

# Written evidence submitted by The Refugee Council

## About the Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is a human rights charity, independent of government, working to ensure refugees are given the protection that they need, are treated with the respect and understanding that they are entitled to, and that they are assured the same rights, opportunities and responsibilities as other members of society.

## Refugee Council Recommendations

### For Syrian refugees in region or on the move

#### *Resettlement*

The Refugee Council recommends that:

- a. The UK Government's resettlement targets are kept under review and revised upwards according to need. Programmes should also be expanded to provide resettlement opportunities to refugees in other parts of the world.
- b. Syrians resettled in the UK are granted indefinite leave to remain in line with other resettled refugees arriving via the Gateway Protection Programme.

#### *Family reunion*

The Refugee Council urges the Home Office to view family reunion as a protection issue and not a straightforward immigration matter. The Home Office and other relevant Government departments should proactively help families separated by forced displacement reunite with their family members in the UK by:

- a. Making legal aid available for family reunion.
- b. Simplifying the family reunification process and seeking ways to make it safer for applicants living in insecure conditions.
- c. Amending the rules so that unaccompanied children found to be in need of international protection can reunite with their family in the UK.
- d. Taking a more flexible approach to the definition of family, allowing refugees to join extended family members living in the UK who are willing to act as sponsors.
- e. Ensuring that the relevant team in the Home Office is sufficiently resourced to swiftly process family reunification applications.

#### *Humanitarian visas*

The Refugee Council recommends that the government explores the use of humanitarian visas to facilitate access to protection in the UK for refugees, through discussion with other EU Member States.

### For Syrian refugees in Europe

We ask that the UK works with other European countries to share responsibility for refugees arriving in Europe by:

- a. Participating in the EU-wide relocation scheme and calling for it to be rights-based.
- b. Ensuring that the latest iteration of the Dublin Regulation is reflected in UK guidance as a matter of urgency including the duty to inform applicants of their right to request transfer to join family members.
- c. Making full use of the provisions contained in the Dublin III regulations to protect family unity.
- d. Ensuring that border countries and other 'hotspots' are properly resourced to process requests to reunite with family members in the UK under Dublin III.
- e. Suspending returns under Dublin III except for the purposes of family reunification.

## About our response

1. We welcome this opportunity to provide evidence to the committee on the Government's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. We would be happy to provide any further written or oral evidence that would assist the Committee with this inquiry.

2. The Refugee Council is cognisant of the Government's exemplary commitment to funding the humanitarian relief effort in and around Syria, second only to the USA, and commends the Government on this. The recent commitment to offer resettlement opportunities in the UK to 20,000 Syrians during the course of this Parliament is also a welcome step. However, with millions of Syrians searching for a safe haven, it is imperative that the Government shows the same leadership in responding to the needs of Syrian refugees on the move by upholding the rights of refugees in the UK, facilitating access to protection in the UK and by advocating for other states to do likewise. Our response to this inquiry focuses on the need for the Government's humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis to extend beyond the remit of the Department for International Development, to the management of the UK's borders and to ensuring that refugees are able to access protection in the UK.

## Responding to the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees in the region

### Background and key concerns

3. There are more than 4 million Syrian refugees with 1.9 million in Turkey and just over a million in Lebanon.<sup>1</sup> Jordan, Iraq and Egypt are also hosting large numbers (628,000, 427,000 and 132,000 respectively). Turkey has now become the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. Lebanon is hosting the largest number of refugees in relation to its national population, with 232 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> UNHCR has estimated that approximately 10 per cent of the refugees in neighbouring countries are acutely vulnerable individuals and need resettlement elsewhere.

