The EU has a population of over 500 million – around 1.35 million asylum applications were lodged in the EU+ in 2015 – around 0.25% of the EU's total population. Europe can manage this inflow if EU Member States work together and in solidarity with each other. This is not a crisis of numbers of people coming, but about the way we are managing it and resources we dedicate to it!⁸

In the year ending June 2015 the top three EU receiving countries were Germany, who received 259,000 asylum applications, Hungary 93,000 and Sweden 78,000.⁹ By the end of 2015 Germany had welcomed around 1 million refugees¹⁰ and almost 900,000 people seeking protection arrived to Greece by sea.¹¹ Just 25,771 people applied for protection in the UK in the year ending June 2015.¹²



Jean supporting Refugee Week in London.

Although Germany has had the most asylum applications in 2015, Sweden had the highest in proportion to its population. In the UK at the end of 2014, the population of refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons made up just 0.24% of the population.¹⁴

ASYLUM APPLICATIONS RECEIVED PER 10,000 HEAD OF POPULATION IN 2015 ¹³



Greens call upon the British Government to show solidarity with other EU Member States and to take part in the European Commission's emergency relocation scheme to relieve pressure on Member States under extreme pressure and relieve human suffering. The European Commission will soon be coming forward with proposals to overhaul the EU's failed 'Dublin' regulation and is likely to propose a system based on a fairer distribution of asylum seekers amongst Member States. We urge the UK to take part in such a system and will be pushing for amendments to the Commission's proposals to ensure that asylum seekers preferences as to which Member State they want to claim asylum in are also a part of the system – without taking peoples valid reasons for wanting to be in a certain Member State because of family, community links and language skills, into consideration, the system will not work.



WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN?

An estimated 26,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in Europe in 2015.¹⁵ Europol estimate that at least 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees have disappeared after arriving in Europe – many are feared to have fallen into the hands of traffickers. In the UK the number of children who go missing soon after arriving in the UK as asylum seekers has doubled in the past year.¹⁶ Local authorities are struggling to cope with increased numbers of unaccompanied children and do not have the resources to properly protect them – **Greens call upon the UK government to ensure local authorities have adequate resources to protect the vulnerable children in their care.**

The British Government has said that it will accept more unaccompanied child refugees but has not made clear how many and whether any of them will be relocated from other EU Member States – **Greens call upon the Government to accept unaccompanied minors who have already made harrowing journeys to the EU.** A British Court recently ruled that the UK must allow three unaccompanied minors and a dependent adult to travel from the squalor of Calais's refugee camps to the UK to join family members – the Home Office should be working proactively to ensure that unaccompanied children in other Member States with family members in the UK are able to be reunited safely and legally – this is their right under EU law. **Greens will also be calling for research to gather and share best practices in registering and protecting unaccompanied minors in other EU Member States.**

FOOTNOTES

- 1 UNHCR Global Trends 2014.
- 2 UNHCR Global Trends 2014 and Home Office Asylum Statistics, second quarter 2015.
- 3 The Guardian 10th August 2015
- 4 BBC 2nd February.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35462698>
- 5 What system of burden sharing between Member States for the reception of asylum seekers? Thielmann et al 22 January 2010.
- 6 28 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.
- 7 European Asylum support office latest asylum trends 2015 overview.
<https://easo.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/LatestAsylumTrends2015.pdf>
- 8 Donn Flynn from the UK based NGO migrants Rights Network has described it as a crisis of policy rather than refugees.
- 9 Home office, national statistics.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2015/asylum>
- 10 German ministry of the interior – this figure relates to the number of asylum seekers registered in the system, but thousands have not yet been able to lodge claims as processing times are now extremely long.
<http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2016/01/asylantraege-dezember-2015.html>
- 11 856,723 according to figures collected in the framework of UNHCR's border activities.
<http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/documents.php?page=7&view=grid&Country%5B%5D=83>
- 12 Main applicants – Home office, national statistics.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2015/asylum>
- 13 BBC 28 January 2016.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>
- 14 UNHCR.
<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/the-uk-and-asylum.html>
- 15 Save the Children, January 2016.
<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/2016-01/response-ipc-report-syria>
- 16 The Guardian 20 January 2016.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/30/fears-for-missing-child-refugees>.
- 17 Local Government Association figures
<http://www.local.gov.uk/>

