

4th January 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

As a coalition of international humanitarian organisations, refugee assistance organisations, and human rights advocacy groups we ask you to approach this New Year with new resolve to address the appalling plight of refugees in Europe. Last year saw 3,770 people drown and hundreds of thousands more endure a desperate march of misery across the continent.

Together, our organisations bear witness to the full arc of this refugee crisis. We see first-hand the human cost of war, persecution and human rights abuses that force people to abandon their homes in search of refuge. We provide emergency relief to desperate men, women and children who have fled to Europe's shores. We help refugees begin to rebuild their lives here in the United Kingdom.

We welcome the leading role the UK has played in offering international aid to places affected by conflict, especially in the Syria region. We also commend the UK for providing assistance to those helping refugees in Greece and the Balkans, where humanitarian relief is urgently needed.

Tackling the reasons people are forced to flee their homes in places such as Syria, Afghanistan and Eritrea must of course remain a priority. However, in the absence of peace, people will continue to flee. We must provide them with safe, well-managed escape routes and refuge.

Last year's announcement that the UK will resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years was a welcome first step, but given the numbers of people searching for safety across the globe, this response is clearly inadequate: it is too slow, too low and too narrow. The UK can and should be doing much more to ensure that refugees are not compelled to take life-threatening journeys or forced into smugglers' hands.

We therefore join leading members of the legal community in endorsing the following four refugee principles and believe that, as a matter of urgency:

- The UK should take a fair and proportionate share of refugees, both those already within the European Union and those still outside it.
- Safe and legal routes to the UK, as well as to the European Union, need to be established.
- Safe and legal routes within the European Union, including the UK, should be established.
- There should be access to fair and thorough procedures to determine eligibility for international protection wherever it is sought.

The UK, along with other European countries, must take responsibility for responding to the refugee crisis on Europe's doorstep.

Over 64 years ago, soon after the horrors of the Second World War, European governments adopted the Refugee Convention, an instrument of international law which British lawyers helped to draft. As a nation, we made a promise: that never again would refugees be left out in the cold to fend for themselves; that this country would protect them; that here, they would find safe haven.

We urge you to keep that promise.

Yours sincerely,

Girish Menon, Chief Executive, ActionAid UK
Kate Allen, Director, Amnesty International UK
Wayne Myslik, Chief Executive, Asylum Aid
Ben Jackson, Chief Executive, Bond
Maurice Wren, Chief Executive, British Refugee Council
Chris Bain, Director, CAFOD
Loretta Minghella OBE, Chief Executive, Christian Aid
Tiffany Allen, Network Coordinator, City of Sanctuary
Dr Phil McCarthy, Chief Executive, CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network)
Leigh Daynes, Executive Director, Doctors of the World UK
Susan Munroe, Chief Executive, Freedom from Torture
John Sauven, Executive Director, Greenpeace UK
Jane Waterman, Executive Director, International Rescue Committee UK
Imran Madden, Director, Islamic Relief UK
Saira Grant, Chief Executive, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Shami Chakrabarti, Director, Liberty
Dr. Hany El-Banna OBE, Chairman, Muslim Charities Forum
Simon Underwood, Chair, North of England Refugee Service
Mark Goldring, Chief Executive, Oxfam GB
Stephen Hale OBE, Chief Executive, Refugee Action
Adrian Marshall, Executive Director, Responding to Conflict
John Wilkes, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council
Emma Williams, Chief Executive, Student Action for Refugees
Salah Mohamed, Chief Executive, Welsh Refugee Council
Natasha Walter, Director, Women for Refugee Women
Tim Pilkington, Chief Executive, World Vision UK
Adam Leach, Chief Executive, Y Care International