### Prevention and solutions

#### *Resettlement*

4. In 2013, UNHCR appealed to States to admit on resettlement or other forms of admission 30,000 Syrian refugees from 2013 to 2014. In 2014 the agency called for an additional 100,000 places for Syrian refugees from 2015 to 2016. The agency called for the development of these avenues to ensure protection and solutions for the most vulnerable.<sup>3</sup> While we understand that this target of 130,000 places for Syrian refugees over three years is likely to be met, the target does not reflect need. Organisations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam have called for 10% of Syrian refugees in the main host countries to be resettled by the end of 2016.<sup>4</sup>
5. The Government has shown considerable reluctance to providing resettlement places to Syrian refugees, despite leading the international response to the refugee crisis in other respects. It was only after considerable pressure following a campaign led by the Refugee Council that the Government responded to UNHCR's appeal and established the Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme for Syrians (VPR) in January 2014. However since its inception, the scheme has continued to come under heavy criticism because of the very low numbers arriving through this route. As of 27 August, only 216 Syrians had been resettled in the UK.
6. In response to an outpouring of public support for Syrian refugees, provoked by the image of Aylan Kurdi's body washed up on Turkish beach, the Government announced its intention to resettle 20,000 Syrians in the UK during the course of this Parliament. This much more substantial commitment to resettlement of Syrians is extremely welcome. However, it should be noted that according to a recent analysis by Oxfam the UK's fairshare of Syria's vulnerable refugees identified as in need of resettlement is 21,295 by the end of 2016.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR statistics available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, 2015, *World at War: Global trends, forced displacement in 2014*. Available here: <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, 2014, *Ministerial-level pledging conference: Resettlement and other forms of admission for Syrian refugees – guidance on the pledging process*. Available here:

<http://resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Resettlement%20and%20other%20forms%20of%20admission%20for%20Syrian%20refugees%20-%20Guidance%20to%20support%20the%20pledging%20process.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International, 2014, *Left out in the cold: Syrian refugees abandoned by the international community*. Available here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE24/047/2014/en/>. Oxfam, 2015, *Solidarity With Syrians: Action needed on aid, refuge, and to end the bloodshed*. Available here: [http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/solidarity-with-syrians-action-needed-on-aid-refuge-and-to-end-the-bloodshed-579237?utm\\_source=oxf.am&utm\\_medium=ZmWm&utm\\_content=redirect](http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/solidarity-with-syrians-action-needed-on-aid-refuge-and-to-end-the-bloodshed-579237?utm_source=oxf.am&utm_medium=ZmWm&utm_content=redirect)

<sup>5</sup> Oxfam is calling for 10 per cent of the population of refugees registered in neighbouring countries, equivalent to 408,806 people, to be resettled or offered humanitarian admission in rich countries that have signed the UN Refugee Convention by the end of 2016. See reference 4 for further details.

This is in addition to offering protection to Syrians claiming asylum in the UK, a fundamental principle enshrined in international law.

7. The Refugee Council is disappointed that Syrians resettled in the UK are granted humanitarian protection and five years leave to remain, rather than refugee status (like the vast majority of Syrians who claim asylum) and indefinite leave to remain like other resettled refugees. There are practical implications for Syrians receiving this lesser form of protection which may impede their ability to integrate and settle in the UK. For example, Syrians arriving through this route wishing to apply to study at a university will not be entitled to 'home fees' until three years after their arrival, nor will they be entitled to student loans. They may also face difficulties accessing Convention Travel Documents.
8. The Home Office guidance on Humanitarian Protection indicates that in most cases the appropriate length of grant would be five years, as indeed is the case with grants of Refugee Status. However, it is clearly possible for those beneficiaries of Humanitarian Protection to be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain and the guidance indicates the circumstances in which it may do this. These circumstances would seem entirely appropriate for the resettled people arriving from the region having fled Syria, as most will fall under the category of "vulnerable persons such as minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence."<sup>6</sup>
9. The Refugee Council recommends that:
  - a. Syrians resettled in the UK are granted indefinite leave to remain in line with other resettled refugees arriving via the Gateway Protection Programme.
  - b. The UK Government's resettlement targets are kept under review and revised upwards according to need. Programmes should also be expanded to provide resettlement opportunities to refugees in other parts of the world.