For further information on issues related to refugees

Refugee Council

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

Refugee Action

<http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/>

Asylum Aid

<http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/>

Citizens UK

<http://www.citizensuk.org/>

Cities of Sanctuary

<https://cityofsanctuary.org/>

European Council for Refugees and Exiles

<http://www.ecre.org/>

Calais Migrant Solidarity

<https://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com/contact-us-2/>

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.org.uk/>

Medcins Sans Frontiers

<http://www.msf.org/>

Red Cross

<https://www.icrc.org/>

EASO

<https://easo.europa.eu/>

European Commission – Migration and home affairs

<http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/>

The refugee crisis and the EU - a green response

<http://www.jeanlambertmep.org.uk/2015/09/18/the-refugee-crisis-and-the-eu-a-green-response/>



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INDIVIDUALS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES WANT TO HELP

The response of civil society and volunteers across Europe has been overwhelming – from Calais to Lesbos, volunteers have been leading the way in saving lives and welcoming refugees to Europe. So far more than 50 local authorities have been involved in accommodating Syrian arrivals in the UK and there are over 40 ‘Cities of Sanctuary’ initiatives in towns and cities across the UK and Ireland. But local authorities and civil society organisations must be given the resources to provide support to those arriving, ensure language and integration courses are offered and that local services are properly funded to avoid extreme pressure.

The UK Government has committed £130 million (over the duration of this Parliament) for local councils to help resettle Syrian refugees, responding to calls for targeted funding from the Local Government Association and others. Whilst welcomed, the LGA wants the Government to monitor the scheme closely to ensure the funding is adequate, with a costings review after 18 months.

However, local authorities are under extreme and increasing Government pressure to cut services, especially after the recent Spending Review plans to abolish their central government grant. This amounts to a £4.1 billion funding cut over the Spending Review period. The LGA says this is in addition to almost £10 billion in further demand-led cost pressures facing councils by the end of the decade, and means a 24% real-term reduction in local government grant funding, even allowing for the £1.5 billion increase in the Better Care Fund.¹⁷

By placing councils under such extreme pressure only the barest minimum is likely to be used to support refugees. For a rich country like the UK this is unacceptable and wholly unnecessary. **Greens call for adequate government funding for local councils to avoid negative impacts upon refugees and ensure local services are not placed under extreme pressure.**

A WAY OUT OF THE SITUATION CALAIS

The situation in Calais is a political choice, created by the intransigence of the British and French authorities who refuse to offer real solutions to the humanitarian tragedy in both of their back yards. It is now estimated that there are around 6000 people seeking protection who are currently living in squalid, makeshift camps near Calais and Dunkirk. Most of them are from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sudan and want to reach the UK for a variety of reasons – they may have family or community links here and speak English.

Greens call upon both the UK and French authorities to extend co-operation to asylum and migration rather than solely focusing on the police and security elements of the situation, and ensure the safe and rapid transfer of unaccompanied minors entitled to join family members in the UK or elsewhere in the EU under the Dublin 3 regulation.

The French Government should provide effective information as regards the French asylum system and encourage people to apply and act urgently to end police brutality and intimidation. The UK Government should accept responsibility for those with family members or other ties in the UK, agree a rapid, fair processing system with the French to allow the lodging of applications for asylum in Britain and allow those with good cause to settle here. It should also issue guidance to caseworkers on the proper implementation of the Dublin 3 regulation, with an emphasis on a generous ‘humanitarian’ interpretation of the relevant provisions.