



**SUPPORTING AND  
EMPOWERING  
REFUGEES**

Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
Prime Minister's Office  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

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## **Open letter to the Prime Minister**

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing on behalf of the Refugee Council, Refugee Action, and the Scottish and Welsh Refugee Councils to urge you to consider extending the UK's humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis by working with our EU partners to share the responsibility of coping with the refugee flows presently being carried by those countries in the region that neighbour Syria.

We are greatly alarmed at the scale of the current refugee crisis and are aware that these concerns are shared by the UK government whose commitment to date to providing very substantial humanitarian aid is to be commended.

However, we understand from the UNHCR that the crisis has escalated to such an extent that the countries bordering Syria are struggling to cope with the numbers of refugees, despite the financial support offered by the UK and others. We now believe that additional practical support, in the form of practical responsibility sharing measures, must be provided to help those displaced by the Syrian conflict and to relieve some of the pressure on Syria's neighbours.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres has said: "Syria has become the great tragedy of this century - a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history."

More than 97 per cent of Syria's refugees are hosted by neighbouring countries in the immediate surrounding region, placing an overwhelming burden on their infrastructures, economies and societies. They urgently need massive international support to help them deal with the crisis. We urge you to consider how the UK and European Union might best share some of the responsibility for providing Syrians with the protection they need.

We request that you consider the following specific measures:

1. instituting an immediate programme of emergency humanitarian evacuations, working with the UNHCR and the rest of the international community to identify those refugees whose needs are the most acute;
2. making it possible for Syrians with a connection to the UK, particularly those who have family members recognised as refugees by the UK government, to be assisted to enter the UK to join their families and communities;
3. establishing a substantial and co-ordinated resettlement programme in the UK and, ideally, all other European member states, with a focus on the more vulnerable refugees who are currently being supported in the region by the UNHCR and other agencies.

We expressed our concerns about the deepening crisis in Syria in a letter to the Immigration Minister in July this year, together with a request that the UK Government works with its fellow European Union member states to establish a substantial European evacuation and resettlement programme. Even in the two months since that letter, the situation has worsened considerably and, according to the UNHCR, shows signs of becoming a protracted refugee situation, requiring more than the provision of financial assistance.

Our agencies, with our long experience of working with resettled refugees and the local communities into which they are relocated, stand ready to assist with the planning and implementation of such a programme.

With best wishes



Maurice Wren  
**Chief Executive**  
**Refugee Council**

Refugee Action  
Scottish Refugee Council  
Welsh Refugee Council

cc: Rt Hon Theresa May MP