## **Responding to the humanitarian needs of refugees on the move**

### **Background and key concerns**

10. The generous provision of resettlement places by states is critical in finding solutions for some of Syria's most vulnerable refugees. However, it is important to understand that it is unlikely that a Syrian resettlement programme would have saved Aylan Kurdi, nor will a Syrian resettlement programme help others like Aylan who have already left the region, or who do not meet the qualifying criteria for a resettlement place.<sup>7</sup> The plight of Aylan highlights the urgent need for states around the world to respond to the growing Syrian diaspora by facilitating safe passage for refugees.<sup>8</sup>
11. Refugees are often forced to make secondary movements once they have left their countries of origin as they may still be at risk, or because of insecure and unsustainable conditions in countries which are unable or unwilling to respond appropriately to the needs of the disproportionate number of refugees they are hosting. With almost no legal avenues for international travel open to them, most refugees will have no option but to embark on long dangerous journeys in the company of smugglers in order to find protection. Syrians are the largest group arriving in Europe via the sea route (55% of arrivals).<sup>9</sup> More than 3000 people have died this year attempting to arrive in Europe this way; we do not know how many were Syrian.

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<sup>6</sup> UKVI guidance, last updated in 2013, Humanitarian protection. Available here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/257431/huma-prot.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257431/huma-prot.pdf), page 11

<sup>7</sup> To be considered for a resettlement place, families or individuals must fall under one of the UNHCR resettlement submission categories. These are: 1) Legal and/or physical protection needs of the refugee in the country of refuge; 2) Survivors of torture and/or violence, where the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatization or where appropriate treatment is not available; 3) Medical needs, in particular life-saving treatment that is unavailable in the country of refuge; 4) Women and girls at risk, who have protection problems particular to their gender; 5) Family reunification, when resettlement is the only means to reunite refugee family members who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, are separated by borders or entire continents; 6) Children and adolescents at risk, where a best interests determination supports resettlement; 7) Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions.

<sup>8</sup> Aylan's aunt in Canada had for a number of years sought to 'sponsor' her brother's family to enable them to join her in Canada. According to media reports, in June the application had been returned as it was "incomplete as it did not meet regulatory requirements for proof of refugee status recognition". It was only after their visa applications were refused that the family embarked on the dangerous journey that led to the deaths of Aylan, his brother and his mother.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR statistics available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

Travelling irregularly through transit countries refugees may be at risk of further violence and exploitation. Women travelling irregularly are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

12. The UK does not offer an 'asylum visa' and like many other states when war breaks out and people begin fleeing a country like Syria, the Home Office closes down options for legal travel. Other types of visas such as student or visitor visas are routinely refused if the authorities believe there is an intention to claim asylum upon arrival. There has been a dramatic reduction in the number of visas granted to Syrian nationals since the conflict in Syria began: in 2010 the UK approved 70% of visas for Syrian nationals; in 2014 this dropped to 40%.<sup>10</sup>
13. There are other examples of measures taken to prevent refugees from accessing protection in the UK. In March of this year changes were made to the immigration rules to remove the transit without visa exemption for Syrians with a visa for entry to the USA. This was done explicitly for the purpose of preventing Syrians from claiming asylum in the UK.<sup>11</sup>

### Prevention and solutions

14. There is an urgent need for the expansion of existing legal channels to protection in Europe (e.g. resettlement, family reunion), and the creation of new routes (e.g. humanitarian visas). Such an approach would reduce the number of people relying on people smugglers and therefore would save lives.

#### *Family reunion*

15. Family reunion is one of the few existing legal channels available for refugees to come to the UK and other European countries. In the UK, the families of recognised refugees and those granted humanitarian protection can apply to enter under the family reunion rules, to be reunited here. Evidence suggests that refugees seeking to bring their family members to join them in the UK as well as to other European countries face considerable barriers. Currently, very few refugees with relatives in the UK would qualify for family reunion due to the very restrictive nature of family reunion rules.
16. UNHCR has repeatedly advocated for swifter, more efficient family reunification procedures for refugees in Europe, particularly for Syrians, but there is little indication that member states are prepared to make the process any easier. In fact, the trend is towards more restrictive eligibility criteria, more onerous requirements for supporting documentation and less availability of state-funded legal aid to help refugees navigate the increasingly complex application process. This is true of the UK where, most notably, following the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) refugees are no longer entitled to legal aid to support their applications. For further information on the barriers to family reunion facing refugees in the UK as well as detailed recommendations on how to facilitate family reunion, see the British Red Cross report *Not so straightforward*.
17. The withdrawal of legal aid for family reunion reflects a tendency to see it as a straightforward immigration matter. The British Red Cross report not only examines the complexity of the process, it also highlights the humanitarian and protection needs of family members who wish to travel to the UK. Of the 91 cases included in the study, the majority of sponsors (in the UK) were men while 95% of applicants were women and children (seeking to join their sponsor in the UK). 51% of applicants were exposed to security risks. 96% of those exposed to security risks were women and children. This was true of applicants that had to cross borders to make applications. In particular, Syrian applicants travelling to Lebanon cited arrest and imprisonment as a major concern. Indeed, one child applicant was imprisoned on his return to Syria following the submission of his application.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Guardian article, 11 March 2015, *UK closing doors to Syrian migrants, lawyers say*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/11/syrian-refugees-uk-visa-asylum-seekers-visa>

<sup>11</sup> 16 March 2015, Statement of changes in immigration rules, available here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/413118/48244\\_HC\\_1116.pdf?utm\\_content=bufferedc21&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413118/48244_HC_1116.pdf?utm_content=bufferedc21&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer) We would particularly draw your attention to paragraph 3.2 of the explanatory notes.

<sup>12</sup> British Red Cross, 2015, *Not so straightforward: the need for qualified legal support in refugee family reunion*. Available here:

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/~media/BritishRedCross/Documents/About%20us/Not%20so%20straightforward%20refugee%20family%20reunion%20report%202015.pdf>

18. It is deeply concerning to see the steadily increasing refusal rate on Syrian applications for family reunion in the UK: 12% of all family reunion applications from Syrians were refused in the first quarter of 2014. By the third quarter of last year the refusal rate had doubled to 24%, almost a quarter of applications. By the first quarter of this year this increased to 32%; just under a third of all Syrians applying to join their family members living in the UK were refused.<sup>13</sup>
19. Some of those refused the chance to reunite with family in the UK may not fit the Government's definition of family. For adult refugees, only partners and dependent children under the age of 18 would qualify for family reunion in the UK, under the usual rules. This, for example, means that a Syrian father granted asylum in the UK would be allowed to bring his wife and his younger children to join him. However his eldest child, an 18 year old daughter, would not ordinarily be allowed to travel with the family and they would be forced to leave her behind or pay smugglers to bring her to the UK – in either scenario, putting the young woman at considerable risk. We are aware of a number of cases, including Syrian, where young female dependant family members who are over the age of 18 are refused.
20. Unlike other EU member states, unaccompanied children granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK are denied the right to reunite even with their closest family members. This is despite the fact they have been through an asylum determination system and been found to be a refugee or in need of humanitarian protection, in the same way as an adult. The right to reunite with your family is a fundamental right of a refugee and as a matter of urgency the Home Office should amend the rules for unaccompanied children so that they are in line with adults granted refugee status or humanitarian protection.
21. Family reunion rules in the UK and other member states do not recognise the way that forced migration can change the makeup of a family and their dependency on extended family. In addition to ensuring that those entitled to refugee family reunion under the current rules are able to access it, the Refugee Council recommends that at this time of exceptional need a more flexible approach is taken to what constitutes 'family' allowing refugees with extended family members living in the UK who are willing to act as sponsors, to be allowed to join them in safety here. The Government could follow the examples of Austria, Germany, Ireland, and Switzerland; states that have provided opportunities for the admission of relatives beyond family reunification rules. For example, Germany has pledged 18,500 places to Syrian refugees through private sponsorship.<sup>14</sup> Refugees in Germany are able to privately sponsor members of their extended family if they can guarantee accommodation and living costs.
22. The Refugee Council urges the Home Office to view family reunion as a protection issue and not a straightforward immigration matter. The Home Office and other relevant Government departments should proactively help families separated by forced displacement reunite with their family members in the UK by:
  - a. Making legal aid available for family reunion.
  - b. Simplifying the family reunification process and seeking ways to make it safer for applicants living in insecure conditions.
  - c. Amending the rules so that unaccompanied children found to be in need of protection can bring their family to live with them in the UK.
  - d. Taking a more flexible approach to the definition of family, allowing refugees to join extended family members living in the UK who are willing to act as sponsors.
  - e. Ensuring that the relevant team in the Home Office is sufficiently resourced to swiftly process family reunification applications.

#### *Humanitarian visas*

23. A humanitarian visa is another tool that could be used to enable refugees to travel legally to the UK and other European countries to claim asylum. Certain states already issue humanitarian visas however there is a lack of detail around such programmes, complicating understanding of the opportunities they may present for people in need of protection. However, current practice suggests the following process:

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<sup>13</sup> Disaggregated statistics by country of origin provided by the Home Office statistics team.

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR fact sheet, 7 October 2015, Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees. Available here: <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf>

- a. Applicants for humanitarian visas approach the consular representation of the potential host state (possibly in a third country).
  - b. The consular representation may pre-screen the humanitarian visa application to identify protection needs but this is only an initial assessment as the final status determination procedure is conducted after entry to the host state.
  - c. After arrival in the host state, the applicant lodges an asylum application.
24. The humanitarian visa programmes of Brazil and France seem to operate on this basis and were established in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Since 2013, Brazilian embassies in countries neighbouring Syria have had the possibility to issue special humanitarian visas for Syrians and other nationalities affected by the Syrian conflict who want to seek refuge in Brazil. Claims for asylum are presented upon arrival in Brazil. As of February 2015, Brazil had issued 7,380 humanitarian visas to Syrian refugees.<sup>15</sup> Since 2012 French consulates have been able to issue asylum visas where a need for protection is evidenced on a discretionary basis. There is little detail on the scheme but as of February 2015 France had issued 1,880 visas to Syrians to enable them to travel to France and claim asylum.<sup>16</sup>
25. The Refugee Council recommends that the government explores the use of humanitarian visas to facilitate access to protection in the UK for refugees, through discussion with other EU Member States.
26. In line with UNHCR's recommendations, other forms of admission should be considered such as academic scholarships and labour mobility schemes, allowing Syrians who have had their studies interrupted to continue their education and helping refugees realise their right to work.<sup>17</sup>

## Responding to the humanitarian needs of refugees in Europe

### Background and key concerns

27. Reception conditions for refugees in European countries currently experiencing a high volume of new arrivals are wholly inadequate. The failure of a Common European Asylum System is forcing refugees to continue to travel irregularly, creating 'hot spots' or pressure points in different locations across Europe where there is insufficient or no shelter and protection. It is deeply concerning to see refugees facing teargas and barbed wire fences in Europe, the birthplace of the refugee convention. Inevitably, women and children's safety will be compromised. For example, in Calais, there have been reports of around 200 women sleeping rough amongst 3,000 men, leading to women reportedly being forced to seek out male 'protectors' and/or transactional relationships as survival strategies.<sup>18</sup>
28. A significant commitment to the establishment of safe and legal routes to Europe by a number of European countries would lead to a reduction in the numbers attempting to arrive by sea. Admission of refugees through legal channels such as resettlement, family reunion and humanitarian visas, would also allow for better planning and management. However, given the lack of safe and legal channels and the inevitable high numbers therefore taking irregular routes and arriving in Italy and Greece, the government needs to recognise that a more equitable sharing of responsibility for refugees (including hosting them) is required within Europe.
29. As a first step, the UK should be participating in the EU relocation programme which plans to relocate 160,000 people from Italy and Greece in clear need of temporary protection to other member states. The UK should also be insisting that any relocation scheme is rights-based and gendered. The Government must also play a greater role by making full use of the clauses in EU regulation 604/2013 that protect family unity (specifically articles 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 17).

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<sup>15</sup> UNHCR fact sheet, 7 October 2015, *Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees*. Available here: <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> As above

<sup>17</sup> For more details see UNHCR guidance for the Ministerial-level pledging conference on resettlement and other forms of admission for Syrian refugees. Available here: <http://resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/Resettlement%20and%20other%20forms%20of%20admission%20for%20Syrian%20refugees%20-%20Guidance%20to%20support%20the%20pledging%20process.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> The Pool, August 2015, *The Brutal and Devastating Hardship faced by women at Calais*. Available here: <https://www.the-pool.com/news-views/latest-news/2015/34/the-hardships-faced-by-the-women-at-calais>

30. EU regulation 604/2013, commonly referred to as the ‘Dublin III regulation’<sup>19</sup> came into force in January 2014 and the UK is fully bound by it. However, the guidance to Home Office staff published on the gov.uk website has not been amended since this change of law and still refers to Dublin II, which is no longer relevant. As a result, it is unclear what written instructions staff in the Home Office are working to, which is a concern because of the significant improvements made to policy in the latest iteration of the regulation. This needs addressing as a matter of urgency. The Dublin regulation preamble states clearly that respect for family life and the principle of family unity should govern decisions relating to the examinations of asylum applications. In addition, the criteria relating to unaccompanied children are rooted firmly in the best interests of children.
31. We are specifically concerned about three significant elements of the Dublin III regulation that are not reflected in current guidance. Firstly the criteria relating to unaccompanied children, listed in Article 8, require Member States to reunite children with family members, siblings or relatives, yet this is not mentioned in the guidance. Similarly Member States are bound by Articles nine, ten and eleven which relate to the reunification of family members (spouse, partner and dependent children); a fact again, not reflected in the guidance.
32. It is unclear what process the Home Office undertakes to assess how it responds to requests made under the discretionary clause (Articles 16 and 17) in bringing together relatives, including those dependent upon asylum applicants in the UK, where family or cultural considerations prompt a request for the UK to take responsibility for asylum requests made in other Member States. A positive approach to the discretionary clause would be a sensible way of showing solidarity with those Member States experiencing most pressure, as well as being in the best interests of families and relatives seeking asylum.
33. Syrians in Calais may be eligible to have their asylum claims considered by the UK under Dublin III.
34. Given the scale of the numbers arriving in mainland Europe at this time, it is wholly inappropriate for the UK government to return refugees to other European countries except for the purposes of family reunification. Between January 2013 and the end of 2014, 50 Syrians were removed from the UK under Dublin rules, 18 of them to Italy.<sup>20</sup> Refusals of Syrians under the Dublin regulation in the UK are on the increase: according to Home Office statistics 77 Syrians were refused under Dublin in all of 2014; in the first six months of 2015, 62 Syrians were refused. This is a deeply concerning trend at a time when other European countries are working together to relocate arrivals away from overwhelmed southern European countries.
35. We ask that the UK works with other European countries to share responsibility for refugees arriving in Europe by:
  - a. Participating in the EU-wide relocation scheme and calling for it to be rights-based.
  - b. Ensuring that the latest iteration of the Dublin Regulation is reflected in UK guidance as a matter of urgency including the duty to inform applicants of their right to request transfer to join family members.
  - c. Making full use of the provisions contained in the Dublin III regulations to protect family unity.
  - d. Ensuring that border countries and other ‘hotspots’ are properly resourced to process requests to reunite with family members in the UK under Dublin III.
  - e. Suspending returns under Dublin III except for the purposes of family reunification.

### **Concluding observations**

36. Given the scale of the Syrian refugee exodus and the significant increase in the number of Syrians seeking safety in Europe, a response that focuses entirely on support to the region, in isolation, is clearly both inadequate and too narrow. There is an urgent need for the Government to proactively seek to share responsibility for hosting a greater proportion of Syria’s refugees through the provision of legal routes to safety in the UK for both refugees outside of Europe and for those who have already arrived on European soil. A multi-faceted collaborative approach that embraced the spirit of the 1951 refugee convention would

<sup>19</sup> The Dublin regulations aim to deal with the situation where an individual applies for asylum in one EU member state, but has previously made an application (or been present) in another. In such cases, the individual may be transferred to the first EU state.

<sup>20</sup> The Guardian article, 11 March 2015, *UK closing doors to Syrian migrants, lawyers say*. Available here: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/11/syrian-refugees-uk-visa-asylum-seekers-visa>

enhance the value and effectiveness of the UK's current financial commitment. It would provide much needed leadership in encouraging other states to match the UK's commitment in providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in the region as well as to upholding the rights of refugees on the move, including by ensuring legal routes to protection in their territories.